

**DIOCESE OF  
BROOKLYN**  
SERVING BROOKLYN AND QUEENS

# Press Kit 2024

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Diocese of Brooklyn  
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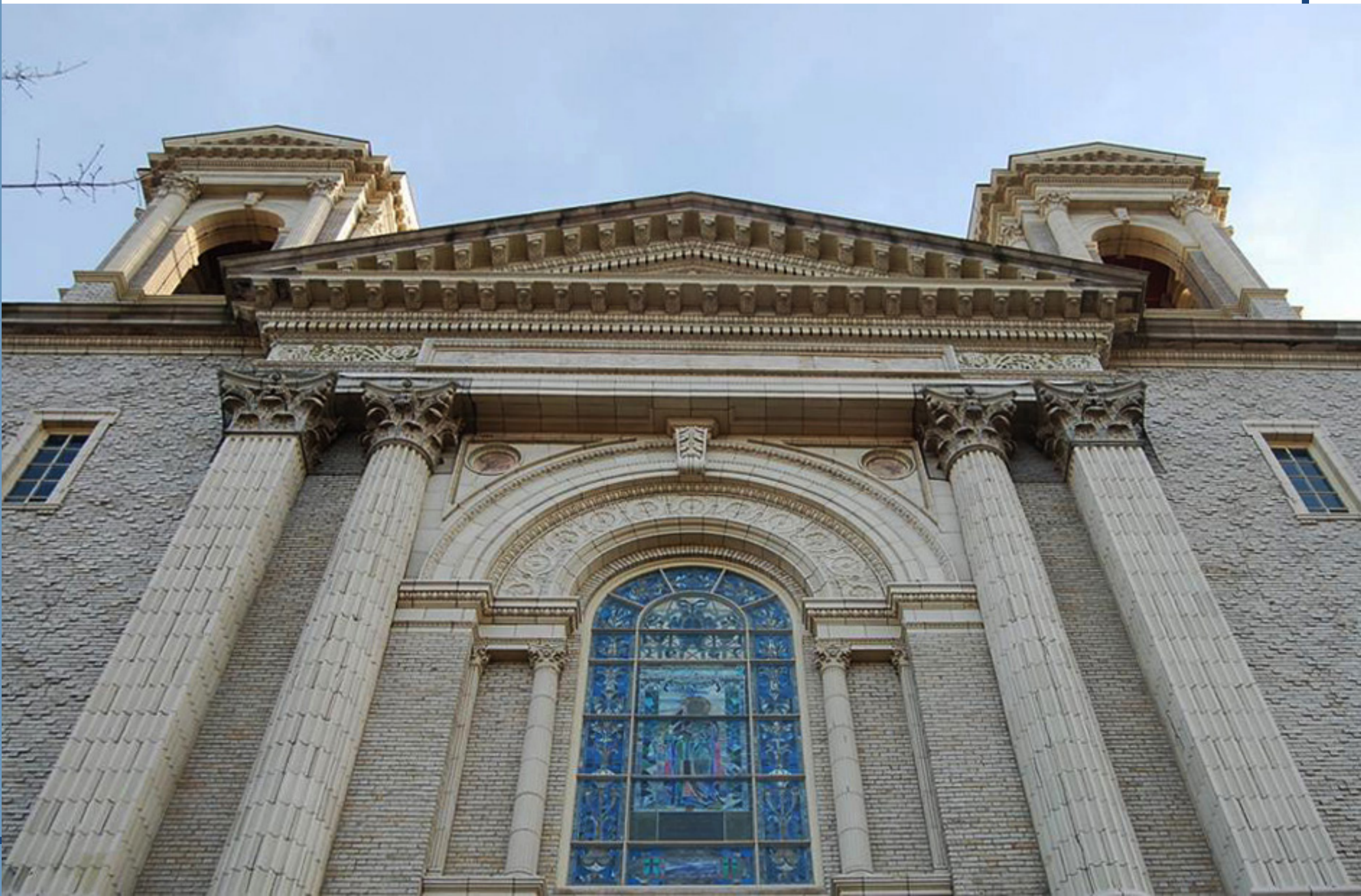
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# About Us

“The interaction of disparate cultures, the vehemence of the ideals that led the immigrants here, the opportunity offered by a new life, all gave America a flavor and a character that make it as unmistakable and as remarkable to people today as it was to Alexis de Tocqueville in the early part of the nineteenth century.”

– John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*

This quote aptly captures the history and essence of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn. Founded in 1853, the Diocese of Brooklyn sought to address the needs of the more than five million Irish Catholic immigrants who, tired and poor, arrived at the port of New York in search of a better life, many of whom settled in Brooklyn and Queens. Today, the Diocese of Brooklyn continues its vibrant and diverse history, home again to an immigrant population, this time Hispanics.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn serves the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. It is presided by the seventh and current Bishop of Brooklyn, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, a champion of immigrant rights.

The boroughs' combined population stands at more than 4.9 million, of which more than 1.3 million identify themselves as Catholics. The diocesan cathedral is the Cathedral Basilica of St. James in downtown Brooklyn. The Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph in Prospect Heights was elevated in February 2013 by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and was dedicated on May 13, 2014, by Bishop DiMarzio. The faces of the people in the pews of St. Joseph's reflect the diversity of the many cultures that call the Diocese of Brooklyn home. It is also among the largest churches in Brooklyn and Queens.

Due to its multicultural and diverse populations, Masses are regularly held in 33 different languages across the Diocese, throughout 177 parishes in over 200 churches. Its 26 ethnic ministries promote cultural events and provide an opportunity for immigrants to belong to the larger community while preserving and sharing their uniqueness and traditions.



# Bishop Robert J. Brennan,

## *Eighth Bishop of Brooklyn*

[f](#) [t](#) bishopofbklyn

**B**ishop Robert J. Brennan was born June 7, 1962, to Robert and Patricia Brennan in the Bronx, New York. The oldest of five children, Bishop Brennan has two brothers and two sisters, 14 nieces and nephews, two great nephews and one great niece.

He was raised in Lindenhurst, New York, where his parents still reside. Bishop Brennan attended Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School in Lindenhurst, and St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School, West Islip, New York. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and computer science from St. John's University, Queens, New York.

Bishop Brennan studied for the priesthood at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, New York. Bishop John McGann ordained him a priest in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, NY, on May 27, 1989. His first priestly assignment was to the Church of St. Patrick in Smithtown, NY. In 1994, he was appointed Secretary to the Bishop, working in this capacity for three bishops: Bishops John McGann, James McHugh, and William Murphy. He resided at St. Agnes Cathedral and served at the parish during those years. In 2002, he was named Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia for the Diocese of Rockville Centre. In 2010 he was appointed pastor of the Church of Saint Mary of the Isle, Long Beach, NY.

On July 25, 2012, he was ordained as Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of Rockville Centre. Leaving his position as pastor in Long Beach at that time, he resided in the parish of Our Lady of Peace in Lynbrook. On January 31, 2019, Bishop Brennan was appointed 12th Bishop of Columbus, and he was installed as Bishop of Columbus March 29, 2019.

During his time in Columbus, he has been actively involved in the work of the Catholic community in central and south-central Ohio, including serving on the boards of the Catholic Foundation, Mother Angeline McCrory Manor, and Cristo Rey Columbus Catholic High School. He also has been a board member and the Vice Chancellor of the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus.

At the national level, Bishop Brennan has served with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as a member of the Committee for Catholic Education, the Administrative Committee, and the Priorities and Plans Committee.

Bishop Brennan's greatest strength lies in parish pastoral activity. As the Bishop of Columbus, he traveled regularly in order to meet >





and engage people from every part of the 23 counties of the Diocese of Columbus, learning about their lives, both their everyday activities and their faith commitment. He has also enjoyed learning about the many parishes and schools here; the many facets of the ethnic and geographic cultures of the Diocese; and the vibrancy of the many missionary movements in Columbus, particularly the participation of young people.

The hallmark of Bishop Brennan's time in Columbus was the initiation of the Diocesan-wide Real Presence, Real Future evangelization and planning initiative. Real Presence, Real Future is a two-year diocesan-wide consultative process that invites participation from clergy, lay ecclesial ministers, parish volunteers, and all the faithful. Through listening to the needs and ideas of the people, this process that Bishop Brennan started will help determine the best path forward to increase the presence of the Church throughout the Diocese of Columbus in the 21st century.

On November 30, 2021 Bishop Brennan was installed as the Eighth Bishop of Brooklyn, serving the people of Brooklyn and Queens. In the first year of his ministry, Bishop Robert Brennan visited 127 parishes throughout Brooklyn and Queens, celebrated 25 Confirmations, and visited 25 schools. Bishop Brennan has ordained three priests to serve in the Diocese of Brooklyn, and seven transitional deacons on the path to the priesthood; four for the Diocese of Brooklyn, two for the Archdiocese of New York, and one for the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

Bishop Brennan communicates with the faithful on social media through his weekly video gospel reflections. He also launched a podcast, "Big City Catholics." The weekly conversations engage the faithful to explore their faith and stay informed of his ministry throughout the diocese. *Big City Catholics* is available on popular podcast platforms, including Apple, Spotify, and YouTube, or on the Diocese of Brooklyn website, [podcast.dioceseofbrooklyn.org](http://podcast.dioceseofbrooklyn.org).



# The Coat of Arms of his Excellency

## *The Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan, Bishop of Brooklyn*

In accordance with the heraldic tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, the Coat of Arms of a Bishop is composed of four elements: a shield with its charges (symbols); a golden processional cross; a green hat (galero) with twelve attached tassels; and appearing below everything, a scroll with the motto written in black. Designing his shield—the central element in what is formally called the heraldic achievement—a bishop has an opportunity to depict symbolically aspects of his life and heritage, and elements of the Catholic faith that are important to him. Every coat of arms also includes external elements that identify the rank of the bearer.

The formal description of a coat of arms, known as the blazon, uses a technical language, derived from French and English terms, that allows the appearance and position of each element in the achievement to be recorded precisely.

A diocesan bishop shows his commitment to the flock he shepherds by combining his personal coat of arms with that of the diocese, in a technique known as impaling. The shield is divided in half along the pale or central vertical line. The arms of the diocese appear on the dexter side — that is, on the side of the shield to the viewer's left, which would cover the right side (in Latin, *dextera*) of the person carrying the shield. The arms of the bishop are on the sinister side — the bearer's left, the viewer's right. In Ireland, whence Bishop Brennan's ancestors emigrated to the United States, coats of arms belong to a sept or family, rather than to an individual. The Brennan coat of arms (Argent, a lion rampant azure and in chief two dexter hands *apaumée* gules) comprises a white shield with a blue heraldic lion, and two red hands in the top corners of the shield. Rather than use the original design — the symbolism of which is somewhat obscure — Bishop Brennan has chosen to retain the overall coloration and layout of his family coat of arms, while employing charges more evocative of his own life of faith.

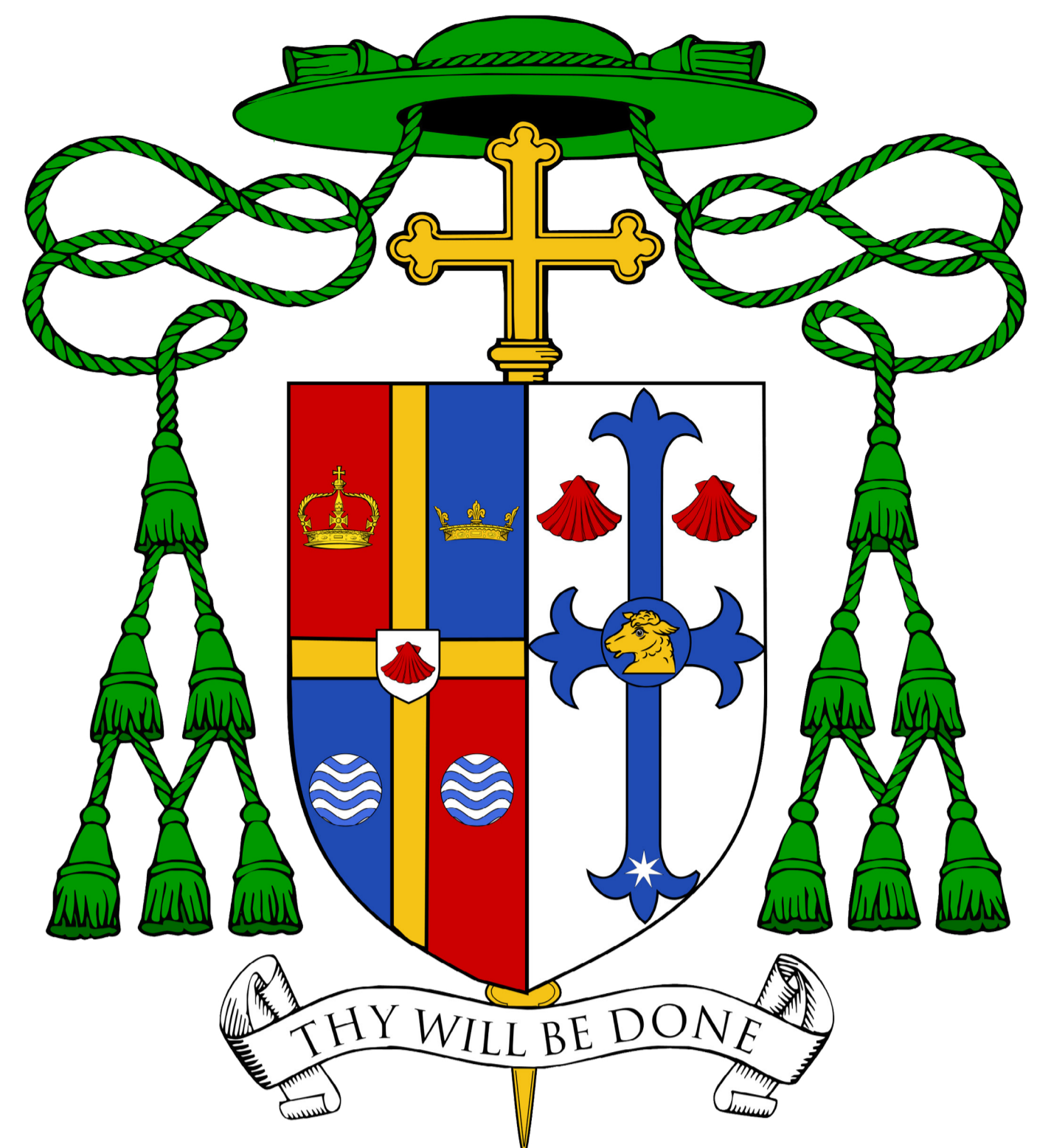
The main charge on the shield is the Cross, the foundation of the Christian faith. The arms of this particular Cross (called a cross flory) resemble a fleur-de-lis, a stylized lily often used as a symbol of the Virgin Mary. A cross flory (in black and white) also appears on the coat of arms of the Dominican Sisters whose schools the Bishop attended in his youth. Moreover, the shape of the crossbeams resembles the tail of the lion rampant that appears on the original family arms.

At the bottom of the cross appears a small white star (a mullet argent), another symbol of Our Lady. Its position recalls the moment of the Commendation, when, "standing by the cross of Jesus" (John 19:25), Mary became, at her Son's command, the Mother of all of his disciples (cf. John 19:27). The star has seven points, recalling the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and so is a fitting symbol of the one who is both "full of grace" (Luke 1:28) and who prays with the disciples of the Lord that they also may receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:4, 8, 13-14).

At the center of the cross appears a lamb's head painted gold (Or). The same charge figures prominently on the coat of arms of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, which Bishop Brennan served as a priest and bishop for nearly 30 years. Because the Latin word for lamb is *agnus*, the gentle animal has long been a symbol of Saint Agnes, the twelve-year-old Roman martyr who suffered persecution and death in the early fourth century in defense of her faith and her virginity, which she had consecrated to Jesus Christ. Saint Agnes is the patroness of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, and of its Cathedral church, where Bishop Brennan resided for 16 years.

At the top of the shield (in chief) are two scallop shells painted red (gules). Although the charges are the same, they are used here to allude to two different saints: John the Baptist and James the Greater. Bishop Brennan attended Saint John the Baptist High School (West Islip) and Saint John's University, and the patron of these schools is often depicted in sacred art using a shell to baptize the Lord Jesus. The date of Bishop Brennan's ordination as a bishop — July 25, 2012 — is the feast of Saint James, the brother of Saint John the Evangelist and the first of the apostles to be martyred, during the persecution of the early Church (Acts 12:1-2). Medieval pilgrims to the shrine of Saint James in Compostella, on the northwest coast of Spain, would pick up scallop shells from the beaches and wear them on their cloaks or caps as a sign that they had completed the journey. The red color of the shells recalls the fact that both of these saints gave their lives as martyrs for the faith.

On a scroll below the shield appears the Bishop's motto, "Thy will be done." This petition from the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:10) summarizes and responds to the symbolism depicted on the shield. Standing with Our Lady by the Cross of the Lord, and recognizing he is called to "drink the cup" of the Lord's suffering by bearing his own cross (cf. Mark 10:38-39), a disciple must rely on the Lord for strength and make his own Jesus' words in the Garden: "Not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). 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.



# Current Statistics

Total Catholic Population: **1,316,791**

Total Population: **4,813,761**

Number of Parishes – **177**

- **147** under direction of diocesan clergy
- **21** under direction of religious priests

Diocesan Priests of the diocese active in the diocese – **692**

- **454** Diocesan Priests of the Diocese
- **164** Religious Priests
- **74** Extern Priests

Total Seminarians – **50**

Deacons - **220**

- **217** Permanent
- **3** Transitional

Brothers – **74**

Sisters – **539**

Auxiliary Bishops- **5**

Retired Bishops- **2**



## Education

Elementary Schools – **70**

- **21,067** students

High Schools – **17**

- **11,605** students

Colleges and Universities - **3**

- **23,741** students

Religious Education

- **2,110** High School Students
- **25,770** Pre-K through 8th Grade

Total Students Under Catholic Instruction

- **84,433**

Full Time Academic Teachers in Diocese

- **3** Priests
- **14** Sisters
- **1,581** Paid Lay Teachers

## Vital

- **6,362** Infant Baptisms (up to age 7)
- **488** Minor Baptisms (ages 7-17)
- **349** Adult Baptisms (18 and over)
- **305** Received into Full Communion
- **5,507** First Communions
- **6,115** Confirmations
- **1,021** Catholic Marriages

## Welfare

- **50** Special Centers for Social Services and Assistance
- **27** Medical Centers
- **18,794** In Patients and Out Patients Assisted Annually
- **15** Day Care Centers
- **29** Homes for the Aged, Chronically Ill, or Invalid
- **5,499** Deaths

*As reported in the January 2021 Diocesan Statistical Overview.*

