



THE FORMAL BLAZON OF THE EPISCOPAL COAT OF ARMS OF

**JOSEPH V. BRENNAN, D.D.**

TITULAR BISHOP OF TROFIMIANA

AUXILIARY TO THE METROPOLITAN OF LOS ANGELES



PER CHEVRON EMBOWED ARGENT AND BARRY OF EIGHT

AZURE AND ARGENT

IN CHIEF TWO ROSES GULES BARBED AND SEEDED OR

AND IN BASE A SCALLOP SHELL ALSO OR.

ON A CHIEF AZURE A FLEUR-DE-LIS OR

BETWEEN TWO WINGS DISPLAYED ARGENT

AND FOR A MOTTO

« CARITAS CHRISTI URGET NOS »

## THE OFFICE OF AUXILIARY BISHOP

The Office of Auxiliary, or Assistant, Bishop came into the Church around the sixth century. Before that time, only one bishop served within an ecclesial province as sole spiritual leader of that region. Those clerics who hold this dignity are properly entitled “Titular Bishops” whom the Holy See has simultaneously assigned to assist a local Ordinary in the exercise of his episcopal responsibilities. The term ‘Auxiliary’ refers to the supporting role that the titular bishop provides a residential bishop but in every way, auxiliaries embody the fullness of the episcopal dignity.

Although the Church considers both Linus and Cletus to be the first auxiliary bishops, as Assistants to St. Peter in the See of Rome, the first mention of the actual term “auxiliary bishop” was made in a decree by Pope Leo X (1513-1521) entitled *de Cardinalibus Lateranses* (sess. IX). In this decree, Leo confirms the need for clerics who enjoy the fullness of Holy Orders to assist the Cardinal-Bishops of the Suburbicarian Sees of Ostia, Velletri-Segni, Sabina-Poggio-Mirteto, Albano, Palestrina, Porto-Santo Rufina, and Frascati, all of which surround the Roman Diocese. Because the Cardinal-Bishops resided mostly in Rome, serving the popes as senior advisors, these vicars actually governed the suburbicarian sees in the absence of their superiors.

In the broader sense, however, the origin of the office of Auxiliary Bishop as we know it today came into the Church when Islam overtook North Africa and the Near East in the first millennium, resulting in the collapse of the local Catholic dioceses across the southern Mediterranean basin. Those Christians who were not martyred for their faith generally converted

to Islam or fled to a sure shelter in Europe. A great many of the bishops of this region also made their way to safety in Rome. In due time, most of these deposed bishops permanently resided in the Eternal City, living at the Papal Court or at the seat of the Roman Empire. They remained there, living in great style and comfort, until their own deaths but their formal diocesan titles did not die with them as one would expect.

Not willing to relinquish both her rights to, and presence in, these overtaken dioceses, the Holy See continued for centuries to nominate men to the vacated sees in hope that one day the Church would return and she could then illustrate a continuity of Apostolic Succession throughout the duration of the Islamic occupation. During this prolonged period, these many dozens of dioceses in exile were officially seated in exile in Rome where the clerics assigned to them had little to do. In time this caused problems for the Church, which continued to resist the presence of so many bishops at the Papal Court. By the twelfth century, even sitting bishops of major European sees began to prefer life at the magnificent Papal Court to the simplicity, and sometimes harshness, of their own dioceses; so much so that a succession of popes of this age had to finally order bishops to return home under pain of excommunication. The presence of so many exiled titulars only compounded the situation.

Not knowing what to do with so many idle bishops, the popes in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries began to make use of the keen abilities of these clerics by assigning them to temporary governance of vacant sees across Western Europe. The local princes who coveted wealth and influence enjoyed by the local dioceses and abbeys-nullius often blocked formal replacement of a permanent residential bishop for upwards to a decade. And so, in this impermanent role the titular bishops more or less served as temporary papal vicars but each retained their jurisdiction over their own titular see from long abandoned North Africa and

beyond. This policy continued for several hundred years and out of it grew the modern canonical understanding of the role of both auxiliary bishop and vicars apostolic.

It was not until after the Council of Trent (1543-63) that Pope Saint Pius V (1566-72) decreed that thereafter, auxiliary bishops could only be assigned to cardinals who governed major sees or to archbishops with vast territories under their spiritual care. At this time, the term “auxiliary” was generally replaced by that of “suffragan” but when larger ecclesiastical provinces were later sub-divided into numerous smaller dioceses, this latter term was then affixed to those newly created residential bishoprics that in turn reported to the senior archbishopric of the region (the incumbent of the greater see thereafter referred to as the Metropolitan-Archbishop of that province) and as such, the term “auxiliary” returned for those prelates working as assisting bishops to a cardinal or archbishop. Pope Pius’ decree also limited the appointment of auxiliaries to those sees that were financially able to properly sustain a second bishop in that place. The rights, privileges and responsibilities of these clerics were thereafter carefully defined in the writ of appointment of each individual prelate, each differing dependent upon the specific needs of each local Church.

It was after Trent, therefore, that the law finally required a cleric, who was not already a bishop at the time that he was named an auxiliary of a specific place, to be vested with one of the many now *vacant* sees from North Africa or the Near East or from parts of Europe by then absorbed into other jurisdiction or from a see placed in abeyance. From the earliest days of the Church, it had always been understood that no one could enjoy the fullness of Holy Orders without being assigned a specific diocese over which he either actively or passively governed. In fact, when a

priest is ordained to the episcopacy as an auxiliary bishop, as in the case of the new auxiliary bishops of Los Angeles, one of these ancient long-lost sees of the Mediterranean basin, or one of those suppressed in Europe, North or South America or elsewhere, is always assigned to him.

Today these dioceses are known collectively as the *sedi titulari* (or titular sees). The titular see of Trofrimian has been assigned to Bishop Joseph V. Brennan (*Trofrimianensis* to give it its proper Latin title) as his own canonical diocese. Thus continues the Apostolic Succession of the See of Trofrimian even though more than a thousand years has now passed since a Catholic bishop has actually sat in governance there.

Trofrimian was part of the ancient ecclesial province of Byzacena, a region in present-day Eastern Tunisia (known as the region of Sahel) consisting in geographic dimensions of about 85 miles from the sea coast into the mountains to the south and approximately 30 miles in width east to west. The Archdiocese of Byzacena was seated at the city by the same name, a city second only to Carthage in all of Africa at that time. Within this territory the ancient province of Byzacena was divided into 150 individual dioceses, so rich and historic was this region of North Africa in the first half millennia of Christianity.

The current Code of Canon Law defines an auxiliary bishop as one who does not possess the right of succession of that place (403§1). It likewise stipulates that all auxiliaries of a diocese be simultaneously appointed as either Vicars General or as Episcopal Vicars (406§2) and specifies within the rescript of appointment what privileges and obligations of the office that new auxiliary will enjoy (405§1).

***The Heraldic Achievement of  
The Most Reverend Joseph V. Brennan***

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, as with all offices, there are external elements to the coat of arms design as well as interior elements forming the coat of arms itself. Herein is the formal explanation for the coat of arms of The Most Reverend Joseph V. Brennan, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles in conformity to those laws.

While viewing the design, the viewer's eye settles first upon the shield itself, the central portion of the entire heraldic achievement. In this design, the top portion of the shield is known properly as the chief. Not all coat of arms designs include a chief but when they do, this is considered the field of honor or the most important part of the design. When gazing upon Bishop Brennan's shield the chief appears like a bar of blue across the top of a fuller shield below.

**OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS**

***A Dedicated Charge***

When the Archdiocese invited the heraldic designer to create the coats of arms of each of the three new auxiliary bishops it was decided to create a special charge (emblem) given to each new

bishop to bear that would be created in honor of Our Lady of the Angels. It is more than rare for a new bishop of the church to be consecrated in a cathedral, diocese and city all dedicated to the same title, even more so when the title is that of the Blessed Virgin Mary. When, on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, Bishops O'Connell, Brennan and Barron are ordained to the episcopacy each of their coat of arms will have a newly created charge (emblem) symbolic of Our Lady of the Angels. Each will be unique, no two the same, but so similar and with the same symbolic meaning, as to proudly mark each as bishops ordained in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, in the Archdiocese dedicated to the same titular, in a city originally known by the same name.

The charge (emblem) for each is a combination of the Fleur de Lys for the B.V.M. and a pair of angel's wings on a blue chief (the field at the top of the shield of each bishop); blue being the color reserved for Our Lady and also the color of the Pacific Ocean that forms one of the borders of the church and region.

For Bishop O'Connell, the Fleur de Lys is rendered in gold. The wings are silver (which is always rendered as white in heraldry as real silver tarnishes). Gold and silver are the Divine Attributes, perfect and pure in every way.

For Bishop Brennan, the Fleur de Lys is rendered in the same metals gold for the Fleur de Lys and silver for the wings. As you will note, although the same theme (emblem), these three designs are unique in every way.

For Bishop Barron, the Fleur de Lys is rendered in silver, the wings of gold. This change was for heraldic balance, the special homage remains the same as for the other two bishops.

It is the designer's hope that every new bishop consecrated for Los Angeles will continue this special honor for Our Lady of the Angels.



