Blazon

Sable, upon a cross fleuretty Or a helmet Argent; upon a chief of the second the eschewed cross and “M” of the arms of Venerable John Paul II between two open volumes of the third, edged Gules.

Significance

The episcopal heraldic achievement, or bishop's coat of arms, is composed of a shield, which is the central and most important part of the design, a scroll with a motto and the external ornamentation. The design is described (blazoned) as if the description was being given by the bearer (from behind) with the shield being worn on the left arm. Thus, it must be remembered, where it applies, as the device is viewed from the front that the terms sinister and dexter are reversed.

As a bishop without canonical jurisdiction (an auxiliary bishop), Bishop Kennedy's personal arms occupy the entire shield.

Drawing on the Irish heritage of his parents, Arthur and Helen (O'Rourke) Kennedy, the main portion of the design is a variation on the arms of the Kennedy family, that are normally composed of a black field on which are displayed three silver (white) helmets. For his variation, Bishop Kennedy has placed a single silver helmet on a golden (yellow) cross fleuretty, taken from the arms of the Archdiocese of Boston, the diocese His Excellency has served as a priest, and now as a bishop, and both of these charges are upon the black field of the Kennedy arms.

The upper one-third of the design, heraldically known as a “chief,” is gold (yellow). On this chief are two open books to reflect Bishop Kennedy's major priestly ministry as an educator, especially in the seminary setting, noting that His Excellency is Rector of Saint John Seminary, in Brighton. Between the two open books is the eschewed blue cross and “M” that formed the pontifical arms of Servant of God (Venerable) Pope John Paul II. By the use of these charges, His Excellency, Bishop Kennedy, acknowledges the profound influence of Pope John Paul II on the modern church, all founded on the scholasticism of the great theologians like Ambrose, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

For his motto, His Excellency Bishop Kennedy has selected the Latin phrase “UT COGNOSCANT TE.” This phrase from Saint John Gospel (John 17:3) expresses the profound directive of all Christian educators, that in their role, they pledge themselves to teach, for Christ, “SO THAT THEY MAY KNOW YOU.”

The achievement is completed by the external ornamentation which are a gold (yellow) processional cross, that is placed in back of the shield and which extends above and below the shield, and the pontifical hat, called a “galero,” with its six tassels in three rows on either side of the shield, all in green. These are the heraldic insignia of a prelate of the rank of bishop, by instruction of The Holy See, of March 31, 1969.