

THE HERALDIC ACHIEVEMENT OF
THE MOST REVEREND JAMES DOUGLAS CONLEY

There are several elements to every coat of arms design. Ecclesial arms, according to the *Rubrica Araldica Vaticana* (the one thousand year old assembly of laws governing church heraldry) are very specific of what may be permitted to each office, rank or institution in the church. For bishops and archbishops, there are external elements to the coat of arms plan and the interior elements forming the coat of arms itself. Herein is the formal explanation of both forms of heraldic elements found in the coat of arms of The Most Reverend James D. Conley, Titular Cissa and Auxiliary to the Archbishop of Denver -

While viewing the design, the viewer's eye settles first upon the Episcopal hat, known properly as the *galero*. For the rank of bishop, the color for the heraldic chapeau is a deep green. The formula for this hue has remained the same for nearly one thousand years, the recipe for which has been passed to the heraldic designer, James-Charles Noonan, Jr. by his late godfather, Cardinal Jacques Martin, longtime prefect of the Papal Household and the foremost Vatican heraldry expert in his time. Suspended from the *galero* on either side in the pyramidal form are six tassels in the same green, known properly as the *fiocchi*.

Next in the design as we move downward, is found the Episcopal Cross which for the office of Bishop has but one transverse arm and most closely resembles the processional cross found at Mass. For the Bishop Conley design, a new Episcopal Cross has been designed.

The Conley Cross is unique to the bishop, never again to appear in any design. It is rendered in gold as is proper. The interior of the four segments of the Cross will be etched (in the same way sacred vessels are etched with symbolism) with ears of wheat, symbolic of both the State of Kansas (for the crop most famous of that region) and for the Church there (for the Sacred Hosts made of the wheat from the fields from places like the farmlands of Kansas).

The central stone on the Cross is a deep green emerald, incorporated here to represent Bishop Conley's Irish heritage ~ the best element to represent one's Irish roots.

The next element to call to mind as one studies the Conley coat of arms is the motto found beneath the shield proper. The bishop has selected the motto used by Cardinal John Henry Newman, one of his spiritual mentors, and whose anniversary shall be on the day James D. Conley is consecrated a bishop of the Church. To further honor Cardinal Newman, the actual shape and form of the banderole, or motto ribbon, used by him in his own cardinalatial coat of arms has been incorporated into the Conley design, a very vivid tribute to the late Cardinal Newman.

THE ARMS PROPER

There are two colors (actually one color and one metal) blue and gold employed in Bishop Conley's coat of arms. Shields may be divided many ways, each meaning something special in itself. Also, the form of line used to create a division can mean something as well.

When a small field, a bar about the width of 20% of the total size, appears across the top of the heraldic design, this is known as a *Chief*. In heraldry, the chief is the field of honor. This field has been included in the Conley design and it has been worked in deep heraldic blue in homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Blue is also the hue of philosophic truth, the color symbolic of the teaching role of each bishop of the Church. Upon this field of honor appears the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus rendered in gold and fimbriated (bordered) in red. The gold represents the divinity of the Christ and the red his sacrifice on Calvary. The red also represents the color of fire, particularly the fires of Confirmation and thus symbolic also of the office of Bishop. The Crown of Thorns surrounding the heart has been worked in black, the color of Sacred – Ordained priesthood.

A heart appeared in the ancient arms of Cardinal Newman and so this symbolic reference was important to Bishop Conley, but moreover, the importance of the Bishop's personal devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the reason for this special emblem's inclusion in the design. Furthermore, the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is day on which Bishop Conley shall be consecrated to the episcopal dignity and thus it was his desire to honor both this devotion and event within his episcopal coat of arms.

The larger segment of a coat of arms including a *chief* is actually the less important field as described above. When there are two fields, a line must divide them. These lines may be straight or they may take the form of one design or another. In the Conley design, the line employed is known as *de Fleury*, this is to say that the line is broken repeatedly by the appearance of a small *fleur de Lys*.

By repeating this design-line, the image of a diadem is thus created and here in the Conley design this diadem represents the tiara worn in the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in her title MATER ECCLESIAE which appears in mosaic form upon the façade of the Apostolic Palace. As such this diadem not only is symbolic of the BVM but also the bishop's tenure for a time in the Roman Curia and moreover his loyalty to the Petrine Office and the Holy See.

This bottom field has been worked entirely in gold. Upon this field appears a new charge (emblem) which was created by the designer just for Bishop Conley to represent his two main patrons: Ss. James the Less and Augustine of Hippo. Upon the large gold field appear two arrows in saltire (the arrows forming an 'X') on top of which appears a single key. The two arrows represent Saint Augustine, one for his wisdom the other for his teaching and his embrace of the faith after conversion. In heraldry, the arrow always represents truth and wisdom.

The arrows have been rendered in black, once more the color of priesthood. It is keen to note that the Wea people, a native American people indigenous to Indiana and a people sharing their heritage with Bishop Conley who descends also from the Wea nation, presented a black arrow at times of great ceremony and so its presence here in the Conley arms serves a dual symbolic purpose, one also intended as a mark of honor and respect for this native American heritage.

Superimposed upon these arrows will be found an ornate key, worked in red for martyrdom, for St. James the Less. The key is one of the symbols for St. James the Lesser representing his writing, the key to salvation in the Christian faith coming forth from the written Word of God, being worked in red symbolic of his violent death and witness to Christ. Together as one charge (emblem) the arrows and key are unique to the coat of arms of James Douglas Conley, being richly symbolic of his spiritual, ecclesial and

familial life and are proper to his rank and office of Auxiliary Bishop of the Holy Roman Church.

