

**DIOCESE OF  
BROOKLYN**  
SERVING BROOKLYN AND QUEENS

# Press Kit 2025

Roman Catholic  
Diocese of Brooklyn  
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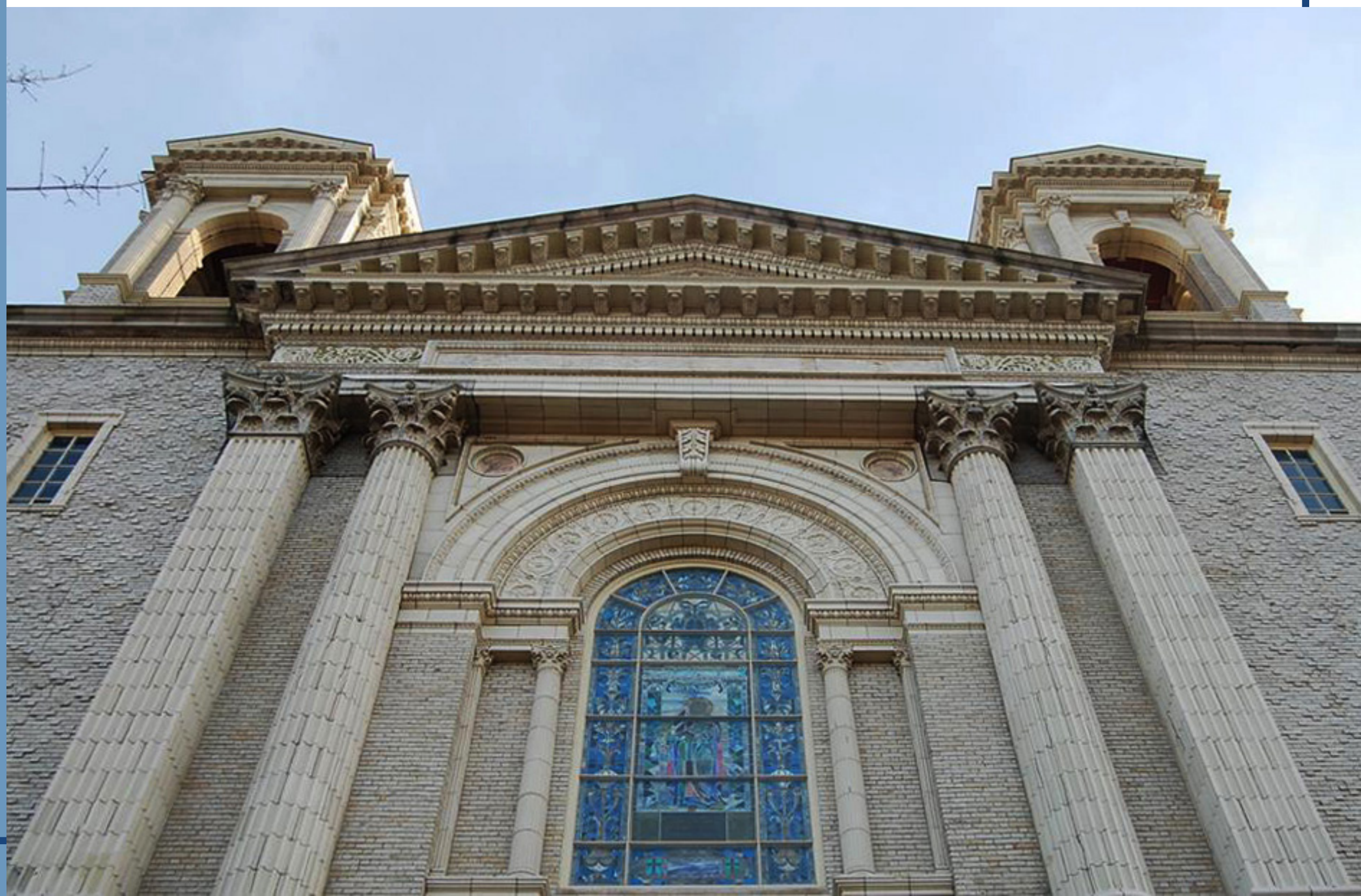
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# About Us

"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.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn serves the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. It is presided by the eighth and current Bishop of Brooklyn, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan.

The boroughs' combined population stands at more than 5.1 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 Benedict XVI, and was dedicated on May 13, 2014, by Bishop Nicholas 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 26 different languages across the Diocese, throughout 172 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*

  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 father still resides. Bishop Brennan attended Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School in Lindenhurst, and St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School, in 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 was installed on March 29, 2019.

During his time in the Diocese of Columbus, Bishop Brennan was 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.

On November 30, 2021, Bishop Brennan was installed as the Eighth Bishop of Brooklyn, serving the people of Brooklyn and Queens. Bishop Brennan's greatest strength lies in his commitment to parish pastoral activity.

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In 2023, Bishop Brennan instituted a Lenten Pilgrimage in the Diocese of Brooklyn, inviting the faithful to join him in visiting different station churches each day during the season of Lent, which greatly increased in participation in 2024 with the introduction of a Lenten Pilgrimage App.

On April 20, 2024, Bishop Brennan led a Eucharistic Revival event, which included Mass, prayer and song, at Louis Armstrong Stadium attended by more than nearly 7,000 faithful of Brooklyn and Queens. The theme of the event, "Whoever Eats This Bread Will Live Forever," (John 6:51), brought special attention to the true presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

During the 2024 Memorial Day weekend, Bishop Brennan welcomed the National Eucharistic Revival to Brooklyn, leading a procession from the Brooklyn Bridge through the streets of Brooklyn. In July, Bishop Brennan led a

delegation of people from Brooklyn and Queens to the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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.

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. He currently serves as the Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Diversity in the Church, as a Consultant to the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and is a member of the Board of Trustees for The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.





# 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.

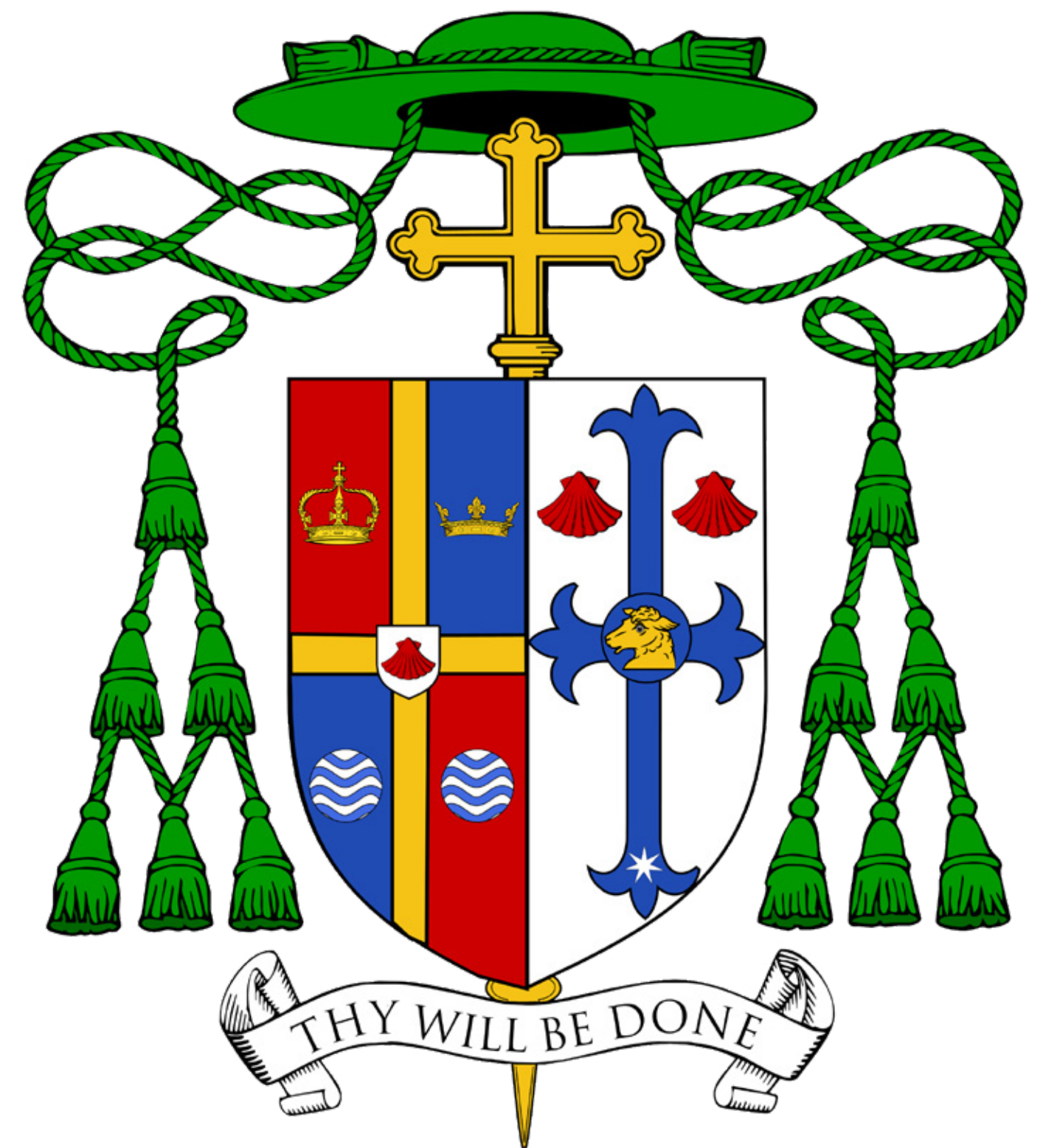
The main charge on the shield is the Cross, the foundation of the Christian faith. The arms of this particular Cross (called a cross flory) resemble a fleur-de-lis, a stylized lily often used as a symbol of the Virgin Mary. A cross flory (in black and white) also appears on the coat of arms of the Dominican 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 emulate 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 Population: **5,141,538**

Number of Parishes – **172**

- **139** under direction of diocesan clergy
- **20** under direction of religious priests

Priests in the Diocese – **557**

- **417** Diocesan Priests
- **140** Religious Priests

Total Seminarians – **41**

Deacons - **228**

- **221** Permanent
- **7** Transitional

Brothers – **63**

Sisters – **452**

Auxiliary Bishops- **2**

Retired Bishops- **5**



## Education

Elementary Schools – **65**

- **17,028** students

High Schools – **16**

- **11,065** students

Colleges and Universities - **3**

- **28,104** students

Total Students Under Catholic Instruction

- **28,134**

Full Time Academic Teachers in Diocese

- **1,783** Paid Lay Teachers

## Vital

- **8,486** Infant Baptisms (up to age 7)
- **597** Minor Baptisms (ages 7-17)
- **581** Adult Baptisms (18 and over)
- **356** Received into Full Communion
- **7,620** First Communions
- **7,940** Confirmations
- **1,525** Catholic Marriages

## Welfare

- **25** Special Centers for Social Services and Assistance
- **8** Day Care Centers
- **3** Homes for the Aged, Chronically Ill, or Invalid
- **5,663** Deaths

*As reported in the December 31, 2024 Diocesan Statistical Overview.*





# The Cathedral Basilica of St. James





# The Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph

