

## Pallium Lecture Series

### **Pallium & Moral Authority**

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

1 April 2004

By now you know all about the pallium. It is interesting that a piece of material which is so simple and almost invisible can be an important symbol today in the Church and in civil society. It seems incredible, but it is. The pallium is a symbol of authority, and never has there been so much debate over authority and power as there is today, whether in society or in the Church, and sometimes they appear to have crossed a crisis and lost their precise surroundings. In every case, they need to be redefined and re-launched. Every sector of society asks our leaders that they exercise greater leadership and less power.

To have and exercise authority, leadership, in fact, means to be the custodian of a design or plan, to preserve and propose principles and fundamental values of society, to maintain a clear sense of the ends of all things, of one's personal and communitarian life, having a clear orientation before oneself. Power is anything but the instrument, the modality for the actualization of this design, of this precise sense of the ends and of orientation. Power is authoritative when it is able to translate into practice this design, this orientation, the expressed sense of authority. Meanwhile, power becomes tyrannical, oppressive, cumbersome, when it is detached from its original design. In fact, if power is detached from moral authority, a human community that had come together to promote and have flourish liberty, equality, solidarity and the defense of life, ends up making daily decisions that are contrary to equality, liberty, and the defense of life. If power is separated from truth, it becomes an empty procedure, insignificant, and even dangerous for the peaceful living of society.

The separation of truth and power is very common today, in fact it is becoming the model of democracy, which renounces truth and leans only on public opinion. National parliaments, local councils, university assemblies, international fora are not concerned whether the opinions are true, rather, they limit themselves to counting and validating opinions that have the support of the majority and who have major resources at their disposal.

This is why it is a pleasure to reflect upon the pallium, neither so much because it is an exotic item, nor for its historical value only. The pallium reminds us that there exists on earth a power that does not belong to the man who exercises it, nor to the majority, nor to the strongest group, nor to those who are richer or better in controlling public opinion, but to God. It is a power that protects the design of God among humanity, in His Church on earth. It is this element of the transcendent power of the Bishop that fascinates, stimulates, and motivates us. The Bishop exercises an authority that contains the design of God for His people on earth. It is for this reason that the Bishop must always be closer to God, has to be a man of prayer, accustomed to discerning the will of God through meditation and contemplation; has to be a man of collaboration and communion, because God is Trinity and His design among the community of man is a design of communion. The Bishop has to be a man capable of loving, of allowing the love of God to overflow from his heart, because the authority of God is service.

The pallium is worn also by the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. This is why John Paul II, even though he is aging and is physically fragile, remains a great moral leader. The impact and the effectiveness of the thoughts and actions of John Paul II among international relationships reside in his moral authority.

The support of the authority of the Pope is certainly not a military one: there aren't any armed divisions at his disposal. Stalin could rest at peace, who one day exclaimed with sarcasm: "How many divisions does the Pope have?", as if to say: I don't care about his authority if he is unable to defend himself. His authority does not come from an economic or commercial power: all one needs to do is to look at the yearly balance sheet of the Holy See and compare it with that of another State in the world; it does not seek the support of an electoral vote, since the Church does not rely upon an electoral majority vote; nor is she influenced by the changing tides of public opinion, often forged by the mass media.

The breadth and the effectiveness of his action on the world political scene come from his moral authority. John Paul II has dedicated an Encyclical on the "Splendor of Truth." Love and creative fidelity to the truth are revealed particularly in every aspect of his universal pastoral mission. It springs from his conviction and experience, which can be seen in an address to government officials and politicians who convened in Rome for the Jubilee Year 2000, when he said: "It is not a matter, for the Christian today, to leave the world in response to God's call, rather, to give testimony to the faith and to be

coherent with its proper principles, in the difficult and always new circumstances that characterize the political sphere."

The authority of John Paul II upon the world limelight springs exactly from that coherence with the proper principles that he proposes to politicians. To have authority means to have a clear design, to give form and life to the principles and values upon which human society is founded, to maintain a clear vision of the ends and the orientation. Power is authoritative when it is grafted upon authority and translates into a daily reality the project, the values, the principles that it creatively nourishes and hands down. The force of authority is its moral persuasion.