The bottom portion of the design for Bishop Brennan is divided by a field known as a per chevron division. This translates to the base of the shield protruding to the top in a mountain-like manner. Inside this chevron are found *a Barry of eight wavy azure and argent*. This means that blue and silver (white because silver tarnishes) wavy lines; eight in number fill the interior of the chevron. These wavy lines are symbolic of two things, the waters of baptism and the Pacific Ocean. Bishop Brennan very much wished to honor the sacraments, in particular the Sacrament of Baptism. He also wished to recognize the eastern border of the archdiocese, the magnificence of the Pacific Ocean. These wavy lines bring honor to both. Upon this field is placed the gold Pilgrim's Shell, the scallop used in Baptism thus completing this homage.

The remainder of the field of the shield, all of that above and outside the chevron division is worked in silver (white). Silver represents the purity of God and the efficacy of the sacraments of the Church. Upon this simple field are two red roses, the Roses of Our Lady of Guadalupe which was important to Bishop Brennan to see included in his coat of arms design.

### *Ecclesiastical Attitude Concerning*

#### OR and ARGENT

Or and Argent, the two heraldic metals depicted in art as yellow and white (as in the case of the flag of the Vatican City State) seldom appear together in heraldry, unless separated by color

(properly known as heraldic tincture). Although this has been more or less a steadfast, almost 'sacred' rule in civil, state, and familial armorial, this rubric in heraldry has never applied to the armorial of the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is true that in state heraldry, it is almost always forbidden to overlay the two metals, one on top of the other, just as it would be to lay one color upon another. But the Church of Rome never adopted this rule. In fact, it not only generally ignored it, despite centuries of criticism for doing so, particularly from northern Europe, but it all but viewed this prohibition as an abrogation of proper design methodology in creation and implementation of the theological symbolism of Christian charges which forms an integral part of all Catholic ecclesial heraldic design.

According to longstanding Church custom, gold and silver are heavenly attributes, metals that represent purity, innocence, wisdom and Godliness. As such, law in ecclesial armorial cannot separate them even when civil authorities diverge. When appropriate, it is right and proper to combine the two, as in the case of sacred charges.

Perhaps this posture towards metal upon metal stems from the medieval Church's embrace of the arms of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem which appear as a silver (Argent) shield with a gold (Or) Jerusalem Cross upon it. Nevertheless, after the Latin Kingdom's creation, Or and Argent became generally accepted by the Church at Rome—an acceptance that also spread throughout the Latin Rite in subsequent centuries. In fact, nine popes through the ages have included metal upon metal in their pontifical coat of arms, including two recent pontiffs, Pope-Saint John XXIII (1958-1963) and John Paul I (1978), both of whom included 'in chief' the golden lion of St. Mark (a permissible titular charge) upon a silver field. It is interesting to note that in Italian papal blazonry, this design is referred to as '*d'argento al leone passante alato e nimbato al naturale*',

which has been translated as a nimbed lion passant Proper, but for all intense and purpose, these two recent papal arms serve as the foremost examples of the acceptability of metal upon metal in ecclesial armorial and the Holy See clearly views them as such.

In his work on the subject entitled *Or and Argent* (Van Duren, 1994), Archbishop Bruno Heim not only traces the foundation of the rule 'against' placing metal upon metal in heraldry but he likewise illustrates the Church's negation of this rule, illustrating how the Church viewed general insistence of this rule as an anathema, primarily on spiritual grounds. Included in Heim's tome are 60 black and white illustrations with proper hatching depicted, as well as, 360 color illustrations of arms granted through the centuries that include this practice by a variety of states including Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Poland. Oddly, Heim does not site the many papal arms as proof of the Church's acceptance of placing silver upon gold and vice versa in this work but those that he purposefully chose to include do site the acceptance of this custom amongst European aristocracy, churchmen, and in burgher arms across the continent through the centuries.

It is clear that most modern civil heraldists (and state heraldic authorities for that matter as well) continue to aggressively avoid this practice, but true ecclesial heraldists may not do so as both Catholic custom and the Latin Rite's ecclesial heraldic law both permit and encourage its usage in the inclusion of properly rendered spiritually symbolic charges of churchmen and institutions of every rank and office of the Roman Catholic Church. And to this I must add, that in 1986, but a mere thirty years ago, the then-Garter King of Arms (Sir Colin Cole) and the then-Clarenceaux King of Arms (Sir Anthony Wagner), in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, both designed and formally issued a royal Grant of Arms to one Raymond Andrews of Berkshire, England in which

design were placed both metal upon metal and color upon color. Surely the College of Heralds of the England therefore accepts this practice as well.

Unlike the recent case in England, however, in Catholic ecclesial armorial Or upon Argent, and vice versa, are generally found in theologically or spiritually inspired charges rather than in a metal charge placed upon a metal field. And thus is the case in the arms of Joseph V. Brennan, which does not blatantly use this process but which is true to Catholic symbolism in the charges selected for his coat of arms.”

### MOTTO

In heraldry, a motto has been a personal philosophy of life as well as a family dictum, and sometimes even a cry for battle. But in Church heraldry, a cleric's personal motto has always been intended to represent his personal spirituality and theologically based philosophy of life and is most frequently grounded in Sacred Scripture or in a prominent prayer or litany. For Joseph V. Brennan, this symbolism is found on the banderole (motto ribbon) in four simple yet powerful words:

« CARITAS · CHRISTI · URGET · NOS »

which translates generally into English as....for the love of Christ compels us. Found in Saint Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5:14-15) —According to Saint Paul it is the love of Christ that drives man to know Him. Paul's letter reads: *For the love of Christ compels us,*

*because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*



## THE EXTERNALS

There are external elements to every coat of arms design that must also be explained. This is also so in ecclesial heraldry. Surmounting the shield of a bishop is the pilgrim's hat, the heraldic emblem for all prelates and priests of the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church. For the rank of bishop, titular, and residential, the pilgrim's hat is always worked in deep forest green. For this rank and office in the episcopacy there are six tassels suspended on either side of the hat in a pyramidal style. The hat is properly known as the galero and the tassels take the name fiocchi. These cords (cordiere) and tassels are worked in the same hue of green and the interior of the hat is always rendered in red, and has been so for eleven centuries, red representing the clergy's possible martyrdom for the vocation that they have adopted in life.

Behind Bishop Brennan's coat of arms is found the episcopal cross. For the bishops, this cross has only one transverse arm, but for all archbishops the cross has a second, smaller transverse arm above. The cross may be jeweled or depicted as plain and most resembles the processional cross commonly used in liturgies. The episcopal cross found behind and above this coat of arms is worked in gold, and will be very familiar to Catholics. It is the Celtic Cross. Bishop Brennan was keen to recall his Irish birth and heritage in his coat of arms design. Within the cross proper

are found ancient Celtic knot designs specific to the early foundations of Christianity in Ireland. At center is found a faceted emerald stone in homage to the bishop's origins. As a consequence, Bishop Brennan's episcopal cross incorporates all of the Celtic symbolic references that he wished to include.

Overall, Bishop Brennan's coat of arms has remained faithful to the style of Church heraldry originally developed in the Middle Ages. It is this ancient style that the Church continues to demand in the seals of office of each diocesan bishop, and of the co-adjutors and the titular bishops as well, whose seals traditionally derive from the design of the personal coat of arms.



#### ABOUT THE HERALDIC DESIGNERS

James-Charles Noonan, Jr. is a well-known Church historian and ecclesiastical protocolist as well as one of the few Vatican trained heraldists at work today. He routinely works with the Holy See, with members of the College of Cardinals and the episcopacy. Noonan has published numerous books on these subjects, in the United States and Europe, including the bestselling opus *The Church Visible: The Ceremonial Life and Protocol of the Roman Catholic Church* (1996, Second Edition, 2012).

He holds several academic degrees and is an alumnus of numerous prestigious institutions in America and Europe. He has also been highly decorated for his achievements, having received nine orders of knighthood from foreign heads of state, royalty, and from the Vatican. Trained in ecclesial heraldry by the undisputed leaders of this field of study, namely the late Archbishops Bruno B. Heim, the private secretary of Pope John XXIII whose arms Heim designed along with the papal arms of Paul VI, John Paul I and Pope John Paul II and H.E. Cardinale, papal diplomat, author and heraldist, as well as the late Cardinal Jacques Martin (Prefect of the Papal Household during three pontificates), Mr. Noonan is now recognized as the leading Catholic heraldist of our own time. His select clients include cardinals, archbishops and bishops, and he has designed arms for basilicas, cathedrals, seminaries, shrines, and for abbots, priors, priests and minor prelates the world over. Mr. Noonan resides in Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania.

Linda Nicholson, who expertly paints the heraldic arms designed by James-Charles Noonan, Jr., completes the partnership of this unique team in Church service. Nicholson's talented renderings complement Noonan's rich designs. She is a Craft Painter of the prestigious Society of Heraldic Arts in England and paints grants of arms for the Governor General of Canada. According to Noonan, "Linda Nicholson is one of the great heraldic painters of our time and one of the few remaining experts in this craft". In addition to her artistic talents, Mrs. Nicholson holds a Master's Degree in Medieval Studies from the University of Toronto. She resides in Ontario.



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