

THE OFFICE OF THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS OF THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF

The Use of the Pallium

Among the liturgical insignia of the Supreme Pontiff, one of the most evocative is the pallium made of white wool, symbol of the bishop as the good shepherd and, at the same time, of the Lamb Crucified for the salvation of the human race. As Pope Benedict XVI made reference to it in his homily for the Holy Mass inaugurating his Petrine ministry on 24 April 2005: “The symbolism of the *pallium* is even more concrete: the lamb's wool is meant to represent the lost, sick or weak sheep which the shepherd places on his shoulders and carries to the waters of life.”



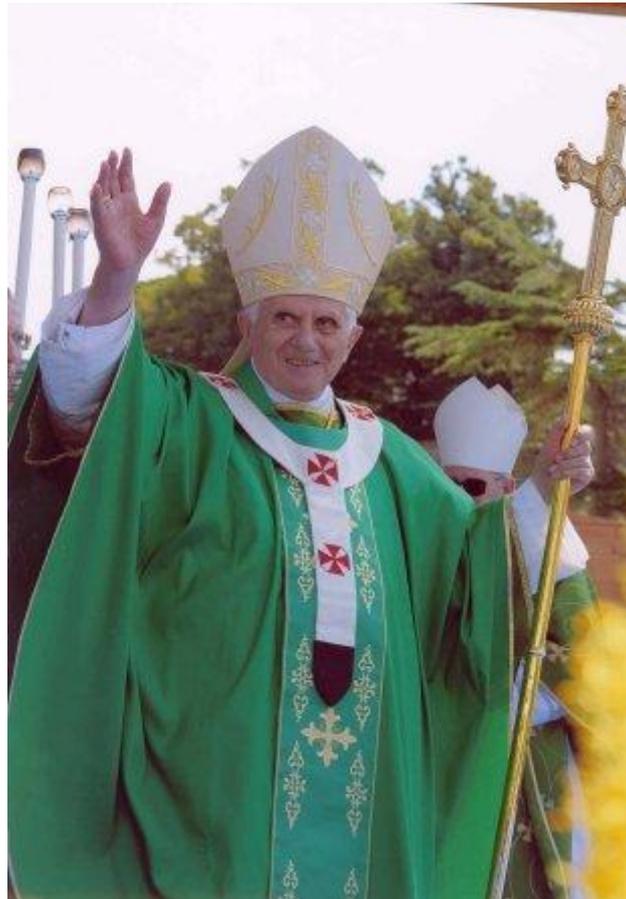
The first historical notes about the pallium emerge in Christian antiquity. The *Liber Pontificalis* (Pontifical Book) notes that Pope St. Mark (died 336) conferred the pallium on the Suburbicarian Bishop of Ostia, one of the consecrators of the Roman Pontiff. Even if we cannot be sure of the historic value of this information, at least it reflects the practice of the fifth and sixth centuries, when the *Liber Pontificalis* was compiled in the ambit of the Roman Curia.

In 513, Pope Symmachus granted the privilege of the pallium to St. Caesarius of Arles and thereafter the concession of the pallium by the Pope to the bishops of Italy and outside Italy multiplied. In other churches of the West, the pallium used as episcopal insignia was not in evidence, if it was not being granted to the bishops by the Roman Pontiff.

The pallium is the symbol of a special relationship with the Pope and expresses besides the power, that, in communion with the Church of Rome, the metropolitan acquires by right in his own jurisdiction. According to Canon Law (canon 437), a metropolitan must request the pallium within three months of his appointment and may wear it only in the territory of his own diocese and in the other dioceses of his ecclesiastical province.

The *homophorion* as a liturgical vestment used by Orthodox bishops and Eastern Catholic bishops of the Byzantine Rite, consists of a sash of white material, curved at its center thus allowing it to move around neck and to lean on the shoulders, causing the ends to fall onto the chest. In the Eastern tradition, the "great *homophorion*" (to be distinguished from the smaller version worn by bishops on certain occasions and similar to the *epitrachelion*, that corresponds to the western stole) has undergone a certain development and today is wider and more ornate in style. Unlike the pallium, the *homophorion* is not reserved for metropolitan archbishops, but can be worn by all bishops.

The Papal Pallium



The liturgical pallium in the most ancient depictions appears in the form of an open scarf placed over the shoulders. In this form we see it in the figure of Archbishop Maximian (498-556) in the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna (which dates to the first half of the sixth century). A strip of the pallium is marked with a cross that hangs in front on the left shoulder, turns around the neck and, passing onto the right shoulder, descends very low toward the chest, at last, to return to the left shoulder and to fall again around the back. This manner of wearing the pallium was maintained until the High Middle Ages when, with the use of pins, it began to be worn so that the two ends hung exactly in the middle of the chest and the back. With the pins replaced by a fixed piece of sewn material, the papal pallium took on the form of an enclosed circle, that one finds commonplace after the ninth century, as one sees in depictions in various Roman basilicas, like Santa Maria Antiqua, Santa Maria in Trastevere and San Clemente. The two ends of the pallium, however, always maintained a considerable length, until, after the fifteenth century, they were progressively shortened.

The ornamentation of the pallium, that one finds illustrated already in a Ravenna mosaic, became thereafter always more elaborate. Four, six or eight red or black crosses were sewn onto it; on the edge fringe was sometimes attached. In the developed form of the pallium, the ends of the strips end with little bands of lead covered with black silk. The three jeweled pins, that originally served to hold the pallium firmly in place, already by the thirteenth century became a simply decorative element.

The long pallium crossed over the left shoulder had not been worn by the Pope and the bishops in the West after the Carolingian period. It would seem as though already in the Middle Ages one finds a consciousness of this historic development: an illustration of a manuscript from the eleventh century shows St. Gregory the Great wearing the pallium in the contemporary fashion with the ends falling in the middle, and the Apostle Peter wearing it in the ancient style on the left shoulder (see Library of the Abbey of Montecassino, 73DD). Therefore, the well-known picture located in the Sacro Speco of Subiaco, dating to around 1219 and depicting Pope Innocent III with the ancient type of pallium, seems to be a conscious “archaism.”

After having used a pallium that was larger and that crossed over the left shoulder, Benedict XVI, began to use again, from the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul in 2008, the form of the pallium used until the time of John Paul II, although of a wider and larger style, and with red crosses. The use of this form of the pallium is meant to underscore better the continuous development that this liturgical vestment has known in the span of more than twelve centuries.

The pallium of the metropolitan archbishops, in its present form, is a straight sash of material of almost five centimeters, made of white wool, curved at the center thus allowing it to rest on the shoulders over the Roman or Gothic chasuble and with two black flaps falling in front and behind, so that, seen either from the front or from behind, the vestment reminds one of the letter "Y." It is decorated with six crosses of black silk, one on each end and four on the incurvature, and is decorated in front and on the back, with three pins made of gold and jewels (*acicula*). The different form of the papal pallium with respect to that of the metropolitans makes clear the diversity of jurisdiction signified by the pallium.

Ref.: http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/details/ns_lit_doc_20091117_pallio_en.html

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