



The Pallium (from Latin for covering) is a liturgical vestment, symbolizing the fullness of Episcopal (Bishop's) office. It is worn not only by the Pope, but also by metropolitan archbishops and patriarchs. The Pallium is also symbolic of personal loyalty to the Pope and thereby a sign of unity between a local Church and the universal Church. The Pallium is a white, woolen, circular, two-inch band worn loosely around the neck, breast, and shoulders. It is ornamented with six black silken crosses and has a weighted pendant front and back, extending nearly to the waist. The Metropolitan Archbishop receives a pallium from the Pope or his representative as a symbol of his metropolitan jurisdiction. Should he transfer to another Archdiocese, he is vested with a new pallium. The pallium is buried with the Archbishop when he dies.

The Pallium is woven from the wool of two lambs, representing Christ, the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd. These animals are furnished from the lambs raised by the Convent of St. Agnes in Rome and chosen and blessed by the Pope each year on the feast day of St. Agnes (January 21). The lambs are sent to the Benedictine Sisters of St. Cecilia in Trastevere where they are cared for and shorn of their wool for weaving.

On the eve of the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, the Pallia are laid upon the tomb of St. Peter in St. Peter's Basilica, to rest above his body for the night, "contracting a share of apostolic authority," as it were. The following morning (June 29th) at Mass celebrated in the Basilica for the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul by the Pope, and concelebrated by the Metropolitan Archbishops who have been appointed during the preceding year, these pallia are blessed. Following the Mass the Pope presents each of the "new" metropolitan archbishops with a pallium which he is to take back to his Archdiocese where he is to arrange for a special celebration at which the Papal Nuncio (the Pope's Ambassador to that country) will officially invest the Archbishop with the Pallium.

The "newly blessed" pallia that are not presented after the Mass are placed in a silver urn and enclosed in a cabinet under the altar of crucifixion, over the traditional tomb of St. Peter. Here they await delivery by papal embassy to the "new" metropolitan archbishops who were unable to attend the Mass at St. Peter's Basilica that day.