



## **Explanation of the Coat of Arms and Episcopal Motto**

### **Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer**

The bishop's coat of arms is composed of a shield with its symbols, a motto, scroll, and the external ornaments. In the United States, Roman Catholic residential bishops traditionally join their arms, in a heraldic practice known as impalement, with the existing arms of their new diocese. This is not the custom elsewhere in the Church but has been so in America for most of its ecclesial history. Keeping with this custom, the arms of Bishop Gainer are now joined in impalement to those of Harrisburg.

The heraldic device of the See of Harrisburg is a compellation of the arms of William Penn's family, the founders of Pennsylvania, and the family of John Harris of Yorkshire, England, who, in 1712, first settled the area on the Susquehanna River, later named for them as Harris Ferry, which later took the name Harrisburg.

The shield appears in silver and is divided by a Latin Cross in red. Upon this cross appears a silver shamrock in honor of the titular cathedral of Harrisburg: Saint Patrick of Ireland.

In a chief sable, that is to say a black field in the shape of a bar that appears at the top of the Harrisburg arms, are two plates, or silver balls also known in heraldry as roundels, assumed from the Penn family arms. Between them appears a silver crescent from the Harris family achievement but which in Catholic heraldry also represents the image of the Blessed Virgin under the title of the Immaculate Conception, a title for Our Lady entrusted to the Church in America naming her Protectress of our nation.

The personal arms of Bishop Gainer, seen on the right side of the shield, reflect his life and his heritage. These arms are composed of a red field on which is displayed a silver (white) bar which is encircled by a golden (yellow) ring. This is the dominant configuration, honoring Saint Catherine of Siena, of the arms of the bishop's home: the Diocese of Allentown, Pennsylvania. Above the bar is a silver pine tree and below the bar are the three silver hills with the golden double-crossmember that is known as the "Cross of Lorraine." These eastern European (Baden and Slovak) charges are used to honor the heritage that has come to the bishop from his parents.

For his motto, Bishop Gainer has selected the phrase, "Ex de plenitudine...gratiam pro gratia." This phrase, taken from Saint John's Gospel (John 1:16), expresses the profound belief for each Christian that all we ever need, the life of God within, comes to us from the unending source of all goodness, that is, the Lord, for "from His fullness, grace upon grace."

The device is completed with the external ornaments which are the processional cross, which is placed in back of the shield and which extends above and below the shield, and a pontifical hat, called a "gallero," 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.