

## **Sacramental Records and Records Retention in Parishes**

### **Introduction**

Each parish is required to keep the following sacramental registers: Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage and Death (Canon 535). In addition, a register of First Communion should be kept. Care should be taken to purchase registers of quality care and binding. Use of the alphabetized list at the beginning of each register is also strongly encouraged. Although computerized files may be convenient for indexing needs, these are never to be considered a substitute for the original handwritten registers. The original handwritten Sacramental Registers are to be kept permanently. Sacramental records are confidential information. Registers should be kept in a safe secure place in the parish, and should not be removed, copied, or loaned without the approval of the pastor. It is strongly recommended that the registers not be removed from the parish unless it is for rebinding. In this case, the registers should be hand-carried to the binder if possible. When a parish is suppressed, the chancellor will direct to which parish the parish registers are to be stored. Separate registers should be maintained for each parish.

### **Maintenance of Registers**

The pastor is responsible for proper maintenance of the registers. However, he may delegate the day-to-day administration of the records to a responsible person such as the parish secretary or business manager. (Canon 535) Recording sacramental entries should be done promptly and accurately. (Canon 877) Information should be entered in neatly printed letters. A good quality pen should be used, preferably black ink. Do not use pencil, colored ink, or felt-tipped marker.

### **Institutions**

In general, the sacramental records of institutions such as hospitals are to be maintained at the parish in which the institution resides and not at the parish of the chaplain. If a Catholic institution has already established sacramental registers, the procedures of this manual are to be followed. All necessary permissions, notations, and notifications are to be completed as outlined in these procedures.

### **Religious Profession**

Records relating to the profession of perpetual vows are maintained by individual Orders. Notification of the profession of perpetual vows is to be sent to the place of baptism. The date and place of profession and the name of the witness to the vows are to be noted in the baptismal register.

### **Holy Orders**

The date and place of ordination as well as the name of the Ordinary conferring the sacrament are to be sent to the recipient's place of baptism where it is to be noted in the baptismal register.

### **Access to Sacramental Registers**

Sacramental registers are not open to examination by anyone except the pastor or his designee and the bishop or his designee. Anyone may obtain an authenticated certificate of his own sacramental record. Certificates of records are available only to the person named in the record (or legal guardian if under 21) or church personnel for sacramental purposes. Others need a signed release from the person named in the record. Parishes may provide certificates for non-sacramental purposes to genealogists/researchers if time permits but may also elect to refer them to the Diocesan archives. Requests for certificates must be made to the parish of origin before referral to the Diocesan archives.

Inquiries to the Diocesan Archives should be referred to:

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