

SYMBOLS *of a* BISHOP

A bishop, from the Greek word *episkopos* (overseer), is a direct successor to the apostles. Bishops have, by divine institution, taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the church. The appointment of **Bishop David P. Talley** as the sixth Bishop of the **Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee** focuses a spotlight on symbols of a bishop. In fact, the bishop himself is a symbol and is surrounded by symbols.

Bishops wear certain regalia distinctive of the Order of Bishop, the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders - the pectoral cross, ring, miter, and crozier (staff). Let us look at some of them.

The Bishop's Chair

In ancient times, a chair was a sign of authority to teach. The bishop's chair is called a cathedra from the Latin word for chair and it is the presence of the bishop's cathedra in a church that makes it a cathedral. The bishop's chair, then is a symbol of the bishop's teaching office and pastoral power in his diocese. It is also a sign of the unity of believers in the faith that the bishop proclaims as shepherd of the Lord's flock.



Coat of Arms

A bishop's coat of arms is distinguished by a sign of his rank. That sign, placed over the shield, is a particular version of an ecclesiastical hat that was worn in processions, as late as 1870. The hat is low-crowned, flat, and wide-brimmed. On a bishop's coat of arms, the hat is green and hanging from it are 12 green tassels, six on each side. There's also a processional cross above the shield. The cross on a bishop's coat of arms has one bar; an archbishop's cross has two. The design of the shield itself differs from bishop to bishop.



Miter

The miter is the proper liturgical headdress for all bishops of the Latin rite, including the pope. The word comes from the Greek word *mitra*, meaning "turban." It consists of two stiffened flaps of material joined by a headband with two fringed strips hanging from the back base of the miter. The miter as we know it today developed from the conical head-covering worn by the pope that appeared in the 10th century. At first, it was only used by the pope.



Pectoral Cross

The pectoral cross gets its name because it is worn over the breast, or pectus, hanging from a green cord intertwined with gold threads. There are rules determining whether it is worn over or under whatever the bishop is wearing. If he's in a suit and collar, the pectoral cross is usually placed in the vest pocket with the chain showing.



Crozier

The crozier is a pastoral staff that is conferred on bishops (and abbots) at their installation. In the West, the top of the staff is curved to remind the bishop of the shepherd's crook and of his pastoral care of the people entrusted to him. It is a sign of the bishop's need to keep watch over his whole flock, sustaining the weak and faltering, confirming those wavering in faith, and leading back the erring ones into the true fold.



Ring

The bishop's ring is a symbol of the bishop's fidelity to and nuptial bond with the Church, his spouse. It signifies the bishop's symbolic marriage to the Church or Christ. The bishop's ring is usually made of gold with an amethyst. The bishop's ring was first mentioned as an official part of the bishop's insignia in the early seventh century.



Zucchetto

The zucchetto is a skullcap worn, particularly by prelates, since the 13th century. The pope wears a white zucchetto; cardinals, a red zucchetto; and bishops, a purple zucchetto. Everyone else wears black.

