



The Holy See

The Coat of Arms
of Pope Francis



DESCRIPTION OF THE COAT OF ARMS

"miserando atque eligendo"

THE SHIELD

Pope Francis has decided to keep his previous coat of arms, chosen at the time of his episcopal consecration and marked by linear simplicity.

The blue shield is surmounted by the symbols of papal dignity, the same as those used by his Predecessor Benedict XVI (the mitre above crossed keys of gold and silver, bound by the red cord). At the top of the shield is the emblem of Pope's religious order, the Society of Jesus: a radiant sun carrying the letters in red, *ihs*, the monogram of Jesus. 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 St Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. In traditional Hispanic iconography, St Joseph is shown with a vine in his hand. By bearing these images on his shield, the Pope communicates his special devotion to the Most Holy Virgin and to St 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 St Matthew. This has particular significance in the life and spirituality of the Pope. In fact, on the Feast of St 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 St Ignatius of Loyola.

Once he had been ordained a Bishop, H.E. Mons. Bergoglio, in memory of this event that signified the beginning of his total consecration to God in His Church, chose, as his motto and as his programme of life, the words of St Bede: *miserando atque eligendo*. This he has chosen to keep in his papal coat of arms.