

NEWS RELEASE



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Pope Benedict to confer pallium on Archbishop-Designate Lucas

Tradition dates back 1,700 years

June 10, 2009 (OMAHA, NE) – Pope Benedict XVI will place a woolen band, called a pallium, around the neck of Archbishop George J. Lucas on June 29, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, as a symbol of the new Omaha archbishop's authority and responsibility. The presentation of the pallium takes place just weeks before the installation of the new archbishop on Wednesday, July 22, 2009 at 2 p.m. in St. Cecilia Cathedral.

Archbishop Lucas is among four U.S. archbishops named in the past year who are expected to receive their pallia from Pope Benedict.

“The pope and archbishops wear the pallium as a sign of their authority over the Christian community, but it is the Gospel authority of a shepherd called to carry his sheep, to lead them and feed them,” said Rev. Joseph Taphorn, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha.

An archbishop's pallium is made from the wool of lambs blessed by the pope on the feast of St. Agnes. This blessing is traditional for the Jan. 21 feast of St. Agnes.

The two lambs — donated by the religious of the Order of Lateran Canons Regular — are raised in the Trappist monastery of the Three Fountains (“Tre Fontane”), on the outskirts of Rome.

After the lambs are shorn on Holy Tuesday, the pallia are woven by the nuns of the Benedictine convent of St. Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome.

Then they are placed in a bronze urn near the Chair of St. Peter until June 29, feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, when the pope blesses them and confers them on the metropolitan archbishops appointed during the year.

The pallium symbolizes the lost sheep that is found again, carried on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd, and the Lamb crucified for the salvation of humanity. It also symbolizes, in part, the pope's concession of authority and communion to heads of major local Churches.

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Receiving the pallium is a 1,700 year-old tradition. The modern pallium is a circular band about two inches wide, worn around the neck, breast, and shoulders, and having two pendants, one hanging down in front of the chasuble and one behind. The pendants are about two inches thick and twelve inches long, and are weighted with small pieces of lead covered with black silk. The remainder of the pallium is made of white wool. Archbishops are allowed to wear it only in their respective dioceses.

Taphorn and Rev. Gregory P. Baxter, the archdiocese's moderator of the curia, will join Archbishop-Designate Lucas in Rome.

For tickets to the pallium Mass in Rome, contact the Archdiocese of Omaha at (402) 558-3100 or Pentecost Tours at (800) 713-9800.

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Founded as a diocese in 1885, the Archdiocese of Omaha serves spiritual and human needs in a 23-county area of Northeast Nebraska. Through its 148 parishes and missions, the archdiocese reaches out to more than 221,000 Nebraska Catholics. With two Catholic universities, 58 elementary schools, 18 high schools and a parish-based religious education program within its boundaries, Catholic education enriches the lives of some 44,000 young people. The Archdiocese of Omaha is one of the largest private social service providers in the region. Catholic Charities and the Office of Family Life lead a network that ministers to the broadest and most fundamental needs of our community. Generous support to the Annual Appeal is symbolic of the collective faith that allows the Archdiocese of Omaha to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. www.archomaha.org