The Pope exercises this moral power in the world in many forms. Let us think of the Christian communities, such as yours in Milwaukee, that he motivates, animates, sustains: the network of initiatives turned to the spiritual reconstruction of society, to peace, to solidarity, to justice, to humanitarian help that sustains the Christian community in the world which constitute a precious contribution, often silent, but indispensable for the peaceful coexistence among people in the entire world. Even if sometimes some Catholics in the world have difficulty in following certain teachings of the Pope, the Catholic community is always perceived by society, by public opinion, as a community that is under the guidance and communion with the Pope. Even in countries where the Catholic community is very small, numerically insignificant, the governments, even if they do not always heed the testimony, the appeals, the initiatives of the Catholic community, are attentive because they know that although the community may be small and weak in force, she has upon her shoulders a world community, a strong moral authority that is visible in the Pope. The Pope exercises his moral force through prayer, his words, his trips, his courageous acts (we think of his visit to the Synagogue in Rome and the mosque in Damascus; we think of the stopover years ago at Khartoum in Sudan; his trip to Cuba, the healing of memories and his request for forgiveness during the Holy Year; the enthusiasm he revived in young Jewish people in his trip to Jerusalem and the welcome reception among the Muslims of Kazakhstan).

There is also a particular way with which the Pope exercises his moral authority. It is the presence and activity of his representatives in the international diplomatic community. The Holy See, which personifies the government of the Pope, is represented in 174 countries in the world. Of the 191 member States at the UN, 174 have diplomatic relations with the Holy See. There is one resident representative of the Pope in 110

countries whose function is to ensure communion and communication between the Pope and the local Church, and, at the same time, to assure the function of a true ambassador to the Government. Here, there are no territorial, military, or economic interests at stake. The ambassadors of the Pope in various countries, in collaboration with the Bishops of the place, concern themselves in particular with encouraging good relations and promoting the constructive contribution of the Catholic to the society of that same host-country. But the ambassador of the Pope also works for the advancement of human rights of all citizens, regardless of their religion. He concerns himself with encouraging peace, preventing conflict, promoting the spiritual and the social good of the local community. Obviously, his primary preoccupation is to work for the full and fecund enjoyment of religious liberty.

From her 2000 year experience, the Church is convinced that when the government officials of a country fully respect the rights of every citizen with regard to religious liberty, they are also respectful of other rights, such as civil, political, and personal rights of every citizen. A State which guarantees respect and freedom for a religious community to express it and live it out is a State which respects the religious freedom of its people. This benefits not only the Catholic Church but also other communities and the entire society. To gain respect for the identity and liberty of the Catholic Church is to verify the tendencies and pretensions of state power.

The Pope also has a representation at the United Nations, and at this moment is entrusted to me. In New York I do diplomatic work on par with those of other representatives of the United States, of Mexico, of India or Nigeria.

I am sure you ask yourselves, how the Pope, who is essentially a religious authority, can engage in this type of work, through his representatives who are also religious, and Bishops.

There are historical reasons. At the beginning of Christianity, the political power was transferred from Rome to Byzantium in the East. The Emperor of Byzantium started to convene councils and to make decisions, which concerned the internal life of the Church. To keep the Church independent of political power, the Pope began to send his representatives to the Imperial court to discuss with the Emperor certain decisions, to make known to him the thoughts of the Pope and to see that the Church could govern itself according to the proper rules. So, after centuries later when diplomacy became

established, that is, around the year 1500, the States opened their first embassies. The Pope, too, established embassies, which were called Nunciatures. It is true that in those times, until the end of 1870, the Pope also governed a territorial State in some regions of Italy. But the representatives of the Pope were not ambassadors of a temporal State, rather representatives of the Pope. As a matter of fact, even during the fifty-nine years when papal authority was stripped of all territorial foundation when Rome was taken in 1870, to the Lateran Treaty in 1929, the Holy See did not reduce its diplomatic activity in any way: the Legates of the Roman Pontiff were dispatched throughout the world, (the number of States officially represented before the Pope doubled, going from fourteen to thirty; fifty or more bilateral documents were signed, a dozen or so cases calling for arbitration and international mediation were deferred to the Pontiff). Moreover, it was non-Catholic sovereigns like Kaiser William II, Tsar Nicholas II and Queen Wilhelmina who took the initiative so that the Holy See's advice would be admitted to the international Conferences of Berlin and the Hague, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Since the disappearance of the Papal States, the number of Nunciatures has never ceased to grow: of the fourteen Nunciatures then in existence the number reached thirty at the beginning of the last century, then to sixty in the period after the Second World War. Numerous peoples who were politically dependent on the great Empires now gained their sovereignty, such as the countries of Latin America in the 19th century and the African States in the 20th century. In addition, some Asian and Near Eastern countries now have relations with the Holy See. Some twenty countries who call themselves "Islamic" have also wished to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See. When Pope John Paul II was elected to the See of Peter, on 16 October 1978, eighty-eight states were represented before the Holy See. The number continues to increase, reaching at this present moment one hundred seventy-four.

