



Heraldic Achievement of

## **MOST REVEREND WILLIAM E. KOENIG**

Tenth Bishop of Wilmington

*Gules, crusilly bottony fitchy argent, a lion rampant Or, impaling per fess azure and vert, a wolf passant regardant argent collared and lined Or behind a lamb couchant of the last, in chief a dove volant recursant descendant in pale argent and issuant from the base an olive branch septuple-fructed Or.*

Designing his shield—the central element in what is formally called the *heraldic achievement*—a bishop has an opportunity to depict symbolically aspects of his life and heritage, and elements of the Catholic faith that are important to him. Every coat of arms also includes external elements that identify the rank of the bearer. The formal description of a coat of arms, known as the *blazon*, uses a technical jargon, derived from French and English terms, that allows the appearance and position of each element to be recorded precisely.

A diocesan bishop shows his commitment to the flock he shepherds by combining his personal coat of arms with that of the diocese, in a technique known as *impaling*. The shield is divided in half along the *pale* or central vertical line. The arms of the diocese appear on the *dexter* side — that is, on the side of the shield to the viewer's left, which would cover the right side (in Latin, *dextera*) of the person carrying the shield. The arms of the bishop are on the *sinister* side — the bearer's left, the viewer's right.

The arms of the Diocese of Wilmington were designed in 1926. They are based on the arms of Roger la Warr (died 1370), third Baron de la Warr, who bore *Gules, crusilly and a lion rampant argent* (a red shield strewn with white crosses, bearing a white lion). Thomas West, twelfth Baron de la Warr, also called "Lord Delaware," served as governor of the Jamestown Colony from 1610 to 1618. The Delaware River and Delaware Bay were named for him, which in turn gave their name to the Native American tribe that dwelled in the area, and to the colony of Delaware when it was established in 1704.

The white lion of the arms of the Barons de la Warr was recolored gold (*Or*) for the diocesan arms, recalling the arms of Pope Pius IX (reigned 1846-1878), who erected the Diocese of Wilmington in 1868. In addition to the three counties of the State of Delaware, the new diocese also comprised nine counties in the State of Maryland, as well as Accomack and Northampton Counties on the Eastern Shore of Virginia (which became part of the Diocese of Richmond in 1974). To commemorate the Maryland part of the diocese, the crosses from the arms of the Barons de la Warr were modified so that their three upper ends terminate in small rounded crosses (*bottony*), and the lower end terminates in a point (*fitchy*). Crosses *bottony* appear in the arms of Cecil Calvert, second Baron Baltimore (1605-1675), the founding proprietor of the Maryland colony in 1632.

Bishop Koenig's arms comprise a scene that is both personal and scriptural. The shield is divided horizontally and painted blue and green, creating a field on which are depicted a *lamb*, painted

gold, and a *wolf*, painted white. The lamb is a symbol of Saint Agnes, the patroness of the Diocese of Rockville Centre (New York), where the Bishop grew up and where he has served as a priest since his ordination in 1983. (In Latin, the name of the saint sounds like the word for lamb, *agnus*.) The Bishop served as parochial vicar of Saint Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre (1996-2000) and later as its rector (2009-2020).

The Bishop's baptismal patron saint, William of Vercelli (also known as William of Montevergine and William the Abbot; 1085-1142), is also the patron saint of the parish in Seaford, New York, where the Bishop first served as a pastor (2000-2009). St William was known to have worked many miracles, the most famous of which was the taming of a wolf. When he discovered that the beast had hunted and killed the donkey on which he relied for tasks around the monastery, St William commanded the wolf to take over the donkey's labors. This story is often recalled in art, particularly St William's statue in Saint Peter's Basilica, in which a wolf rests at his feet. The wolf is depicted here as *collared and lined*, further stressing his tame nature, yet he keeps watch over the lamb, as a bishop ought to keep close watch over the flock entrusted to his care (cf. 1 Pt 5:1-4).

At the top of the shield is a *dove*, representing the Holy Spirit descending upon the apostles and the Church. The Bishop served as Director of Vocations from 1989 to 1996, as well as Director of Ministry to Priests from 1990 to 1996. He has included the dove to recall both these ministries, as the Holy Spirit is the source of both the vocation of the priest and of the sacramental character imprinted at a priest's ordination by the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands.

The ministry of both priest and bishop is further represented by the *olive branch* sprouting from the base of the shield. It bears seven olives, symbolic of the seven sacraments of the Church. It also alludes to the ministry of a bishop to direct the sacramental life of the diocese (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 26), which is symbolized most clearly at the annual Chrism Mass, during which a bishop blesses olive oil for use as the Oil of Catechumens and the Oil of the Sick throughout the diocese, and consecrates perfumed olive oil as Sacred Chrism, used in the sacraments of initiation and ordination.

Taken together, the various charges on the Bishop's shield also form a pictorial representation of the prophecy contained in the eleventh chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse," the prophet proclaims, "and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa 11:1). This branch is the coming Messiah, who will be descended from King David. "And the Spirit of the Lord," represented here by the dove, "shall rest upon him" (v. 2), bestowing his seven-fold gifts. When the Messiah comes, he will usher in the Kingdom of God, which will be marked by unity and peace throughout creation, such that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb" (v. 6), and other natural enemies shall likewise live in harmony. The rest of the prophecy describes the rule of the Messiah – "with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth" (v. 4) – in terms that aptly describe the ministry of a bishop as well.

The shield is ensigned with external elements that identify the bearer as a bishop. A gold processional cross appears behind the shield. The *galero* or "pilgrim's hat" is used heraldically in various colors and with specific numbers of tassels to indicate the rank of a bearer of a coat of arms. A bishop uses a green *galero* with three rows of green tassels.