



Coat of Arms of Archbishop José Avelino Bettencourt

DESCRIPTION



At the focal point of the arms is a triple, inlaid eight-pointed star in the shape of a Greek cross, which recalls the words of Saint Paul in the Letter to the Philippians: *“You will shine among them like stars in the sky, as you hold firmly to the word of life”* (2:15-16).

The threefold star evokes the Church’s faith in the Triune God, as expressed in the ancient Nicene Creed. Its cross-like shape alludes to the mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, while the third inlay represents the Holy Spirit, Patron of the Azoreans. The eight points of the star refer to Mary, the Mother of God, and to the mystery of the Incarnation. Mary is present

as Mother of the Church and Patroness of Lusitania (*Terra Mariae*), also invoked since the seventeenth century as “*Our Lady of the Bettencourts*”.

The chevron is the heraldic symbol of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, Patron of Canada and the Archdiocese of Ottawa, as well as the Archbishop’s namesake.

A black lion, the symbol of courage, rampant on an argent shield, is from the arms of the first Bettencourt to be granted this distinction in the later part of the first millennium. It is found among the seventy-two shields in the Hall of the Coats of Arms in the National Palace of Sintra (Portugal), and appears etched in basalt over the house of the same name in Angra do Heroismo (Azores).

The two lions on the chevron allude to the two branches of the Bettencourt genealogy united by the marriage of the Archbishop’s parents (Silveira Bettencourt and Soares Bettencourt).

The Latin motto – FIDES SPES CHARITAS – is drawn from the conclusion of Saint Paul’s hymn to love in the First Letter to the Corinthians: “*Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love*” (13:13). The deep red colour of the shield symbolizes love, strength and faithful service.

