

**Heraldic Achievement of  
MOST REVEREND MICHAEL J. FITZGERALD  
Titular Bishop of Tamallula  
Auxiliary to the Archbishop of Philadelphia**



*Argent a saltire gules on a chief engrailed sable a balance suspended from a cross pattée between two antique lamps argent enflamed 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 larger part of the shield is painted white (*argent*) and marked with a large X-shape, called a *saltire*, in red (*gules*). This simple design has been used as the coat of arms of the Fitzgerald family in Ireland since at least the 14th Century. The red saltire on a white field is sometimes referred to as the Cross of Saint Patrick, and the Bishop uses it here to honor his family heritage.

A horizontal stripe at the top of the shield is known as a *chief*; here it is painted black (*sable*). The central charge on the chief is a *balance* or pair of scales, a familiar symbol of justice under the law. Bishop Fitzgerald has earned doctorates in both Civil and Canon Law, and has served the Archdiocese of Philadelphia as a judge of the Metropolitan Tribunal, as the founding director of the Office for Legal Services, and in the roles of Promoter of Justice and Judicial Vicar.

The scales are also a familiar attribute of the Bishop's baptismal patron, Saint Michael, symbolizing the archangel's traditional role of assisting the Lord with the judgment of souls on the Last Day (cf. Matthew 25:31; Revelation 20:12). The scales stand between two lighted lamps, symbols of that Wisdom which is a gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Matthew 25:1-13; Isaiah 11:2), and which "teaches justice" (Wisdom 8:7).

The color and design of the chief alludes to Saint Thomas More, the patron saint of lawyers and statesmen. As Lord Chancellor of England (1529-32), Saint Thomas was entitled to a coat of arms, and bore *Argent a chevron engrailed between three moorcocks sable*. The chief on the Bishop's coat of arms is *engrailed*, drawn with concave indentations, in the same manner as the chevron on Saint Thomas More's.

The design of the engrailing gives a cloud-like shape to the white part of the field at the top of the saltire. This may be seen as an allusion to Heaven, where all justice and wisdom will be fulfilled in the Beatific Vision, and the light of God's glory will shine upon all (cf. Revelation 22:23). The design of the shield as a whole is a reminder that the light of Heaven is attained only by free acceptance of the Cross in this world: a sentiment that is likewise expressed in the Bishop's motto, *Per Crucem ad Lucem*, "through the Cross to the Light".

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.