

## **Coat of Arms**

### **The Most Reverend Robert J. Baker, S.T.D.**

### **Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama**

#### **BLAZON**

Arms impaled. *Dexter*: Argent, a bend of five lozenges azure between in chief a sword and in base the Cross of Saint Chad both gules. *Sinister*: Vert, the Great Cross of Saint Augustine argent between, in dexter a garb of three or, and in sinister, a palm tree of the third, in base on the sun in his splendor also of the third, an anchor erect azure.

#### **MOTTO**

For his motto Bishop Baker chooses the words “Rejoicing in Hope” which are adapted from Saint Paul’s letter to the Romans, 12:12: “Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.” This is Christ’s gift of grace to us all.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE**

The arms to the viewer’s left (Shield bearer’s right, from behind the shield) are the escutcheon of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama. This includes elements from the arms of the English city after which the Alabama city is named. The five blue lozenges or diamond shapes charges appear in the arms of Birmingham in the U.K.; the red cross of Saint Chad reminds us of the titular saint of the metropolitan cathedral of the archdiocese of Birmingham in the U.K., and the upright sword is the symbol of Saint Paul, patron of the Birmingham, Alabama cathedral.

Bishop Baker impales his personal heraldic device onto the coat of arms of his diocese to represent his governance of the people of God in the Church of Birmingham in Alabama. Impalement also represents the mystical “marriage” between the local Ordinary and his jurisdiction. The shield of arms is ensigned with the green heraldic hat which has sixteen “houppes” or tassels depending from either side denoting the hierarchical rank of a diocesan bishop.

The Bishop’s personal arms are composed of “charges” or elements which have religious, personal, and family significance. The green field represents growth in the Faith as suggested by the liturgical color for “Ordinary Time” when the Church teaches us to mature in our faith commitment.

The *Great Cross* is located in the city of Saint Augustine, Florida; Bishop Baker’s diocese of ordination to the priesthood, and it denotes the location of the first Mass celebrated on this continent. It is the cross of our redemption and its special design and location remind us of the beginnings of the Faith in our country. The garb or sheaf of wheat appears as three bundles bound together and recalls the state of Ohio, where the Bishop was born and educated for the priesthood. His family roots are in that state. The three parts of the garb speak of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity which the Bishop wishes to be the foundation of his episcopal ministry. The palm tree suggests Florida and South Carolina, the two states where Bishop Baker has lived out his ministry.

The “sun in his splendor” denotes the Risen Christ who is our hope and salvation. He gives us light and life by the grace of redemption which should shine in our lives. The anchor is an ancient symbol of hope, a central theme in the Bishop’s life and ministry. Its blue color represents the Blessed Virgin Mary who is described in the “Salve Regina” as “our life, our sweetness, and our *hope*.”

### **DESIGN**

The Bishop’s Coat of Arms was designed by the Reverend James Parker, a retired priest of the diocese of Charleston. The artwork is by the Reverend Larry D. Lossing, a retired priest of the Diocese of Orlando, with assistance from Rodney Davidson of the Diocese of Birmingham.