Therefore, this diplomatic activity of the Pope upon the world scene has an historical explanation that is very precise and that has been recognized even among international documents that regulate modern diplomacy. It is enough to think of the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations, adopted by States almost forty years ago, in which specific mention is made of the presence of Apostolic Nuncios. Representatives of the Pope, at the same level of Ambassadors. The word "Nuncio" comes from the Latin: *nuntius*, which means "messenger," "mouthpiece." This is the word that has been used to indicate the Representatives of the Pope. They are messengers, the mouthpiece of the Pope. This term has been kept also to underline the specific diplomatic exercise of the

pontifical Representatives. They do not represent a territorial State but a well-defined entity: the papacy. In fact, they do not represent Vatican City-State, but the Holy See.

In the morning, when I open my mail, I frequently come across a very curious spelling in the address: His Excellency, Archbishop so and so, Ambassador of the Holy Sea (S-e-a). Why are we not dealing with the Holy "Sea," but rather the Holy See (S-e-e)?

The "Holy See" is the Pope, together with all the bodies of the Roman Curia through which he governs the Catholic Church. The Holy See is a sovereign juridical person because it is the supreme organ of the Catholic Church. Its attribute as a sovereign subject is recognized in international law. It is the Holy See, and not Vatican City that is the juridical interlocutor within the international community.

In 1929, the Vatican State was created by the agreement between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Italy. They decided to establish Vatican City in order to assure the Pope a basis for his absolute independence and autonomy from any earthly power.

The Vatican is intended only to ensure independence for the action of the Holy See, thanks to a territorial sovereignty reduced to its minimal expression. The Vatican does not pursue the aims that are proper to a Country, which has to guarantee the political, social and economic rights of its population, etc.

When the newspapers speak about the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and a State, they usually say: "the Vatican" is sending an Ambassador, for instance, to Israel or Russia. In reality, it is not the little Vatican City State that is the subject of international law acting in bilateral or multilateral relations in Washington, New York, Geneva or Kinshasa. It is always the Holy See that is acting.

We speak about the diplomacy of the Holy See. Diplomacy and Holy See - that seems to be contradictions in terms. In fact, diplomacy is a word full of meaning. The popular notion is often that which comes from Machiavelli, when he said: "Diplomacy is the art of getting what you want at any cost and by any means." How can the Holy See accept this concept of diplomacy? The Holy See participates in diplomacy to have its voice heard within the international community. However, its diplomacy does not lie upon military might or economic strength. Rather, the diplomacy of the Holy See, even if

it abides by the rules of diplomacy, has characteristics, which are different from those of the countries of the world.

I would like to illustrate this, by telling you something of what I am doing at the UN in New York. First of all the Holy See holds the status of an Observer State and not one of a full member State. The Holy See enjoys by its own choice the status of Permanent Observer at the United Nations, rather than of a full Member. This is due primarily to its desire to maintain absolute neutrality in specific political problems. Full membership would put the Holy See in direct contact with political, military, economic and commercial matters. As a full Member the Holy See would be obliged to abstain too often in these areas, due to the fact that it would go beyond the scope of its own specific mission.

Secondly, the real interest of the Holy See in participating in UN's activities is to be able to express its own views on the different topics being debated within this forum. What it appreciates the most is the right to speak, right to take the floor and contribute to the shaping of debates. During the last session of the General Assembly, we delivered some twenty interventions: on the culture of peace, and on disarmament, which allowed us to see how the long debate triggered by the Iraqi crisis stands; on macro and microeconomics, which give us the opportunity to read current events and trends in the light of the social thought of the Catholic Church and to maintain pressure on what we now call at the UN "the soft threats on humanity," -namely unemployment, poverty, housing and sanitation, access to medicines, HIV/AIDS pandemic - affecting the majority of human society much more than the so-called "hard threats," namely, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. We brought the Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Brazil, Cardinal Claudio Hummes, to lead our delegation on the high level panel on AIDS, in order to bring experiences and confirmation that the Church is very committed to overcoming this pandemic and her stance on prevention which cannot be simply dismissed, because it works, as does her vast human resources that the local churches are devoting to the terminally ill or orphans of HIV/AIDS. We intervened on the drug issue, stressing the importance of the family in the prevention of this plague. In view of the tenth anniversary of the international year dedicated to the family, we are supporting many delegations willing to rehabilitate the family as the basic unit to trigger education and formation of a new generation sensitive to the environment, to justice and solidarity, to peace and reconciliation, to the fundamental values without which the good structures, programs and norms emanated by the UN would just fall apart. In addition, we are very busy with

the issue of human cloning. We have been preparing the current debate since the beginning of last year, working on an effective position-paper, making known our position to the different missions accredited to the UN, but also the respective chanceries all over the world, through our papal representations, enlisting the cooperation of scientists and jurists in an information campaign. I am glad to tell you that this issue is a fascinating one, not only for its scientific, ethical and juridical dimensions, but also because the interest and the attention that the topic commands are a clear confirmation that this is the debate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And it is also somewhat gratifying: as an Observer our delegation is not going to cosponsor Resolutions or to vote, but we give our support, we stand ready to engage in clarifying discussions, we intervene within the Committee, and delegations do not hesitate to express their appreciation.

The presence of a diplomatic mission allows the Holy See to enter into and keep constant contact with the different bodies of the UN and with the Representatives of all the countries of the world. I should say that the most challenging, interesting, sometimes difficult, but always gratifying side of my daily activity is to represent to UN officials and diplomats' different pleas, suggestions, requests, appeals coming from our people on the grass roots level. I am referring to dioceses, associations, religious congregations, and individuals who turn to us, confident that we can represent to the right offices and persons their views, their requests, usually on humanitarian issues. And I have to say that my interlocutors always give much attention and oftentimes operative consideration to the issues I represent to them. Just to give you some examples, many bishops individually or as a national conference. Catholic associations, NGOs, women and men of good will throughout the world at brinks with inextricable situations of conflict, of endemic poverty, of ethnic hatred, of indifference by the international community, they turn to the Pope's representation in New York and ask to assist them in coming to the UN and representing directly your cases before those who hold some responsibility and have means to influence local governments or groups of power. A couple of months ago, a delegation came from the Great Lakes region, between the Democratic Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, where massacres, war, exploitation seem to have no end. Meetings with different offices and personalities of the UN were arranged. They represented their case with the conviction, the precision of terms and data and the love, which they feel in their hearts for those populations. At times, their passionate candor seemed to contrast with the realism of their interlocutors, especially when they tirelessly pleaded for measures to stop the illegal influx of weapons and armaments in that region. This is something beyond the scope of the peacekeeping missions. Nevertheless, I was happy when a couple of weeks



ago the Security Council adopted a strong Resolution intended to seriously tackle this exact issue. A couple of Bishops from Uganda wrote asking to represent their case, the sad situation of an entire ethnic group suffering for years from bloody incursions by guerrilla bands, kidnappings of their children and women, destruction of entire villages. Yesterday an informal group of Representatives of concerned. Countries and UN officials met in order to take up the issue. We are now preparing to assist a delegation of Bishops and laypersons from Burundi, eager to take some serious steps in favor of a peaceful coexistence in their country.

Last but not least, a word on the particular ways and means the Holy See operates at the UN. As I said before, our strength is certainly not of a military nature; nor does it rest on economic and trade interests. Our strength stems from what in ecclesial terms we call "communion." When governments and people sensitive to power see that we are united, coherent and consistent in our stands, they take us into consideration. This is a facet of the moral power, or better, the moral authority I mentioned earlier. In light of this, I would like to emphasize that each and every Catholic association, parish community, ecclesial institution, in their varied interests and perspectives, are part of this communion. The more we strengthen our collaboration, the more we are effective and the greater the impact we will be able to make at the UN as we give voice to those who have no voice in the public arena.

**H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore**