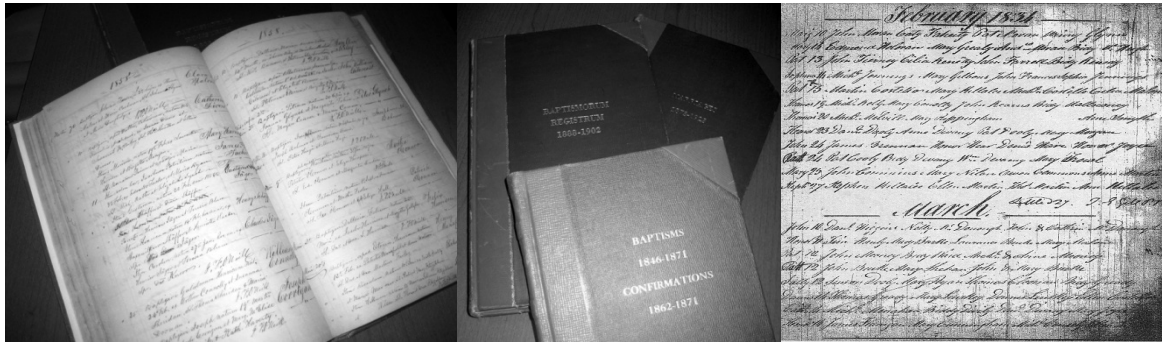


Sacramental Records Handbook

5th Edition



The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta

Office of Archives and Records

archives@archatl.com

Acknowledgements

The Office of Archives and Records has worked hard on updating the *Sacramental Records Handbook*. However, we did not make these updates on our own and would like to thank a few key people for their assistance and expertise.

First, acknowledgments must go to the dioceses and people who helped write the original version of the *Handbook*. The Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the Diocese of Dallas, and the Archdiocese of Chicago were kind enough to let us use their handbooks as our original model. At the Archdiocese of Atlanta, special thanks goes to Chancellor Deacon Dennis Dorner and former Directors of Archives and Records Carolyn Denton and Claire Jenkins.

Second, special thanks go out to the people who helped with the current updates to the *Handbook*, starting with the entire staff of the Office of Archives and Records. We also appreciate the invaluable canon law assistance of the Office of Canonical Affairs.

Thirdly, we would like to thank Brian Fahey, Archivist for the Diocese of Charleston for allowing us to utilize their *Sacramental Records Handbook* to update sections within our own, particularly their excellent appendix of example register entries.

Finally, a huge thank you to the sacramental records coordinators at our own parishes for their many wonderful questions and suggestions over the last several years that helped us decide what improvements could be made to the *Handbook*.

Foreword

The Archdiocese of Atlanta has grown tremendously in the last decade since this *Sacramental Records Handbook* was originally written. Several new parishes and missions have been established and many new Catholics have joined our community. All of our parishioners have the right to expect accurate, well-preserved sacramental records. Therefore, all pastors and parochial administrators entrusted with the pastoral care of a parish or mission are required to maintain sacramental registers.

The *Sacramental Records Handbook* for the Archdiocese of Atlanta was originally written in 2010 to assist in that exact goal: proper maintenance and preservation of sacramental registers. This *Handbook* is designed to assist parish clergy and/or personnel in the practical steps of how to enter information in the registers, how to make proper changes, how to maintain those registers long-term, and who to contact with questions.

The Office of Archives and Records has done extensive research to update the *Sacramental Records Handbook* for the new decade, incorporating details that are more specific and adding entire sections of new information. I am very grateful to them for preparing this new edition of the *Handbook* and to those who will use it to preserve our Catholic history for future generations.



The Most Reverend Gregory J. Hartmayer, O.F.M. Conv.
Archbishop of Atlanta

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Introduction

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, in accordance with the norms of canon law, maintains sacramental records in order to continue the tradition of the Church and to protect the spiritual lives of its members. Sacramental records are those records created when individuals receive one of the seven sacraments—Baptism, Penance, Eucharist (First Communion), Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick.

Sacramental records are vital and essential to the Church as well as to individuals and our communities. They document the canonical status of parishioners and record the rich history of Catholic communities. Sacramental records are generally made by the clergy or their delegates in a parish when the sacrament is performed, and are maintained in the parishes.

The use and maintenance of sacramental records are governed by canon law. The individual rules or canons of canon law are often referred to as “norms.” These norms are found in the Code of Canon Law, the ritual books used for the celebration of the sacraments, and other legal texts. Each of the sacraments has associated norms that must be followed. The provisions of canon law, as well as Archdiocesan policies and procedures, have been incorporated to develop this *Sacramental Records Handbook*. The *Handbook* is meant to provide practical guidance for parish use and is not intended as a complete statement of all issues that may arise in canon law, civil law, or archival practice.

Sacramental Registers as Bound Books

The Code of Canon Law (Can. 535) refers to sacramental registers as “parish books” that are to be “accurately inscribed and carefully preserved.” When information about an event is entered by hand on paper, dated, and authenticated by signatures near the time when the actual event occurs, the document then becomes a manuscript, also known as a primary source, and therefore is official and has legal standing. Traditionally, a manuscript is defined as an original document written by hand and not reproduced in multiple copies. Such is the nature of sacramental registers as bound books.

Each parish and mission are required to maintain paper records of sacraments in a bound book. Even when a priest serves as pastor of more than one parish, separate registers are to be maintained for each parish. **Registers in paper format are considered the original, essential archival record of sacraments administered in parishes and must be handled, stored, protected, and maintained as such.**

The Archdiocese of Atlanta also requires that parishes consistently utilize their parish management software to capture data from the paper sacramental register books. The parish management software is not a replacement for the actual handwritten registers, but is meant to provide convenient access to sacramental data for statistical purposes. The handwritten sacramental register remains the official record from which certificates are to be issued.

Registers in General

Canon Law Related to Sacramental Records

CAN. 491 §1. A diocesan bishop is to take care that the acts and documents of the archives of cathedral, collegiate, parochial, and other churches in his territory are also diligently preserved and that inventories or catalogs are made in duplicate, one of which is to be preserved in the archives of the church and the other in the diocesan archives.

§2. A diocesan bishop is also to take care that there is an historical archives in the diocese and that documents having historical value are diligently protected and systematically ordered in it.

§3. In order to inspect or remove the acts and documents mentioned in §§1 and 2, the norms established by the diocesan bishop are to be observed.

CAN. 535 §1. Each parish is to have parochial registers; that is, those of Baptism, marriages, deaths, and others as prescribed by the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan bishop. The pastor is to see to it that these registers are accurately inscribed and carefully preserved.

§2. In the Baptismal register are also to be noted Confirmations and those things which pertain to the canonical status of the Christian faithful by reason of marriage, without prejudice to the prescript of Can. 1133, of adoption, of the reception of sacred orders, of perpetual profession made in a religious institute, and of change of rite. These notations are always to be noted on a Baptismal certificate.

§3. Each parish is to have its own seal. Documents regarding the canonical status of the Christian faithful and all acts which can have juridic importance are to be signed by the pastor or his delegate and sealed with the parochial seal.

§5. Older parochial registers are to be carefully protected according to the prescripts of particular law.

Types of Sacramental Registers

There are seven sacraments that a person may receive in their lifetime. However, there are more than seven potential sacramental registers and whether those sacraments are recorded by the parish, the diocese, or not at all varies by the type of sacrament. Below is a full list of the types of sacramental registers that exist, who is meant to record and maintain the sacramental register, and if the sacramental register is required.

Register Of	Responsibility of	Required or Optional
Baptism	Parish	Required
First Communion (Eucharist)	Parish	Optional
Confirmation	Parish	Required
Marriage	Parish	Required
Ordination	Diocese	Required
Anointing of the Sick	Parish	Optional
Death	Parish	Required
The Elect	Parish	Required
Reception into Full Communion	Parish	Optional
Catechumens	Parish	Optional

Ownership and Responsibility

Ownership

The ownership of the registers and the ownership of copyrights of all parish sacramental records within the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Atlanta reside with the parishes. However, any decisions or issues related to publishing, microfilming, scanning, replacement, rebinding, repair, or disposal of registers should be determined by the Office of Archives and Records and by the Chancellor of the Archdiocese to ensure proper policies and procedures are followed.

Parishes, Missions and Other Institutions

Generally, only parishes maintain sacramental records and registers. If a chapel or pastoral center (i.e. school or college campus ministry) operates under the authority of the local pastor, its sacramental records should be kept in the parish registers, rather than separately unless pre-arranged with the Office of Archives and Records and the Chancellor.

A pastor or other clergy who also have charge of a mission church are required to maintain for that church a *separate set* of sacramental registers for any sacraments performed at that location. Since missions sometimes get transferred to new parishes and many eventually become parishes, the complete record of those parishioners can be transferred in whole

and then easily located and maintained in one place as opposed to having to track down records for a mission across multiple parishes registers.

Persons assigned as chaplains or clergy with sacramental responsibilities for Catholic or non-Catholic institutions, such as schools, campus ministries, hospitals, etc., that maintain no distinctly Catholic sacramental registers should see to it that the reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, and Death be recorded in the sacramental registers of the territorial parish in which the hospital/institution is located. Such sacraments should not be recorded in the parish where the priest is assigned if it is not the territorial parish. [See the [Parishes by Boundaries Map](#) for assistance in determining the territorial parish.]

If a parish is suppressed or merged with another parish, the registers must be transferred to the Office of Archives and Records. All future sacraments performed at that location are to be then recorded in the registers of the territorial parish.

Responsibility and Delegated Responsibility

The creation, preservation, and use of sacramental records are the responsibility of the pastor. While the pastor can delegate the responsibility to a “person in charge,” ultimately the pastor is still responsible for the registers. Inputting information from the bound paper registers into the parish management software is also required by the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

The person in charge may choose to assign the day-to-day administration of sacramental records to a parish administrator or another responsible staff person. That person should be an employee of the parish or mission (not a volunteer), have knowledge of the parish history and the parishioners, and be in direct communication with the person (if a separate role) entering sacramental information into the parish management software to ensure quality control.

Accuracy of Information

It is the responsibility of pastors in the parishes to ensure that entries in the registers and in the parish management software are complete and accurate. Quality control initiatives that double-check entries on a regular basis will ensure accuracy. Neither the Office of Archives and Records nor the Archdiocese guarantees the accuracy of the information recorded in Sacramental Registers.

Inspection and Certification of Registers

If the pastor does not personally make entries in the registers, the records should at least be certified by having the pastor or delegated parish clergy sign or initial each page. Additionally, Deans should inspect all sacramental registers once during their three-year term and certify the registers with the appropriate seal, signature, and date of inspection. A form is provided in the appendices for Deans to use to document the inspection and must be sent to the Vicar General once completed.

Transfer of Registers to the Office of Archives and Records

The ordinary repository for all active sacramental registers is the parish that created them. However, any parish registers completed approximately 75 years ago should be transferred to the Office of Archives and Records for preservation purposes and to centralize genealogy research.

Records of Closed Parishes

If a parish or mission is closed (suppressed), the registers and all other parochial records shall be inventoried by the Office of Archives and Records to determine appropriate retention and disposition. Sacramental registers and other permanent records will be transferred to the Archives.

Access to Sacramental Registers

Care must be taken to protect the privacy of people. Although sacramental registers contain information about public events and other facts readily known by certain other parties, they also contain information that is very personal and confidential.

Access to the sacramental registers should be restricted to necessary personnel only. Additionally, parish personnel with access to sacramental registers have an obligation to NOT disclose to anyone any details about what they read in the registers.

Outside of the legitimate access described in this section, neither the originals nor any copies of sacramental registers, nor the data they contain, whether on microfilm or otherwise, can ever be given, loaned, or sold to any person or institution without the written permission of the Archbishop. Such permission shall specify the conditions for use, duplication, and publication.

Sacramental Records from 75 Years Ago to the Present Day

If a person is seeking his own record or has a legitimate reason to request family records (i.e. a parent of a minor child under 18 or a person seeking records of an infirmed or incapacitated adult with legal proof of guardianship or executor status), the pastor or appointed parish personnel can examine the registers and issue the required certificates either in-person or by mail. If a pastor feels that an exception for access to information is justified in a particular case, it is important that he first contact the Chancellor.

A sacramental records request should be made in writing and include proof of identification (picture ID). When applicable the name of the parents, the date of birth, and other pertinent information should also be included so that there is no doubt that the person requesting the information is entitled to receive it.

Under no circumstance are sacramental registers to be loaned out to anyone or removed from the parish premises by anyone, including clergy or staff, unless for preservation purposes as approved by the Chancellor and Archbishop.

Sacramental Records Prior to 75 Years Ago

Sacramental records created prior to 75 years ago are open for genealogy research. These registers have been consolidated in the Office of Archives and Records and instructions about how to request information for genealogical purposes is available on the archdiocesan website.

Since the safe, secure, convenient, and professional service of the Office of Archives and Records is available, genealogy researchers will have no need to contact individual parishes for assistance, alleviating the work of parish staff. The rules are designed to protect legal rights and the exercise of responsibilities of all concerned, both civilly and canonically. Parish staff should not be engaging in genealogy research for parishioners and should direct all requests to the Office of Archives and Records.

Access Authorization

Requests made by government or corporate agencies (i.e., Social Security Administration, Immigration, insurance companies, etc.) should be accompanied by a release signed by the person whose record is requested (or a legally qualified guardian) authorizing the release of the information.

Subpoenas and other court orders demanding that records be handed over should be accepted, but no records should be handed over to the server of the subpoena. In cases where the pastor has been served a subpoena, contact the Chancellor before responding.

Access Fees

Parishes should not charge any fees for providing certificates or information from sacramental registers.

Preservation of Registers

Care must be taken in choosing supplies and storage to ensure the long-term preservation of sacramental registers. The Office of Archives and Records is available to assist with these selections.

Format

Sacramental information is to be maintained in two different formats, paper and digital. The format of paper has well established archival standards for preservation that differ substantially from those records in digital format. Special register books are available from legitimate retailers. Most supply companies in the United States sell registers that are manufactured by F.J. Remey Co., which produces archival quality sacramental registers. Please do not use non-archival registers.

A parish may retain separate Baptismal, Confirmation, First Communion, Marriage, and Death Registers or Combined Registers, depending on the needs of the parish. All registers should be handwritten.

Digital information about sacraments should be recorded in the parish management software. This information is for reference purposes and does not replace the need for the bound sacramental registers.

Ink

Entries should be made in fade-proof, waterproof, acid-free permanent ink. The ink must be **black**. Felt-tip pens and pencils are not acceptable. A medium point on a pen is best. Never use white-out over ink or try to scratch out or erase entries. ([Preferred Archival Ink Pen](#))

Repair and Restoration of Registers

The adage “Do No Harm” applies regarding the repair of registers. Do not use tape of any kind, labels, sticky notes, staples, paper clips, glue, or rubber bands on registers. Since the registers are archival by nature, only a trained conservator or professional bookbinder can be allowed to repair registers.

If your sacramental register is showing signs of wear (loose/broken binding, loose pages, etc.), please contact the Office of Archives and Records for an assessment of what can be done to repair the register properly or to prevent further damage. Depending on the level of deterioration, the register may need to be sent off to a conservation company for rebinding or repair. The Office of Archives and Records has a preferred company they contract with on projects and can facilitate the entire process for the parish.

Safe Storage

The sacramental registers and related sacramental files are to be stored in a locked place, such as a file cabinet or safe, ideally one that is fireproof or fire-resistant. Under no circumstances may anyone remove or borrow any parochial books, including sacramental registers, when leaving the parish or transferring to another assignment. The registers should not be taken off the parish premises except by the Office of Archives and Records for the purposes of preservation or permanent transfer to the archives.

Related supporting documentation likewise must be preserved. They are never to be glued, taped, stapled, or paper clipped into the actual corresponding register. They should instead be maintained and stored in a separate labeled file folder where the sacramental registers are stored.

Not only must sacramental registers be kept in a secure place, but they are to be stored and handled in an environment that ensures their preservation. Ideally that means a constant cool temperature (i.e. 70F) with low relative humidity (i.e. 40%). While most parish offices cannot fulfill such precise requirements, steps can always be taken to avoid high temperatures, dampness, bright light, and florescent light. Sacramental registers should never be stored in attics, basements, outside sheds, or storage units of any kind.

Duplicating Sacramental Registers

Sacramental registers can be protected from loss due to fire, age, or heavy use by making back-up copies. Because it is required by canon law that duplicate copies of sacramental records be made, the Office of Archives and Records may undertake a diocesan-wide scanning project for security and preservation purposes. (The same access restrictions apply to copies as to original records.)

Reporting Loss or Destruction

The loss or destruction of any sacramental register should be reported immediately to the Chancellor and/or the Office of Archives and Records.

Data Entries in Registers

On the first page of each register enter the name of the parish, city, date range of the register, the sacrament, and book number if there is one (i.e. Baptism Book 3 or Baptism Book III).

Only that data required by canon law and otherwise necessary for the complete and accurate maintenance of sacramental records is to be entered into the sacramental registers. Parishes and missions are also responsible for maintaining accurate digital data of sacramental records in their parish management software.

Index

Every entry is to be listed in the register's index, according to the person's last name. If you run out of space in the index, you can create a supplemental index to be stored in a labeled sacramental file folder near the register books.

Chronological Order

Entries should be made in chronological order. If the chronological order cannot be kept for some reason, a small note should be made in the proper chronological location in the register, cross-referencing the actual entry (e.g. See JONES, page 37).

Register Columns

Each page of the register has several columns, and each column is titled. It is important that the information recorded in the columns is complete and accurate.

Style for Names and Dates

Please use the name as verified on the birth certificate. The last name of the entry should be printed in upper case (e.g. SMITH). When it comes to dates, print the name of the month rather than use the month's number and use YYYY for the year (e.g. MAY 5, 2020).

Confidential Data

Data which is confidential and which is not to be included on certificates is to be so marked when entered in the register (e.g. Confidential – do not include on certificate). The provisions of Canon 535 §2 are to be observed.

Entry of Minister's Name, Delegation, & Authentication of Event

The name of the minister of the sacrament is to be clearly printed in the register entry. If a pastor delegates the ministry of a sacrament to another cleric (e.g. a deacon or a visiting priest), then that delegation must be noted in the register.

Supporting Documentation

After the information has been entered into the Sacramental Register and into the parish management software, the parish no longer needs to retain all the supporting documents used during the sacramental preparation process. The Office of Archives and Records recommends retaining the paperwork for one year before shredding. (Permission to shred these specific preparation records does not need to be obtained.)

The exceptions to this recommendation are the supporting documents for major changes and for marriage preparation. The supporting documentation for major changes is to be retained permanently in a sacramental records file. The supporting documentation for marriage preparation is to be retained in a premarital file for 75 years after the marriage takes place. [Please refer to the sections on Major Changes and on Premarital Files for more information.]

General Changes and Additions to Entries

Once entered into a sacramental register, data is considered official and permanent. One of the tests for the validity of a record as legal proof is whether it has been officially kept and whether there have been any alterations. Care should be taken to accurately input the information into the sacramental registers to avoid having to make changes. However, if an error is brought to your attention, make sure to follow the guidelines in this *Handbook* for the proper way to make corrections. Original data should never be scratched out, erased, whited-out, covered over, or otherwise destroyed or obliterated. All changes should be visible and dated.

Style and Authorization for Minor Changes

Minor changes (e.g., correcting a misspelling) may be made directly to the original entry. Such changes are to be made by drawing one straight, simple line through the word, number, or letter to be changed and printing the change immediately above or below the error. Example: SMITHE

Authorization for an insubstantial error (e.g. misspelling) may be corrected upon request of those persons who have a right to a certificate.

Style and Authorization for Major Changes

Major changes (e.g. to record an adoption after Baptism) may require that a new entry be created. In these cases, the original entry is to be preserved without change; a new entry, with all the data from the original entry reproduced (except the relevant change or changes), is to be made in the same register as close to the original entry as possible; both entries, as well as listings in the index, are to be cross-referenced; "Do Not Issue Certificate from This Record" is to be printed carefully across the face of the original entry.

Authorization for more significant errors and other changes require authentic supporting documentation. Such documentation will ordinarily consist of an original "raised seal" certificate from a civil or ecclesiastical office, court, agency, etc. The issuing agency, date of the certificate, and any protocol number should be printed in the "Notations" column of the register. When an error involves data pertaining directly to the celebration of a sacrament or rite of Christian burial such that no external verifying documentation exists, the written or oral testimony in the form of an affidavit of a reputable witness will suffice. Supporting documents are to be maintained in a separate sacramental records file and stored near the registers for quick reference. (Do not place the supporting documents in between the pages of the sacramental register as it causes long-term damage to the book and is more likely to be lost.)

Non-Permitted Changes

Some examples of non-permitted changes include:

- New Godparents or Sponsors—The names of Godparents or sponsors are not to be changed for any reason, including death or lack of suitability. In these situations, parents may ask someone else to serve in the role, but no change in the permanent record or on certificates will be made.

- Non-adoptive stepparents
- Customary name or nickname

Certificates

A certificate is an official document certifying that a particular individual has received a sacrament. It should be an exact duplication of data already entered in a sacramental register, excepting certain confidential notations.

Absence of Information

The absence of information to fill an item on a certificate shall be indicated by a line or the words "none" or "not given," rather than by leaving the space blank. It is also possible to issue a signed and sealed certificate without adding the notations. Certificates of this kind must be clearly marked with the words "FOR NON-SACRAMENTAL PURPOSES" since they are not sufficient to certify the canonical status of an individual.

Authorized Source of Records

Only the parish holding the original sacramental record may issue a certificate from the actual register book. While sacramental details should be entered into the parish management software and may include information about previous sacraments, this information is for reference purposes only and should not be used to issue certificates.

Authorized Requests

Any person has a right to obtain a certificate of a sacrament they have received, and which was recorded in a sacramental register. However, only that person, the parents of a minor child, someone with legal guardianship of another, or a bona fide pastoral minister at another Catholic parish has the right to request sacramental information. Additionally, ecclesiastical courts, appointed canonical instructors, or other verified ecclesial authority may also request pertinent information. When the parents of a child are separated or divorced, both parents, regardless of legal custody, are presumed to have the right to a certificate.

Procedure for Requests

Requests for certificates should be submitted in writing (either via physical mail, email, or electronic form) and should include a copy of a photo ID to verify identity. No requests for information from sacramental registers should be conducted by telephone.

Format and Authentication

Certificates should appear official and be issued in a consistent format. Parishes may obtain blank certificates from commercial vendors or have them printed locally. Alternatively, parishes may also create or use a computer template to print their own certificates. All certificates must bear the name and address of the parish and include all relevant information related to that sacrament.

Certificates are to be signed by the pastor and impressed or stamped with the parish seal. Photocopies, digital reproductions, and faxes of certificates are not considered authentic documents.

Alternate Locations

Sometimes sacraments are performed at locations within the territorial boundaries of a parish, but not physically in the parochial church building. In those situations, make sure to provide the actual location where the sacrament was performed in the location field on the certificate while also making it clear the name of the parish maintaining the sacramental register books.

This also applies to parishes maintaining sacramental registers for an active or defunct mission. Ensure that the mission name is listed in the location field of the certificate while also making clear the name of the parish maintaining the sacramental register books.

Required Data

Certificates are to include all data contained in the sacramental register, except that which is marked confidential or extraneous to the person's canonical status. Data in the "Notations" column is to be included. If there is no data in the "Notations" column, the words "No Notations" should be printed on the certificate.

Data on Certificates after Changes

Once specific data has been changed in the sacramental register, the original data is not transcribed onto certificates (e.g. the natural parents' names after adoption).

Missing Records

Sometimes when a certificate is requested, the record in question cannot be found. If there is any possibility that the sacrament may have been conferred in some other parish, the inquirer should be encouraged to check the sacramental records of that other parish or parishes or consult the Office of Archives and Records. If such a search is unwarranted or fails, Canons 876 can be applied.

Only that data which can be vouched for with certainty should be entered in the register, even though doing so may leave an incomplete entry. The name of the witness or witnesses, the date of testimony, and the words, "Based on the testimony of _____," should be printed in the "Notations" column of the register.

Sworn affidavits of parents, sponsors, and/or the pastor and any other supporting documentation should be added to the sacramental records file. These sworn statements should be witnessed by the pastor or parochial vicar and include the priest's signature, date, and parish seal. A notation should be written in the register that the entry is a "recreation of a missing record" and a cross reference should be made to the time when the event should have occurred.

Baptism

Canon Law Related to Baptismal Records

CAN. 535 §1. Each parish is to have parochial registers; that is, those of Baptisms, Marriages, Deaths, and others as prescribed by the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan bishop. The pastor is to see to it that these registers are accurately inscribed and carefully preserved.

§2. In the Baptismal Register are also to be noted Confirmation and those things which pertain to the canonical status of the Christian faithful by reason of Marriage, without prejudice to the prescript of Can. 1133, of Adoption, of the reception of Sacred Orders, of perpetual profession made in a religious institute, and of change of rite. These notations are always to be noted on a Baptismal certificate.

CAN. 852 §1. The prescripts of the canons on adult Baptism are to be applied to all those who, no longer infants, have attained the use of reason.

CAN. 869 §2. Those baptized in a non-Catholic ecclesial community must not be baptized conditionally unless, after an examination of the matter and the form of the words used in the conferral of Baptism and a consideration of the intention of the baptized adult and the minister of the Baptism, a serious reason exists to doubt the validity of the Baptism.

CAN. 870 An abandoned infant or a foundling is to be baptized unless after diligent investigation the Baptism of the infant is established.

CAN. 873 There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

CAN. 874 §2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the Baptism.

CAN. 876 To prove the conferral of Baptism, if prejudicial to no one, the declaration of one witness beyond all exception is sufficient or the oath of the one baptized if the person received Baptism as an adult.

CAN. 877 §1. The pastor of the place where the Baptism is celebrated must carefully and without delay record in the Baptismal Register the names of the baptized, with mention made of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses, if any, the place and date of the conferral of the Baptism, and the date and place of birth.

§2. If it concerns a child born to an unmarried mother, the name of the mother must be inserted, if her maternity is established publicly or if she seeks it willingly in writing or before two witnesses. Moreover, the name of the father must be inscribed if a public document or his own declaration before the pastor and two witnesses proves his paternity; in other cases, the name of the baptized is inscribed with no mention of the name of the father or the parents.

CAN. 878 If the Baptism was not administered by the pastor or in his presence, the minister of Baptism, whoever it is, must inform the pastor of the parish in which it was administered of the conferral of the Baptism, so that he records the Baptism according to the norm of Can.877 §1.

CAN. 1685 As soon as the sentence is executed, the judicial vicar must notify the local ordinary of the place in which the marriage was celebrated. The local ordinary must take care that the declaration of nullity of the marriage and any possible prohibitions are noted as soon as possible in the marriage and Baptismal registers.

Baptism Register Entries

The Baptismal Register serves as the "master record" for a person's membership or "incorporation" in the Catholic Church and therefore notations concerning certain other sacraments received later in life are also recorded within it.

Types of Data

For Baptism celebrated under normal circumstances, the following information is to be entered in the Baptismal Register:

1. The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the parent(s)/adoptive parent(s) or the legal name of the adult (always use the maiden name of a woman).
2. The name of the father (first, middle if any, and surname) and the name of the mother (first, middle, if any, and maiden name), or names of adoptive parents.
3. The date and place of birth.
4. The name(s) of the sponsor(s), godparent(s), or witness(es), as well as their faith (C for Catholic or CW for Christian Witness).
5. The place and date of the Baptism.
6. The name of the minister performing the Baptism.

Source of Data

A government-issued birth certificate, or another document that would appear valid to a reasonable person, should be used to complete the sacristy record and to verify the baptized person's name, date of birth, and place of birth. However, inability to provide a birth certificate or other verifying document should not be cause for denial or delay of baptism.

Before the data is transferred to the Baptismal Register, a parent, guardian, or adult candidate should verify the data written on the sacristy record (usually at the time of Baptism) as correct, and the minister must sign the sacristy record verifying that the sacrament was conferred. There should be a clear procedure in place for assuring that the data is transferred from the sacristy record to the Baptismal Register as quickly and as accurately as possible.

Clergy from Outside the Parish

When a priest or deacon baptizes in a parish church to which he is not assigned, he is responsible for the filing of the necessary records at that parish. The Baptism shall be recorded in the parish where the Baptism took place.

Supporting Documentation

Certain notations in the Baptismal register are accompanied by legal documents that serve as evidence and should also be preserved. Examples include adoption documents proving paternity, affidavits concerning previously omitted Baptisms, and notarized court and governmental documents concerning name and/or date changes. After the appropriate notations are made, the items must be kept permanently in a separate file corresponding to each register and page number. The Sacramental Records File must be referred to in the notation and the file itself should be stored physically near the sacramental register.

Recipients from More than One Parish

When persons from more than one parish are baptized or received into full communion with the Catholic Church at a single ceremony, it is preferred that the record for all the persons be retained at the parish where the rites are celebrated.

Godparents

No more than two names (one male and one female) may be entered in the "Godparents" or "Sponsors" column. Canon 874 §2 allows a baptized person, who is not a member of the Catholic Church, to serve as "a Christian witness." The designation "CW" is useful for clarity. Church law holds that a baptized member of an Eastern Orthodox Church is properly a Godparent and not a Christian witness.

The names of Godparents or sponsors are not to be changed later in the Baptismal register because they have died or because parents feel they are no longer suitable. In these situations, parents can ask someone else to serve in the role, but no changes will be made to the permanent record or on certificates.

Unmarried Parents

It is important that the provisions of Canon 877 concerning unmarried parents be followed. It is unjust to enter unauthorized names of parents in the Baptismal Register.

If a child is born of an unmarried mother, the name of the mother is to be inserted in the Baptismal register, if her maternity is established publicly (e.g. birth certificate) or if she seeks it willingly in writing or before two witnesses. Likewise, the name of the father shall be inserted in the register if his paternity has been proved either by some public document (e.g. birth certificate) or by his own declaration before the pastor and two witnesses. If these conditions are not met, the child is to be recorded as being of "Unknown Mother" or "Unknown Father," in Latin "mater ignota" or "pater ignotus". It is not permitted to make an annotation that states "Illegitimate."

For children whose parentage cannot be known (Canon 870) or is unknown (Canon 877 §2), the following information is to be entered in the baptismal register:

1. The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the guardian(s).
2. The date and place (city and state) of birth, if known, or of when child was found or placed under guardianship.
3. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) selected by the guardian(s), as well as their faith (C for Catholic or CW for Christian Witness).
4. The date and place of the baptism.
5. The name of the minister who performed the baptism.

Ascription to Proper Church Sui Iuris

If the pastor has concerns or questions regarding the proper ascription of the person to be baptized, please contact the Office of Canonical Affairs (or a canonist of the Metropolitan Tribunal if the former is not available) of the Archdiocese of Atlanta for assistance.

Baptismal Certificates

The issuance of a Baptismal certificate should reflect what is recorded in the Baptismal Register. Its purpose is to prove the fact of Baptism and the reception of any subsequent sacrament or church action that affects that person's canonical status in the Church. Once specific data has been changed in the sacramental register, the original data is not transcribed onto certificates (e.g., the natural parents' names after adoption). See the section on Certificates for more details.

Changes and Additions to Baptismal Register Entries

The Baptismal record is the primary sacramental record for Catholics. It serves as a log for all the significant public developments in one's relationship with the Church. As a result, most changes to entries in the sacramental registers are to be made in the Baptismal Register and the parish management software.

Changes to Original Data

Some changes are actual modifications of the original data entered for Baptism (e.g. change of name or change of parent). Baptismal records can potentially be recognized as legal documents, so it is not up to pastors or staff to alter them to suit a person's preference later in life. See the section on General Changes and Additions to Entries.

Notifications Added to "Notations" Column

Changes are often additions to the "Notations" column. For example, when a Catholic is confirmed, married or ordained, the churches where the sacraments are celebrated notify the church of Baptism, so the new sacraments can be noted in the Baptismal Register and entered into the parish management software. Also, when a marriage is declared invalid or when cleric is returned to the lay state, the Tribunal will notify the church of Baptism, so that a notation can be made in the person's Baptismal record.

Types of notification include confirmation, marriage(s) (including convalidations), reception of Holy Orders, perpetual profession in religious institute, and change of rite. Notations of annulment (and prohibitions on future marriages), laicization, and dispensation from vows shall also be entered when requested officially by the appropriate authorities. Notification documents should include a "turn around" document to verify notations have been recorded.

Defections from Church

A parish occasionally will receive a notification from an individual or a church indicating that the person is no longer a Catholic and even asking that the person's name be removed from Catholic Church records. While it is appropriate to remove the person's name from the parish membership rolls in the parish management software, no changes are to be made to the sacramental records.

Extraordinary Types of Baptism

When sacraments are administered in places other than the parish church building (i.e., hospital, campus chapel, a private home), it is important that the records of the sacrament not be lost and that they can be retrievable for future reference: (See [Parishes by Boundaries Map](#) for assistance in locating the proper territorial parish.)

Baptisms should be recorded at the parish whose territory encompasses the location at which the sacrament was celebrated, unless the place of Baptism is a Catholic institution that has received permission from the local Ordinary to maintain its own sacramental records.

Emergency Baptism

When a Baptism is conferred in an emergency, ceremonies may be supplied at a later date. The Baptism, if it is a Catholic Baptism, is recorded properly in the territorial parish where the emergency baptism occurred; that is where the hospital or other place is located. If the ceremonies are supplied at a later date [cf. 1973 Rite of Baptism for Children No. 31.3], a notation should be made in the margin indicating the date and place the ceremonies were supplied.

Conditional Baptism

When a conditional Baptism is conferred, "baptized conditionally" is to be written in the "Notations" column. Otherwise, the entry is the same as for any other Baptism. Conditional baptism is to be administered only if there is a doubt whether a person has been baptized or whether baptism was conferred validly and the doubt remains after a serious investigation.

If the original attempt at Baptism was celebrated in a Catholic Church, the conditional Baptism should be noted in the margin of the entry that recorded the original Baptism. If the original attempt was in a non-Catholic community, a new entry should be made in the register of the parish within whose boundaries the conditional Baptism was celebrated. In such cases the date and place of Baptism should be noted instead of the purported earlier Baptism. A note as to its conditional celebration should be included.

Adoption and Baptism

On October 20, 2000, the USCCB issued norms for the purpose of assisting those with the responsibility of recording the Baptism of children who had been adopted or who later are adopted (Can. 877 §3). The norms were originally approved by the USCCB on November 18, 1998, and in turn, received Roman approbation on September 30, 2000.

Baptism before Adoption

For children baptized before adoption, the following information shall be added in the Baptismal Register after the adoption is finalized:

1. Parentheses () shall be placed around the names of the natural parents.
2. The name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) shall then be added.
3. The child's former surname shall also be parenthesized () and the new surname added.
4. A notation shall be made that the child was legally adopted.

Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for these individuals should give the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s), the child's new legal surname, the date and place of birth, the date and place of Baptism, and the name of the minister who administered the sacrament.

The name(s) of the natural parents and the sponsor(s) shall not be given, and no mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the Baptismal certificate. The certificate is issued from the record created *after* the adoption; no certificate ever should be issued from the record created before adoption.

A new entry should be made, and cross-referenced in the index with the old entry, with the following information:

1. The new legal, Christian name of the child as designated by the adoptive parents.
2. The names of the adoptive parents, as well as their faith.
3. The date and place of birth.
4. The date and place of the Baptism.
5. The name of the minister performing the Baptism.

Baptism after Adoption

For children baptized after adoption, no reference to the adoption or the natural parents is to be made in the Baptismal Register. Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for adopted children will be no different from other Baptismal certificates.

The information entered into the register is identical to that of a baptism under normal circumstances. No mention of the adoption need be made in the register or on the certificate.

Same Sex Couples Presenting an Adopted Child for Baptism

For instances in which a same sex couple present an adopted child for baptism, the parish should follow the above norms. Only the parent's name(s) listed on the child's post-adoption, amended birth certificate shall be entered into the register.

Surgical Gender Change

The Vatican Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith holds that no changes should be made to a baptismal record to reflect the "new" sex of an individual who has undergone what is commonly referred to as a gender reassignment surgery. An October 15, 2002 letter from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops further clarifies:

Therefore, even in cases of such [sex reassignment] operations the records are not to be altered. Specifically, the altered condition of the faithful under civil law does not change one's canonical condition which is male or female as determined at the moment of birth. However, should a situation rise in which some sort of notation is determined to be necessary, it is possible, in the margin of the entry for baptism, to note the altered status of the person under civil law. In such cases, the date and relevant protocol number of the civil juridic act or document should be included along with, where possible, a copy of the document itself at that page of the baptismal registry.

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults

Definition of Terms

OCIA

Outside of emergency situations, adults and children over seven years of age are required by canon law to participate in a process of formation governed by the "Order of Christian Initiation of Adults." OCIA culminates in the celebration of all three sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and first reception of the Eucharist—in the same ceremony. Information concerning those who receive the sacraments of initiation shall be recorded in the Baptismal and Confirmation Registers.

Catechumens

A catechumen is a person who is not yet baptized and who has celebrated the "Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens" as part of the OCIA. The name of a catechumen, along with the names of the sponsor, officiating minister, and date and place of the celebration, is entered into a special register of catechumens. Note that already-baptized candidates for full communion and Confirmation technically are not catechumens and that these persons' names are not placed in the catechumenal register.

Elect

An “elect” person is a catechumen who has subsequently celebrated the “Rite of Election or Enrollment of names” as part of the OCIA, and so has been chosen by the Church to receive the sacraments of initiation. The name of an elect catechumen, along with the names of the sponsor, officiating minister, and date and place of the celebration, is entered into a special “Book of the Elect.” Note that already-baptized candidates for full communion and Confirmation technically are not catechumens and do not become members of the Elect, and that these persons’ names are not placed in the “Book of the Elect.”

Sacraments of Initiation Register Entries

Once the elect receives the Sacraments of Initiation, their names shall be recorded in the Baptismal Register and Confirmation Register (First Communion Register optional) of the parish in which the sacraments were celebrated. This same information should be recorded in the parish management software.

Note that, since 1983, confirmation is ordinarily administered at the time of the profession of faith. The “sponsor” for a person joining the Church typically serves also as the sponsor for confirmation.

For the baptism of the elect, the following information is to be entered in the baptismal register:

1. The given or Christian name(s) of the person (use the maiden name of a woman).
2. The names of the parents (first, middle, and surname/maiden name).
3. The date and place of birth (city and state).
4. The name(s) of the sponsor(s), as well as their faith (C for Catholic or CW for Christian Witness).
5. The date and place of the baptism (including city and state).
6. The name of the minister who performed the baptism.
7. Marginal notation of reception of Eucharist and confirmation and marital status (either current valid marriage or the convalidation of the current civil marriage). Any decree of annulment or dissolution (including where granted and protocol number) should also be noted.

For the confirmation of the elect, the following information is to be entered in the confirmation register:

1. The legal and Christian names of the person (use the maiden name of a woman).
2. The chosen Confirmation name of the person.
3. The names of the parents (first, middle, and surname/maiden name).
4. The date and place of baptism (including city and state).
5. The name of the sponsor, as well as their faith (C for Catholic).
6. The place and date of the confirmation.
7. The name of the minister who performed the confirmation.

Once the Sacraments of Initiation have been received and recorded in the appropriate sacramental registers, that parish becomes the parish of record for future certificate requests.

If the parish maintains a Register of Catechumens, include the following information in the register:

1. Full Name of Catechumen,
2. Date and Place of Birth of Catechumen,
3. Full Name of the Priest,
4. Full Names of the Sponsors, and
5. Date and Place of the Rite for Entrance into the Catechumenate.

Reception into Full Communion

Register Entries

When persons are received into Full Communion with the Catholic Church, after having been baptized previously in another Christian faith, an entry must be made in the Baptismal Register and in the parish management software. The data concerning the Rite of Reception should be entered in the spaces provided for Baptism, and the data concerning the original Baptism should be entered in the "Notations" column, especially the date and place.

Special care must be taken to follow the proper procedure when young children are received into Full Communion along with their parents. In such cases, it is suggested that the ceremonies be supplied as in an emergency Baptism, so there is a formal reception into the Church.

The date the ceremonies were conducted should be noted in the spaces provided for Baptism. The data concerning the original Baptism should be entered in the Notations column, especially the date and place.

For the "Full Reception into the Church" celebrated for a baptized adult (OCIA), the following information is to be entered in the Baptismal Register:

1. The given or Christian name(s) of the person (use the maiden name of a woman).
2. The name of the father (first, middle if any, and surname) and the name of the mother (first, middle if any, and maiden name).
3. The date and place of birth.
4. The name of the sponsor, as well as their faith (C for Catholic or CW for Christian Witness).
5. The date and place of the Rite of Reception are noted in the space provided for Baptism.
6. Marginal notations giving the date and place of the original Baptism, reception of Eucharist and Confirmation, and marital status (either current valid marriage or the convalidation of the current marriage). Any decree of invalidity or dissolution (including where granted and protocol number) should be noted.

Bringing a Baptized Child into the Church

For baptized children before age seven who are being received into the Church, the following information is to be entered in the Register and in the parish's management system. It is the same procedure to follow when the child is being received, along with the parents, into Full Communion with the Catholic Church:

1. The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the parent(s).
2. The name of the father (first, middle if any, and surname) and the name of the mother (first, middle if any, and maiden name).
3. The date and place of birth.
4. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) now selected by the parents
5. The date and place (church and town) of formal reception into the Church are noted in the spaces provided for Baptism.
6. Data concerning the original Baptism should be entered in the Notations column, especially the date and place (Rite of Baptism for Children).

If the parish is maintaining a Register of Reception into Full Communion, enter the following information in the register:

1. The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the parent(s).
2. The name of the father (first, middle if any, and surname) and the name of the mother (first, middle if any, and maiden name).
3. The date and place of birth.
4. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) now selected by the parents

5. The date and place (church and town) of formal reception into the Church are noted in the spaces provided for Baptism.
6. Data concerning the original Baptism should be entered in the Notations column, especially the date and place (Rite of Baptism for Children).

First Communion

First Communion Register Entries

When First Communions are performed in a parish where registers are maintained, the following information is to be entered into the Communion Register and in the parish management software:

1. The legal and Christian names of the child.
2. The parents named on the Baptismal certificate.
3. The date and place of Baptism.
4. The church and date of the First Communion.
5. The name of the main celebrant of the Mass.

First Communion records are not required to be retained or reported. They may be shown on the Baptismal record.

Because they are a non-canonical record, unlike Confirmation records, First Communion records cannot be required for the administration of other sacraments, including Marriage.

Notification of Church of Baptism

Although it is no longer required, parishes may give notice of First Communion (i.e. Holy Communion or First Eucharist) to the parish of Baptism.

Confirmation

Canon Law Related to Confirmation Records

CAN. 894 To prove the conferral of Confirmation the prescripts of Can. 876 are to be observed.

CAN. 895 The names of those confirmed with mention made of the minister, the parents and sponsors, and the place and date of the conferral of Confirmation are to be recorded in the Confirmation Register of the diocesan curia or, where the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan bishop has prescribed it, in a register kept in the parish archives. The pastor must inform the pastor of the place of Baptism about the conferral of Confirmation so that notation is made in the Baptismal Register according to the norm of Can. 535-§2.

CAN. 896 If the pastor of the place was not present, the minister either personally or through another is to inform him as soon as possible of the conferral of Confirmation.

Confirmation Register Entries

The place of Baptism should be notified of the Confirmation. In the case of a baptized person who was brought into Full Communion in the Church, the place of reception (Profession of Faith) is to be notified instead of the place of Baptism.

Emergency Confirmation

As in the case of emergency Baptism, the record of an emergency Confirmation is to be kept in the territorial parish in which the Confirmation occurred. Entry should also be made in the parish management software.

Large Group of Recipients

When several people are confirmed at the same ceremony by the same minister, the date of conferral and the name of the minister may be written only once in the register, so long as it is clear that the references apply to all the confirmed.

If there is more than one minister at a single ceremony, the record should show clearly which ministers confirmed which recipients.

Recipients from More Than One Parish

When Confirmation is conferred upon persons from several parishes at one ceremony, all records are made at the parish where Confirmation was celebrated with notification sent to the parishes of Baptism.

Baptismal Certificate

In order to satisfy the obligation of notifying the parish of Baptism about the conferral of Confirmation, a Baptismal certificate for each candidate for Confirmation should be obtained in advance of the celebration of Confirmation.

Some additional reasons for obtaining a Baptismal certificate:

1. The fact of valid Baptism and membership in the Catholic Church will be established.
2. Any previous reception of valid Confirmation, especially in the case of Catholics who were baptized in Eastern Catholic Churches, will be uncovered.
3. Any discrepancies between name and parentage provided in the Baptismal Register and given at the time of Confirmation will be discovered.
4. The identity of Baptismal Godparents can be ascertained.

Baptismal Data

It is recommended that the place and date of Baptism be noted in the Confirmation Register, which can be especially helpful when a person has difficulty locating a Baptismal record later in life.

Notification of Church of Baptism

The Church of Baptism should be notified of the Confirmation as soon as possible by the clergy of the place where the record of Confirmation is retained. This notification is to include the name of the recipient and the date of Baptism, as well as the place and date of Confirmation. The names of the minister, parents, and sponsor are not required.

When a person previously baptized in another Christian communion is received into Full Communion and Confirmed at the same time, the church of Baptism is not notified.

Marriage

Canon Law Related to Marriage Records

CAN. 1081 The pastor or the priest or deacon mentioned in Can. 1079 §2 is to notify the local ordinary immediately about a dispensation granted for the external forum; it is also to be noted in the Marriage Register.

CAN. 1121 §1. After a marriage has been celebrated, the pastor of the place of the celebration or the person who takes his place, even if neither assisted at the marriage, is to note as soon as possible in the Marriage Register the names of the spouses, the person who assisted, and the witnesses, and the place and date of the celebration of the marriage according to the method prescribed by the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan bishop.

CAN. 1122 §1. The contracted marriage is to be noted also in the Baptismal Registers in which the Baptism of the spouses has been recorded.

CAN. 1123 Whenever a marriage is either convalidated in the external forum, declared null, or legitimately dissolved other than by death, the pastor of the place of celebration of the marriage must be informed so that a notation is properly made in the Marriage and Baptismal Registers.

CAN. 1685 As soon as the sentence is executed, the judicial vicar must notify the local ordinary of the place in which the marriage was celebrated. The local ordinary must take care that the declaration of the nullity of the marriage and any possible prohibitions are noted as soon as possible in the Marriage and Baptismal Registers.

Marriage Register Entries

Types of Data

All marriages (including marriages convalidated in the external forum) are to be entered in the Marriage Register. For weddings celebrated with recognition by the Catholic Church, the following information is to be entered into the Marriage Register and in the parish's management system:

1. The legal names of the groom.
2. The name of the father (first, middle if any, and surname) and the name of the mother (first, middle if any, and maiden name) of the groom.
3. The legal names of the bride (always use the maiden name of a woman, even if a second marriage).
4. The name of the father (first, middle if any, and surname) and the name of the mother (first, middle if any, and maiden name) of the bride.
5. The date and place of Baptism of each party.
6. The date and place (actual church and town) of the wedding.
7. The names of the witnesses, as well as their faith (C for Catholic or CW for Christian Witness).
8. The name of the priest or deacon asking for and receiving the couple's vows.
9. Notation of any permissions, dispensations and delegations obtained for the valid celebration of the wedding (including protocol number if existing).

The informational facts in the prenuptial file or envelope are the source for the Marriage Register. The marginal notation column is for the purpose of noting any permission or dispensation, regardless of the source for the permission/dispensation, and other significant factors (for instance, delegation for the minister or sanation).

Source of Data

The pastor is responsible for seeing that the necessary information is recorded in the parish where the marriage was celebrated. The premarital file ordinarily contains all the necessary information. However, the celebrant should be alert to any last-minute changes or corrections to the information contained in the premarital file.

Marriage Outside Parish Church

When a marriage is celebrated according to canonical form in a place other than a parish church (e.g., a chapel), the sacramental record is entered and kept at the territorial parish within the boundaries of which the wedding was celebrated (except when the place of marriage is a Catholic institution that has received permission from the Chancery to maintain its own sacramental records).

In the case of a wedding celebrated with a dispensation from canonical form, the marriage shall be recorded in two places: (1) in the parish of the Catholic party whose clergy prepared the couple for marriage and requested the dispensation (or at least gave permission for another priest to do so); and (2) in the Chancery of the diocese which granted the dispensation from canonical form. The pre-nuptial files are to be kept in the first location. The parish who requested the dispensation is responsible for sending the usual notification of marriage to the parish of Baptism of the Catholic party or parties. They are also responsible for notifying the Chancery that granted the dispensation from canonical form if the marriage was not celebrated.

Convalidation

When a civil marriage is convalidated, the data concerning the convalidation is to be placed in the usual columns. The date, place, and officiant of the original ceremony are to be noted in the "Notations" column.

Sanation

When a marriage is sanated, the data concerning the original ceremony is to be placed in the usual columns. The date, diocese, and protocol number of the sanation are to be noted in the notations column.

Marriages of persons who are baptized or received into full communion in the Catholic Church are not to be recorded in the marriage register, unless the marriage now is being validated, convalidated, or sanated. A notation concerning the marriage is to be placed in the person's baptismal record in the notations column.

Notation of Dispensations and Annulments

When a dispensation is granted prior to marriage, or an annulment or a dissolution (Pauline Privilege, Petrine Privilege, Ratified but Non-Consummated) is granted after marriage, the date, diocese, and protocol number, along with the type of dispensation (e.g. "Dispensation from Disparity of Worship") or the word "Annulment," or "Dissolution" are to be noted in the "Notations" column. Also to be included are any permissions granted; the delegation given to assist at marriage; and any restrictions on future marriages as set forth in the decree of nullity. Any special recording directions contained in the dispensation or annulment document are to be followed as well.

Notification of Church of Baptism

When the marriage of a Catholic is celebrated, convalidated, or sanated, the pastor of the parish where the record of marriage is retained must notify the church of Baptism. This notification should include the names of the spouses and the date and place of the wedding, convalidation or sanation; the names of the officiant and witnesses are not required.

Premarital Files

Contents

Each parish and mission are required to maintain a file of the papers collected during the period of marriage preparation. The file typically will include prenuptial forms, questionnaires, correspondence, sacramental notifications, relevant notes, dispensation documents, and affidavits. A copy of the civil license also is retained in the file.

Do not keep the marital compatibility evaluation except for current use, but note the date the evaluation was undertaken on the premarital envelope or in the file before requesting permission to dispose of the confidential information.

Location

The premarital file for each couple should be retained by the parish or mission where the marriage is recorded in the Marriage Register. If the marriage prep takes place at a different parish from the wedding, a copy of the premarital file should be sent to the parish where the marriage is recorded in the Marriage Register. The priest at the parish who performed the preparation may retain a copy of the premarital file for 1-2 years in case any questions arise before contacting the Office of Archives and Records to properly dispose of the confidential information.

Filing and Retention

The file for each couple is to be kept in its own acid-free envelope or folder, clearly marked with the parties' names and the date of the marriage. A file is considered "expired" or "inactive" when the parish receives notice that one of the spouses has died. The files should be kept together in a locked file cabinet or safe or secure storage room. Expired premarital files can be weeded down to essential documents (questionnaires and marriage registration forms).

Retain pre-nuptial files in a secure location at the parish for 75 years. Once 75 years have passed since the marriage, permission to shred the pre-marital files can be requested by completing a disposition request form and submitting it to the Office of Archives and Records.

Transmission of File

If a legitimate request for the copy of the file is made by an ecclesiastical tribunal, a photocopy or digital scan of the file should be sent. The original file should remain in the parish's archives. If the photocopy of the original file is later returned, it should be destroyed properly. A notation should be made on the copy that this document is a faithful and complete reproduction of the document.

Holy Orders

Canon Law Related to Ordination Registers

CAN. 1053 §1. After an ordination has taken place, the names of those ordained and of the ordaining minister and the place and date of ordination are to be noted in a special register to be kept carefully in the curia of the place of ordination; all the documents of individual ordination are to be preserved carefully.

§2. The ordaining bishop is to give to each of the ordained an authentic testimonial of the reception of ordination; if a bishop other than their own promoted them with dimissorial letters, they are to show the testimonial to their own ordinary for notation of the ordination in a special register to be kept in the archive.

Ordination Register Entries

The archbishop's delegates shall enter all ordinations (permanent deacon, transitional deacon, presbyteral, and episcopal) performed within the territory of the Archdiocese of Atlanta into the appropriate ordination register.

Responsibility for Entry

The Office for the Permanent Diaconate is responsible for maintaining the Sacramental Register for Ordinations to the Permanent Diaconate. The Office of Priest Personnel and/or the Office of Vocations is responsible for maintaining the Sacramental Register for Ordinations to the Priesthood. (Ordinations to the transitional diaconate will be recorded in the Sacramental Register for Ordinations to the Priesthood.)

Types of Data

The following information is to be entered into the appropriate ordination register:

1. The date of the ordination.
2. The full name (last, first middle) of the ordained.
3. The date of birth of the ordained.
4. The type of ordination (permanent deacon, transitional deacon, presbyteral, episcopal).
5. The ordaining prelate.
6. The (arch)diocese for which the person is being ordained.
7. The location (church, city, state) of the ordination.

Notification of Church of Baptism

The archbishop's delegates must notify the church of baptism as soon as possible. This notification should include the name of the ordained, the date and place of the ordination, and the ordaining prelate. The Office for the Permanent Diaconate is responsible for sending notifications for all newly ordained Permanent Deacons. The Office of Priest Personnel is responsible for sending notifications for all newly ordained Transitional Deacons, Priests, and Bishops.

Death

Canon Law Related to Death Records

CAN. 1182 When the burial has been completed, a record is to be made in the register of deaths according to the norm of particular law.

Death Register Entries

Types of Data

Death registers are required to be kept by all parishes. All Catholic funeral liturgies, even if celebrated outside the church building, should be entered in the parish Death Register.

For deaths where the funeral is celebrated in the parish or in the parish boundaries, the following information is to be entered into the Death Register:

1. The legal and Christian names of the deceased person.
2. The residential address of the deceased person.
3. The date and place of death.
4. The date and place of burial (which may be the same as the funeral date).
5. Additional information may include the name of the funeral home, next of kin, the cause of death if known (should be taken from an official Certificate of Death only), vigil place and celebrant, and funeral place and celebrant.

Source of Data

The data needed for the Death Register is ordinarily provided by the funeral director.

Cremation

When the body has been cremated, no reference to the date or place of cremation is made in the Death Register. However, the fact of cremation should be noted, as well as the date and place of the ashes' interment.

Memorial Services

There is no canonical requirement to record a memorial service in the Death Register. It is up to the preference of the parish as to whether to record this information in the register.

Non-Catholic Burial

If a priest or deacon is called upon to preside at a non-Catholic burial, an entry can be made in the Death Register together with a notation concerning the religion of the deceased and the services that were provided.

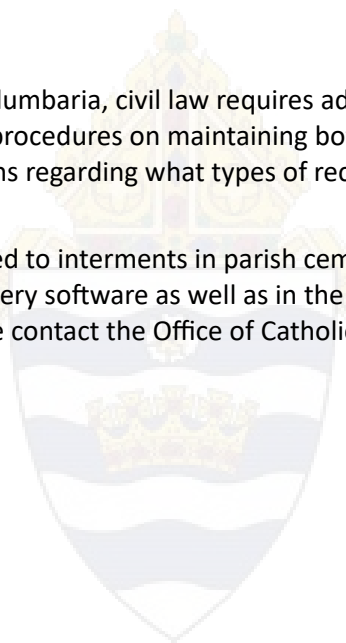
Burial Permits

Burial permit books do not satisfy the conditions of a permanent Death Register.

Cemetery and/or Columbaria Records

For those parishes with cemeteries and/or columbaria, civil law requires additional records to be maintained. The Office of Catholic Cemeteries provides policies and procedures on maintaining both cemeteries and columbaria. Please refer to those documents for further recommendations regarding what types of records need to be maintained in addition to the Death Register.

It is required that pertinent information related to interments in parish cemeteries and/or columbaria should be recorded in the Archdiocesan provided cemetery software as well as in the parish management software. If you need assistance with the cemetery software, please contact the Office of Catholic Cemeteries.



Appendix I: Retention Information

Below is a chart detailing the retention period for various types of sacramental records related paperwork.

Record Name	Record Description	Retention Period
Sacramental Registers	This includes registers for Baptism, First Communion (Eucharist), Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination, Anointing of the Sick, Death, The Elect, Reception into Full Communion, Catechumens.	Permanent Registers should be transferred to the Office of Archives and Records when all entries in the book are older than 75 years.
Supporting Documentation for Major Changes	The paperwork collected to create a new corrected sacramental register entry for an individual. (See section titled "Style and Authorization for Major Changes for more details.)	Permanent Keep in a labeled folder near the sacramental registers. When the register the paperwork refers to is transferred to the Office of Archives and Records after 75 years, the folder should transfer with it.
Premarital Files	The file typically will include prenuptial forms, questionnaires, correspondence, sacramental notifications, relevant notes, dispensation documents, and affidavits. A copy of the civil license also is retained in the file. (Do not retain the marital compatibility evaluation except for current use.)	75 Years from date of wedding Please complete a disposition form to receive permission to properly dispose of past retention premarital files.
Supporting Documentation for Sacramental Preparation	The paperwork collected when preparing for a sacrament that is not marriage.	1 Year Please shred appropriately when retention has been met. A disposition request form is not required.
Mass Intention Books	Record of offerings received for the celebration of a Mass for a particular intention of the donor.	2 Years Please complete a disposition form to receive permission to properly dispose of Mass Intention Books.
Requests for Certificates	Forms and/or documents from individuals or authorized authorities requesting copies of sacramental certificates.	1 Year Please shred appropriately when retention has been met. A disposition request form is not required.

Appendix II: Sample Affidavit for Recreating a Baptismal Record

In the presence of
(Name of Catholic cleric under whose authority this affidavit is accepted by the Catholic Church)
I (we) testify that
(Full legal name of person baptized)

Child of
(Full legal name of father of person baptized)

and

(Full legal name of mother of person baptized – include maiden name)
--

Born in
[include locality (town, city, county, etc.), region (state, province, territory, etc.), and country]

on the _____ day of _____ in the year _____

(day of birth) (month of birth) (year of birth)

Baptized on the _____ day of _____ in the year _____

(day of Baptism) (month of Baptism) (year of Baptism)

At

[place of Baptism, including church name (or hospital, etc.), city/county, state/province, and country]

By

[Name of the individual who performed the Baptism (include the title of the individual, if known)]

Godparents (or sponsors) being
(First and last name, if known)
and
(First and last name, if known)

Witness to the Baptism
Name (This can be the subject of the affidavit if he/she was old enough to remember the Baptism)

Signature of Witness _____ Date _____

Additional Witness to the Baptism
Name (This can be the subject of the affidavit if he/she was old enough to remember the Baptism)

Signature of Witness _____ Date _____

Contact information of Catholic cleric serving as Witness to this Affidavit:
Church Name
Mailing Address (Include street, city, state, and zip code)
Mailing Address (Include street, city, state, and zip code)

_____	_____
Email Address	Phone Number
_____	_____
Signature of Catholic Cleric	Date

Place church seal here

Office Use Only

Date Affidavit Received _____

Parish Receiving Affidavit _____

Appendix III: Sample Register Entries

Standard Entries

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father's name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson	Linda Bouvier	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	
	19 April 1987		Elizabeth Bouvier	Herbert Powell		
KENT, William Joseph	Temple, KS	4 July 1987	Jonathan Kent	Mary Lane	Rev. Charles Knight	
	13 June 1938		Martha Clark	James Olsen		

Conditional Baptism

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson	Linda Bouvier	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Baptized conditionally
	19 April 1987		Elizabeth Bouvier	Herbert Powell		

Christian Witness

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson	Linda Bouvier	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	
	19 April 1987		Elizabeth Bouvier	Herbert Powell (Christian Witness)		

Unmarried Parents – No Father Noted

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	<hr/> Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	

Unmarried Parents – Father Attested and Noted

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	

Bringing Baptized Child into the Church

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Rites furnished for child baptized 29 May 1987 by mother at home, Wilmer, GA, per mother's testimony, 12 June 1987.

Baptism of an Unbaptized Adult

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
BROCKMAN, Kent	Phoenix, AZ 12 Aug 1963	16 Oct 1991	Charles Brockman Sarah Fickle	Stephanie Bells Montgomery Burns	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Baptized, confirmed, and received First Communion 16 Oct 1991

Reception into Full Communion

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	Profession of Faith, 18 Nov 2009	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Received into Full Communion, 18 Nov 2009; baptized 29 May 1987, First Presbyterian Church, Dallas, TX; Married Janice Nimkovich, 14 June 2007, First Baptist Church, San Antonio, TX.

Ascription to Eastern Catholic Church

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Ascribed as Maronite

Testimony of Witness Verifying Reception of Sacrament

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Confirmed 16 Oct 1999 at St. Mary CC, Houston, TX, attested to by mother and sister.

Notation of Confirmation and Marriage

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Confirmed 12 June 1999, St. Benedict CC, Savannah, GA. Married Shannon Kelly 21 May 2007, St. Stanislaus CC, Rincon, GA.

Notation of Ordination to Priesthood

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Bermingham	Confirmed 12 June 1999, St. Benedict CC, Savannah, GA. Ordained transitional deacon 21 May 2007, St. Stanislaus CC, Rincon, GA. Ordained priest 29 May 2008, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Savannah, GA

Notation of Ordination to Permanent Diaconate

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Bermingham	Confirmed 12 June 1999, St. Benedict CC, Savannah, GA. Married Janice Kennedy 14 June 2007, Christ the King CC, Savannah, GA. Ordained permanent deacon 21 May 2007, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Savannah, GA

Notation of Perpetual Vows

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
BARTON, Sarah	Aiken, AR 3 Feb 1988	18 March 1988	John Barton Mary Smythe	Jerome Link Cheryl McGuiness	Rev. John Thomas	Confirmed 13 Dec 2000, St. Michael CC, Erie, PA Perpetual vows, 17 Nov 2008, Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, Nashville, TN.

Marriage Outside Parish Church (Canonical Form)

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Married Janice Kennedy 14 June 2007 at Perkins Chapel, Smallville University, KS; records at Christ the King CC, Savannah, GA.

Marriage Outside Parish Church (Dispensation from Canonical Form)

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Married Janice Kennedy 14 June 2007 at Perkins Chapel, Smallville University, KS; records at Christ the King CC, