



The Formal

BLAZON

of the

Academic and Ecclesial Institutional Arms

of

HOLY SPIRIT COLLEGE

Atlanta in Georgia

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~ *ARMS PROPER* ~

AZURE, between three Fleur de Lys, one in bend in the Dexter chief point, one in bend Sinister in the Sinister chief point, one in pale in center base point OR, on a nimbus set around the rim with three equidistant bosses OR, the dove of the Holy Spirit descending ARGENT flammant PROPER.

~ *CREST* ~

On a torse of the colors ARGENT and AZURE a lamp of learning OR, its flames PROPER



## THE HERALDIC ACHIEVEMENT

~ *The Coat of Arms* ~

A heraldic achievement comprises both the coat of arms proper and also the external elements that are permitted to the bearer of the arms. The externals are similar for all coat of arms designs in any given class of person or institution. The shield, or arms, however, is unique to each person and certainly to each institution.

The shield, or coat of arms, of the Holy Spirit College in Atlanta in Georgia, strictly adheres to the rules of Catholic heraldry in that it includes emblems, known in heraldry as charges, specific to the titular (title) of the school and, if desired, homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Only the titular saint (in this case the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity) and the homage to the Mother of God are ever permitted.

The guardians of the Holy Spirit College in commissioning this new heraldic design were steadfast in their intention to remain faithful to Roman Catholic heraldic law. And so, the arms can be described in the following manner. The shield has a field of blue, not only the color of the Blessed Virgin but also the secular symbolic color for philosophy and thus teaching. Upon this shield are found three Fleur de Lys in gold. The Fleur de Lys, known also as the lily of France, is one of the heraldic emblems assigned to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Three, rather than one single Fleur de Lys, were selected to represent the relationship enjoyed by the Blessed Virgin to all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To accomplish this each of the three Fleur de Lys rest at one of the three points of the shield. One appears at the top left (known in heraldry as Dexter Chief Point), one appears at the top right (known in heraldry as Sinister Chief Point) and the last appears at the base point in the bottom of the shield. Those at the top face downward towards the center of the coat of arms in deference to the appearance there of the emblem of the Holy Spirit, Third Person of the Triune God. That resting in the bottom points upward for the same purpose.

The main emblem or charge of the Holy Spirit College design according to the law must be one that represents the title of the institution and so in this design the titular emblem had to be one representing the Holy Spirit.

James-Charles Noonan, Jr, the heraldic designer, created a new emblem specific for this design, never to appear in another coat of arms in future. This emblem will be forever associated with just Holy Spirit College. The new charge comprises a composite of the three distinct symbolic emblems acceptable for the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church: the descending dove, the tongues of fire, and the golden halo marked with the Trinity. Inspired by the *triquetra* a three arched nimbus with a triangular interior the Holy Spirit nimbus, or halo is quite unique. To the knowledge of the designer, these three emblems have never before been combined into one distinct design. The Holy Spirit coat of arms emblem can best be described in lay terms as follows:

A descending dove, youthful, powerful yet gentle, representing the Holy Spirit as it descended upon Mary at the Annunciation and again above Christ at His baptism in the River Jordan appears upon a field of flames, representing the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit as these appeared above the heads and within the souls of the remaining Apostles at Pentecost. The flames are depicted as proper, red

and gold, representing both the Wisdom of God and His Might. The entire emblem is encircled by a nimbus, a halo so special as to be assigned only to the Triune God. Although round, representing the infinity of God, it is not round in a conventional way. Rather, it has a shape interrupted at three equidistant places by circular interruptions, known in heraldry as bosses. Each of these represents one of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The Father is found at the head, center and above all. The Son is to His right but below Him, the Spirit to His lower left. Both Son and Spirit are equal but different and the spacing between all Three is equal from one to the next. The nimbus is worded in gold as in ecclesial heraldry gold represents Divine wisdom, direction, and omnipotence. Together this Holy Spirit College emblem, unique in the world, fully encompasses the theology of the Catholic Church and fully adheres to the rules set forth by Rome in regards to the symbolism permitted a Catholic institution of advanced learning.

~ *The Crest* ~

### *The Lamp of Learning*

The enflamed lamp has been the universal symbol of learning since the early ninth century and the foundation of such universities as the University of Bologna founded in AD 1088, the University of Paris (founded in AD 1160), and in AD 1289 the University of Montpellier. Entering Roman Catholic academic heraldry by the passage of the first millennia, the inflamed lamp was always depicted in gold with a light of golden flames proper, that is to say rendered in red and gold. The lamp, because of the light that its flames shed, represents wisdom, piety, and inspired learning. It first appeared in general academic use because all universities in the west in through to the end of the Renaissance were Roman Catholic in foundation, operation and philosophy. The church introduced it early-on because the lamp of learning was described in Sacred Scriptures as being the Wisdom of God lighting the path of the faithful. Scriptures also cite this lamp in the parable

describing the dichotomy between the wise and the foolish virgins, stating that it is the lamp of wisdom that lit the pathway of the wise. Once the formal rules of Catholic heraldry were formulated in the twelfth century, the lamp of wisdom became the unifying symbol of all colleges and universities remaining so until today.

The lamp, alternately known as the lamp of *Wisdom* and also as the lamp of *Learning*, rests upon a *torse* which is sometimes properly referred to as the wreath in general heraldic terminology. This torse is always rendered to represent two distinct pieces of clothe twisted together to form a resting place for the crest proper. This design came into heraldry in the Middle Ages from the actual scarves used by knights in battle. In heraldry there are two colors, or two scarves, entwined. These are always made up of the main two colors on the shield of the coat of arms. In the Holy Spirit College heraldic achievement, the two main colors are blue (Azure) and white (Argent), which is actually a metal rather than a color or hue. And so, the Lamp of Learning rests upon the torse made up of the two main colors of the Holy Spirit College shield of arms.

The flames, always rendered as proper, that is to say in both red and gold, represent the inspiration and learning inflamed within the hearts of all the students enrolled throughout time at Holy Spirit College. It is in these burning flames, almost akin to an eternal flame never dying, that each member of the Holy Spirit College community shall recall the spirit and commitment to advanced learning as embodied by the generous founders of this ecclesial academic community in Atlanta in Georgia.

~ *The Academic Wreath* ~

Every coat of arms design has certain external elements that form a part of the heraldic achievement but which do not form a part of what became known as a Coat of Arms. These external elements differ by law according to the rank of the person or institution bearing them. In the church, strict rules, or rubrics, mandate what is permissible and what is forbidden to each rank of person and institution in the church and so no two classes of person or body can be the same. Roman Catholic colleges and universities must conform to such rubrics as much as must cardinals, bishops, and priests.

For universities and colleges, the external element mandate for, or permitted to, these academic bodies is the imperial wreath. This wreath originated in the Roman Empire but was assumed into church use early in the third century once the Emperor Constantine converted to the faith. It has remained the formal external element for all Roman Catholic institutions ever since. The imperial wreath, which later became more commonly known as the academic wreath, is an un-ending circle of greenery, most commonly made of laurel leaves, which the Holy Spirit design incorporates. As a never ending circle, this symbolizes the process of learning in every person's life, from birth until death, as much as it represents the commitment to the Catholic faith by those baptized into it. Its roundness was the early impetus for official seals of office. In the ancient Roman custom, the academic wreath continues to be bound by ribbons in six places, one obscured by the Lamp of Learning. For Catholic universities and colleges the colors of these ribbons has been white (silver) and gold since the eighteenth century when the Papal States adopted these heavenly attributes as the 'colors' of the papal flag. It is in honor of the papacy, therefore, that its colors are repeated in the ribbons binding the wreath surrounding the arms.

Ecclesiastical Attitude Concerning  
*OR* and *ARGENT*

Or and Argent, the two heraldic metals depicted in art as yellow and white (as in the case of the flag of the Vatican City State) seldom appear together in heraldry, unless separated by color (properly known as heraldic tincture). Although this has been more or less a steadfast, almost 'sacred' rule in civil, state, and familial armorial, this rubric in heraldry has never applied to the armorial of the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is true that in state heraldry, it is almost always forbidden to overlay the two metals, one on top of the other, just as it would be to lay one color upon another. But the Church of Rome never adopted this rule. In fact, it not only generally ignored it, despite centuries of criticism for doing so, particularly from northern Europe, but it all but viewed this prohibition as an abrogation of proper design methodology in creation and implementation of the theological symbolism of Christian charges which forms an integral part of all Catholic ecclesial heraldic design.

According to longstanding Church custom, gold and silver are heavenly attributes, metals that represent purity, innocence, wisdom and Godliness. As such law in ecclesial armorial cannot separate them even when civil authorities diverge. When appropriate, it is right and proper to combine the two, as in the case of sacred charges.

Perhaps this posture towards metal upon metal stems from the medieval Church's embrace of the arms of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem which appear as a silver (Argent) shield with a gold (Or) Jerusalem Cross upon it. Nevertheless, after the Latin Kingdom's creation, Or and Argent became generally accepted by the Church at Rome—an acceptance that also spread throughout the Latin Rite in subsequent centuries. In fact, nine popes through the ages have included metal upon metal in their pontifical coat of arms, including two recent pontiffs, Blessed John XXIII (1958-1963) and John Paul I (1978), both of whom included 'in chief' the golden lion of St. Mark (a permissible titular charge) upon a silver field. It is interesting to note that in Italian papal blazonry, this design is referred to as *'d'argento al leone passante alato e nimbato al naturale'*, which has been translated as a nimbed lion passant Proper, but for all intense and purpose, these two recent papal arms serve as the foremost examples of the acceptability of metal upon metal in ecclesial armorial and the Holy See clearly views them as such.

In his work on the subject entitled *Or and Argent* (Van Duren, 1994), Archbishop Bruno Heim not only traces the foundation of the rule 'against' placing metal upon metal in heraldry but he likewise illustrates the Church's negation of this rule, illustrating how the Church viewed general insistence of this rule as an anathema, primarily on spiritual grounds. Included in Heim's tome are 60 black and white illustrations with proper hatching depicted, as well as, 360 color illustrations of arms granted through the centuries that include this practice by a variety of states including Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Poland. Oddly, Heim does not site the many papal arms as proof of the Church's acceptance of placing silver upon gold and *vice versa* in this work but those that he purposefully chose to include do site the acceptance of this custom amongst European aristocracy, churchmen, and in burgher arms across the continent through the centuries.

It is clear that most modern civil heraldists (and state heraldic authorities for that matter as well) continue to aggressively avoid this practice, but true ecclesial heraldists may not do so as both Catholic custom and the Latin Rite's ecclesial heraldic law both permit and encourage its usage in

the inclusion of properly rendered spiritually symbolic charges of churchmen and institutions of every rank and office of the Roman Catholic Church. And to this I must add, that in 1986, but a mere twenty years ago, the then-Garter King of Arms (Sir Colin Cole) and the then-Clarenceaux King of Arms (Sir Anthony Wagner), in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, both designed and formally issued a royal Grant of Arms to one Raymond Andrews of Berkshire, England in which design were placed both metal upon metal and color upon color. Surely the College of Heralds of the England therefore accepts this practice as well.

Unlike the recent case in England, however, in Catholic ecclesial armorial Or upon Argent, and vice versa, are generally found in theologically or spiritually inspired charges rather than in a metal charge placed upon a metal field. And thus is the case in the arms of the Holy Spirit College in Atlanta in Georgia, true to Catholic symbolism in the charges selected for his coat of arms.”

No motto is ever permitted a Roman Catholic institution.

#### ABOUT THE HERALDIC DESIGNERS

James-Charles Noonan, Jr. is a well-known Church historian and ecclesiastical protocolist as well as one of the most famous ecclesial heraldists at work today. He routinely works with the Holy See, with members of the College of Cardinals and the episcopacy. Noonan has published numerous books on these subjects, in the United States and Europe, including the best selling opus *The Church Visible: The Ceremonial Life and Protocol of the Roman Catholic Church* (Viking, 1996). He holds several academic degrees and is an alumnus of numerous prestigious institutions in America and Europe. He has also been highly decorated for his achievements, having received nine orders of knighthood from foreign heads of state, royalty, and from the Vatican.

Trained in ecclesial heraldry by the undisputed leaders of this field of study, namely the late Archbishops Bruno B. Heim, the private secretary of Pope John XXIII whose arms Heim designed along with the papal arms of Paul VI, John Paul I and Pope John Paul II (of beloved memory) and H.E. Cardinale, papal diplomat, author and heraldist, as well as the late Cardinal Jacques Martin (Prefect of the Papal Household during three pontificates), Mr. Noonan is now recognized at the leading Catholic heraldist of our own time. His select clients include cardinals, archbishops and bishops, and he had designed arms for basilicas, cathedrals, seminaries, shrines, and for abbots, priors, priests and minor prelates the world over. Mr. Noonan resides in Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania.

Linda Nicholson, who expertly paints the heraldic arms designed by James-Charles Noonan, Jr., completes the partnership of this unique team in Church service. Nicholson's talented renderings complement Noonan's rich designs. She is a Craft Painter of the prestigious Society of Heraldic Arts in England. According to Noonan, "Linda Nicholson is one of the great heraldic painters of our time and one of the few remaining experts in this craft". In addition to her artistic talents, Mrs. Nicholson holds a Master's Degree in Medieval Studies from the University of Toronto.

Noonan is known for his designs for cardinals, archbishops and bishops, for abbots and canons, and for monsignors and priests of all ranks. He likewise has designed for numerous dioceses, cathedrals, basilicas, parish churches, for Catholic hospitals, universities and other institutions, for convents, monasteries and abbeys as well as for Papal knights and ladies.

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