ABOUT THE PAPAL COAT OF ARMS OF POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis' papal arms include the miter, the crossed keys of gold and silver, and the red cords. These denote the Pope's legal and spiritual authority over the Church.

The blue shield is unique. Pope Francis decided to keep his previous coat of arms, chosen at the time of his episcopal consecration in Argentina. It is notable in its simplicity. At the top of the shield is the emblem of the Pope's religious order, the Society of Jesus: a radiant sun carrying the letters in red, "IHS." The letter "H" is crowned by a cross; beneath the letters are three black nails. Lower down on the shield there is a star and spikenard flower. The star, according to ancient armorial tradition, symbolizes the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ and the Church; while the spikenard symbolizes Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. (In traditional Hispanic iconography, Saint Joseph is shown with a vine in his hand.) By including these images on his shield, the Pope communicated his special devotion to the Blessed Mother and to Saint Joseph.

THE MOTTO

The motto of Pope Francis is taken from a passage from the venerable Bede, *Homily* 21 (CCL 122, 149-151), on the feast of Matthew, which reads: *Vidit ergo Jesus publicanum, et quia miserando atque eligendo vidit, ait illi, 'Sequere me'.* [Jesus therefore sees the tax collector, and since he sees by having mercy and by choosing, he says to him, 'follow me'.]

This homily is a tribute to Divine Mercy and is read during the Liturgy of the Hours on the feast of Saint Matthew. This has particular significance in the life and spirituality of the Pope. In fact, on the feast of Saint Matthew in 1953, the young Jorge Bergoglio experienced, at the age of 17, in a very special way, the loving presence of God in his life. Following confession, he felt his heart touched and he sensed the descent of the Mercy of God, who with a gaze of tender love, called him to religious life, following the example of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

Therefore, he chose as his episcopal motto the words of St Bede: *miserando atque eligendo* (pitying and choosing). He chose to keep this in his papal coat of arms.