

Be pastors, not prison guards, pope tells new archbishops

John L. Allen Jr. | Jun. 29, 2009 NCR Today

By JOHN L. ALLEN JR.

Rome

In an image that might playfully be termed "arresting," Pope Benedict XVI today told a crop of new archbishops that although their jobs require a certain kind of surveillance, that shouldn't turn them into "prison guards," but rather into pastors who "want to serve others."

The pontiff spoke this morning during an a ceremony to impose the pallium, a narrow band of wool cloth, upon 34 metropolitan archbishops appointed to their current archdioceses during the past year. While the 67 million Catholics in the United States represent just six percent of the global Catholic population of 1.1 billion, the five Americans who received the pallium this morning amount to more than 20 percent of new archbishops in 2009:

Gregory Aymond, 59, New Orleans

Robert Carlson, 65, St. Louis

Timothy Dolan, 59, New York

George Lucas, 60, Omaha

Allen Vigneron, 60, Detroit

The pallium ceremony is held each year on June 29, the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Reflecting on the meaning of the term *episkopos*, the Greek word for bishop, Benedict noted that it literally means "overseer," implying a certain kind of what the pope described as "surveillance."

"But it certainly doesn't mean an external surveillance, like one might say of a prison guard," the pope stressed. "It means instead to see from above, to see from the perspective of God — a mode of seeing in love, of one who wants to serve others, to help them become truly themselves."

The pontiff called upon the new archbishops to be messengers of hope.

"The Christian faith is hope," Benedict said. "It's a hope that's reasonable, and we can and must explain the reasons for this hope."

In that context, the pope asked the archbishops to be thinkers as well as doers.

"Part of our duties as pastors is to penetrate the faith with thought, in order to be in a position to demonstrate the reasons for our hope in the disputes of our time," Benedict said.

The pope also returned to what has become a leitmotif of his teaching in recent days, and something that's likely to be a core theme of his upcoming social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* ("Charity in Truth"): Changing the world means changing individual human hearts, one by one.

“Lack of care for the soul, the misery of the interior person, not only destroys the individual, but it threatens the destiny of humanity in its entirety,” the pope said. “Without healing of the soul, without healing of the person from within, there can be no salvation for humanity.”

To promote this individual healing, Benedict urged “obedience to the truth,” expressed in the first place in “the little things of daily life, which often can be wearying and painful.”

The pallium is a white woolen circular band embroidered with six black crosses. It’s worn over the shoulders to symbolize the authority of the archbishop’s office as well as unity with the pope.

The pallium is made from wool shorn from lambs blessed by the pope each year of the Feast of St. Agnes, Jan. 21. The lambs are raised by the Trappist Fathers of the Abbey of the Three Fountains, and the palliums are made by the Sisters of St. Cecilia. New palliums were blessed today by Benedict XVI and placed into a coffer below the Altar of the Confession in St. Peter’s Basilica, where they will remain for a year before being given to new archbishops next year.

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