

Heraldic Achievement of
MOST REVEREND ANDRZEJ J.
ZGLEJSZEWSKI
Titular Bishop of Nicives
Auxiliary Bishop of Rockville Centre



Per fess argent and gules, a saltire between three crosses coupé and in base a fleur-de-lis all counterchanged, a bordure per fess azure and Or.

In designing the shield—the central element in what is formally called the heraldic achievement—a Bishop has an opportunity to depict symbolically various aspects of his own life and heritage, and particular elements of Catholic faith and devotion. The formal description of a coat of arms, known as the blazon, uses a technical language, derived from medieval French and English terms, which allows the appearance and position of each element

in the achievement to be recorded precisely.

The symbolism to be found in Bishop Zglejszewski's coat of arms begins with the colors, also called tinctures. The major part of the shield is painted white (argent) over red (gules), which recalls the national flag and coat of arms of Poland, where the Bishop was born. The blue (azure) found in the top half of the border joins these first two tinctures to recall the national colors of the United States of America, to which he immigrated in 1987. The gold (Or) of the lower half joins the white to recall the colors of the Holy See. Blue and gold, together recalling the sea and sand of the island diocese, are the primary tinctures of the coat of arms of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, where he was ordained a priest in 1990 and which he will now serve as Auxiliary Bishop.

The color blue has long been associated with Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary; its use at the top of the shield recalls that she is Queen of Heaven and Help of Christians, who spreads her protective mantle over her children. Our Lady is also symbolized by the fleur-

de-lis at the bottom of the shield. This stylized lily has been used for many centuries to recall her virginal purity. Placed on the shield together with three Crosses, it alludes also to Mary, the faithful disciple, standing at the foot of the Cross of her Son on Calvary.

The saltire or “X” shape in the center of the shield is also known as Saint Andrew’s Cross, after the Apostle who, according to tradition, was crucified on a Cross in this shape. Saint Andrew is the Bishop’s baptismal patron. Like the shield itself, the saltire is divided across the middle, in an arrangement called counterchanging: where the shield is red, it is painted white, and is red where the shield is white.

This coloration allows for another layer of symbolism, in each of the parts of the saltire. The white bottom half of the saltire becomes a depiction of the carpenter’s square, a traditional symbol of Saint Joseph, the Husband of Mary. The carpenter’s square appears to cover and protect the fleur-de-lis, symbolizing Saint Joseph’s protection both of Our Lady and of the Universal Church. The top half of the saltire, painted red, reminds one of the Holy Spirit, and the grace that he brings by his descent upon the newborn Church at Pentecost. The Bishop has dedicated much of his ministry to the study and service of Divine Worship, and this part of the saltire also recalls the grace of the Sacraments which is given to the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

The two crosses on either side of the saltire are also counterchanged, and symbolize not only the crosses on Calvary but also the passion and martyrdom of Saint Agnes, the patron of the Diocese of Rockville Centre. This heroic young woman faced martyrdom at the age of 13 in Rome; tradition says she was turned in to the authorities by suitors she had spurned because she made a vow of virginity to Christ. She bore a double cross: the “white martyrdom” of purity, and the “red martyrdom” that involved the shedding of her blood.

The scroll below the shield bears the Bishop’s motto: *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*. These were Our Lady’s words to the Angel Gabriel, “May it be done to me according to your word.” The occasion for this humble submission to the Will of God was the Annunciation, the feast day on which Bishop Zglejszewski was ordained a Bishop.

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.