

Bishop coat of arms steeped in Catholic tradition



Veritas in Caritate – Truth in Love

The exterior is the traditional “framing” of a Bishop’s coat of arms. The left side of the crest stands for the Diocese of Cheyenne.

The right side represents Bishop Etienne:

At the top is a river, representing the rivers that have passed through his life;

The Ohio, Tiber (Rome), Potomac (Washington, DC), Mississippi (St. Paul), White (Indianapolis)

As well as the living stream of life, Jesus Christ.

The tree represents both the Etienne and Voges families;

The early generation of Etienne family were loggers, and the Voges family, carpentry and construction,

As well as the tree of life, the cross of Jesus Christ.

The sword is for St. Paul, and the book represents the Sacred Scriptures and Preaching.

The M is for Bishop Etienne’s devotion to the Blessed Mother.

The Sun symbolizes Christ, the Dawn from on High, as well as his general love of the outdoors.

A beginning in the 14th century

The use of a Bishop’s coat of arms goes back to the 14th century, and the Catholic Church has long used the heraldic devices. By the end of the 12th century, such coats of arms were common in England, France and Italy among the noble laity. The coat of arms is divided into the shield, and contains symbols (also called charges) a motto scroll and ornaments. There are certain rules for each rank and order within the Church.

Heraldry in general and ecclesiastical heraldry developed at the same time, but the use of heraldry for the Church first occurred with armorial bearings of a personal and family nature on Church seals and banners. The earliest seals bore the image of the owner of the seal, as did secular seals of knights and nobles. In the 1300s, seals began showing no more than the coat of arms, and the Church seal began to develop along the lines of secular seals. The earliest seals were unquestionably purely personal. In England in 1307, King Edward I said that every religious house should have a common seal. With that idea, came the notion of an impersonal coat of arms for that community, but it is unknown when the coats of arms began to appear.

What might be the most notable on a bishop’s coat of arms is the hat which surmounts the episcopal shield. It 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, both residential and titular, the Pilgrim’s Hat is worked in deep green, the true color of the Office of Bishop. For bishops, there are six tassels suspended on either side of the hat in a pyramidal style. The hat is properly known in the Church as the galero and the tassels take the name fiocchi. These, too, are worked in green for the rank of bishop.

Each bishop chooses his heraldic devices and design to his particular circumstances and spirituality.

Welcome Bishop Etienne

We are pleased to serve the Cheyenne Diocese.

Sacred Heart School of Theology is honored to serve the Diocese of Cheyenne, whose support has contributed to our position as the leading seminary for priestly vocations for men over 30.

We wish blessings on your ministry as we build on this relationship!



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