



Heraldic Achievement of MOST REVEREND TIMOTHY C. SENIOR

Titular Bishop of Floriana
Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia

*Azure a crozier Or and a pilgrim's staff
argent saltirewise, in chief a mullet of the
last, a bordure compony argent and sable.*

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 aspects 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 colors—called *tinctures*—that Bishop Senior has chosen for his coat of arms allude to the arms of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, where the primary tinctures are also white (*argent*) and blue (*azure*). The star in the top center of the shield (*in chief*) here represents the Blessed Virgin Mary. The star is used in the same place and for the same purpose on the arms of the Archdiocese, in which Bishop Senior has served as a priest since 1985.

The new bishop has long had a love for music, and acknowledges that he began to hear and understand the Lord calling him to the priesthood while studying piano and organ. The roots of Bishop Senior's vocation are symbolized in a divided border (*bordure compony*) around the shield, painted alternately white and black (*sable*), reminiscent of piano keys.

The central charges on the shield are placed *saltirewise*; that is, they cross each other diagonally in the form of an “X”. Each is a type of staff, and each refers to a passage in the New Testament Letters which begins (in the Latin Vulgate version of the Scriptures) with the word *senior*, which is translated “elder”. As such, they are an example of “canting arms”—a design which incorporates a pun on the bearer's name.

In his First Letter, Saint Peter addresses the leaders of the Church: “To the elders (*seniores*) among you, I, a fellow elder . . . make this appeal: God's flock is in your midst. Give it a shepherd's care” (*1 Peter 5:1–2*). The responsibility of the bishop to tend Christ's sheep is aptly represented by the crozier, or pastoral staff, which is derived from a shepherd's crook, and is depicted here in gold (*Or*). When he receives the crozier, a newly-ordained bishop is exhorted to “keep watch over the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as Bishop to govern the Church of God.”

Saint Paul wrote two letters to his disciple and companion Saint Timothy, the Bishop Senior's baptismal patron. He appointed Timothy the first Bishop of Ephesus, and in the first of his letters Saint Paul advises him regarding his care of the faithful. “Do not rebuke an older man (*seniorem*),” he writes, “but appeal to him as a father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters with complete purity” (*1 Timothy 5:1–2*). The bishop's role to provide support and encouragement for all the members of the community, especially those who are vulnerable and weak in body or spirit, is symbolized by the *pilgrim's staff* or walking stick. Depicted here in silver (*argent*), the staff represents not only Saint Timothy, but also the years of leadership and service that Bishop Senior has given to Catholic Human Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, as well as numerous other Catholic healthcare and social service ministries in this region.

Taken together, the two staves may be seen to signify the necessary connection between the spiritual and corporal works of mercy—the responsibility of the bishop to tend to all of the needs of the people he is called to serve. The painting of the crossed staves in gold and silver alludes to the crossed keys of Saint Peter, long recognized as a symbol of the Holy Father, and speaks of the bishop's fidelity to the Bishop of Rome, the successor of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

The motto, placed on a scroll below the shield, is a phrase from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy. The apostle writes now from Rome, where he has been imprisoned by Imperial officials because of his preaching of the Gospel. But he has not lost hope even in these dire circumstances, he insists, for “*scio cui credidi*”—“I know him in whom I have believed” (*2 Timothy 1:12*). Reading the motto in the light of the charges on the shield, it becomes clear that the Christian comes to know the Lord through acts of faith, hope and love of God, which are in turn made concrete in acts of charity to the poor and the weak, whom the Lord himself calls his brothers and sisters (*cf. Matthew 25:40*).

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.