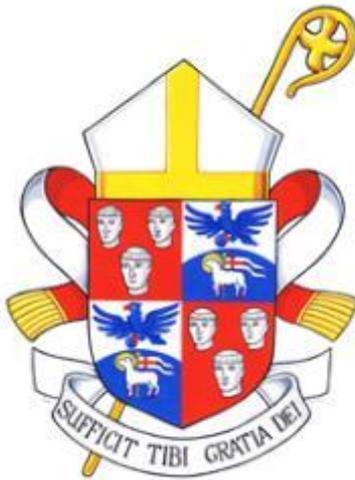


The Coat of Arms of Fredrik Modéus, Bishop of the Diocese of Växjö from Easter 2015



Life is a gift. We get it on loan for a shorter or longer time. In point of fact, everything in life is a gift: health and strength, the experience of the meaning of life and the ability to give and receive love. As humans we live as recipients of God's love without needing to achieve something in return. For me this is the foundational meaning of living in God's grace.

I have chosen the following motto for my time as bishop: "God's grace is all you need" ("Sufficit tibi gratia Dei", 2 Cor. 12:9).

What is especially clear is God's grace in Jesus Christ, who grants to us the gift of reconciliation and calls us to work for reconciliation in everyday life. In church worship God's grace comes close to us in a special way, and we have the task of welcoming others to the fellowship around the Word and sacrament.

The motto is part of the bishop's coat of arms. It includes, first and foremost, the mitre (the bishop's head-covering) and the crozier (the bishop's shepherd's crook). A so-called Taizé cross can be seen in the crook of the crozier. It is there quite simply because the little Taizé community in Southern France has been an important place in my life. Over the years I have met people there who, honestly and without beating about the bush, have asked life's important questions. Together, and in silent prayer before the face of God, we have sought answers to the questions, surrounded by God's grace.

The shield of the coat of arms consists of four fields. The first and fourth show the Diocese of Växjö's coat of arms. This depicts the missionary St Sigfrid's three nephews, Unaman, Sunaman and Vinaman, who lost their lives in their missionary journey and became the first martyrs in what later became known as the Diocese of Växjö. That they were three in number brings to mind a Bible text which is especially important to me. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

In the second and third fields are depicted my personal coat of arms. It consists of an eagle and a lamb. The eagle symbolises overview and freedom. A bishop needs to strive to get an overview and perspective in order to be able to carry out his task of providing support and oversight properly. The theme of freedom is more personal: quite simply, I have been borne by a strong longing for freedom throughout my adult life. In the Lutheran tradition the Christian's freedom is frequently emphasised – the consequence of God's grace. In its claws the eagle clasps a ball. This is a way for me to bring out the importance of play, joy and humour. Such things as are necessary to give colour to life.

Beneath the eagle there is the lamb with the banner of victory. It is a well-known symbol of Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of Mankind. In the bishop's coat of arms it is shown as it is depicted above the door of Sofiakyrkan in Jönköping, a place where my faith took shape in my teenage years.

Between the eagle and the lamb can be seen a faint curved line. This means two things. Firstly, the line is a bridge. The bridge symbolises the bishop's task of bridging conflicts; holding things together and creating unity in a diocese, The bridge could be the Öland bridge, which connects Småland and Öland in Växjö Diocese. Secondly, the line is an horizon. The horizon is a picture of all that we do not know about God. Beyond the horizon eternity awaits; God's grace, in a way that we, as yet, do not comprehend. Ultimately, God is a mystery.

Fredrik Modéus