



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Bishop Walter A. Hurley Personal Coat of Arms

For his Coat of Arms, Bishop Hurley has adopted a design that speaks of his ancestry and his ministry as a priest and bishop. The basic gold and blue shield is divided by a red band against which the following symbols have been applied. At the top, against a gold (Or) background, is placed a “galley”, an ancient sailing ship, in this case colored blue (Azure).

This symbol is adapted from the Coat of Arms of the Canadian Province of New Brunswick, the ancestral home and birthplace of Bishop Hurley.

By extension, the ship also represents the Holy Church, the Bark of Peter. The full sail and the billowing flags indicate that this heraldic ship, like the Church, is en route to a destination driven by the winds of the Holy Spirit. The oars tell of the human effort it takes to navigate the ship, in cooperation with the Divine plan.



The red (Gules) center band contains three gold “frets” (pins). This device comes from the Hurley family Coat of Arms originating in Waterford, Ireland. In heraldic terms, a fret is a symbol of perseverance. The red background speaks of a martyr-like faith and courage.

The blue (Azure) bottom portion of the shield contains a star-like symbol formed by seven swords pointed toward each other. This references the parish of Our Lady of Sorrows where, as a priest of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Bishop Hurley ministered at the time of his call to the episcopacy by Pope John Paul II. “Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted. And you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’” (Luke 2:34-35). This symbol also indicates Bishop Hurley’s reverence for the Blessed Virgin Mary and his prayer that she who knew anxiety and suffering for the sake of Christ, would call us through the sorrows of this life to ultimate joy in Christ.

The gallero which tops this Coat of Arms has been a part of clerical apparel for more than a thousand years. When colored green (Vert) in heraldic terms, it indicates that this particular Coat of Arms belongs to a bishop. The green cord and green tassels, that is “fiocchi”, which emanate from the gallero are a device signifying clerical rank, with bishops being afforded the use of three rows of fiocchi. In Bishop Hurley’s Coat of Arms, the gallero cord has been deliberately designed in a particularly intricate pattern, indicating the complex tasks often given to him to unravel.

The Jerusalem Cross behind the shield indicates that Bishop Hurley is a Knight Commander of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, an honor bestowed on him by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II in 1994 at the request of Adam Cardinal Maida. This is one of the few armorial achievements allowed to be displayed in clerical heraldry. The Jerusalem Cross consists of a large “Cross Potent”, called that because of its resemblance to an ancient crutch and symbolic of the Savior’s power to heal diseases of body and soul. The four smaller crosses tucked into the corners of the Cross Potent indicate the four cardinal compass points from which the Gospel spread from the city of Jerusalem.



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This heraldic insignia of a prelate of the rank of bishop conforms to the instruction of the Holy See of March 31, 1969. Bishop Hurley's Coat of Arms was researched and designed by Fr. Timothy Pelc of the Archdiocese of Detroit, who also supplied the above heraldic information and commentary.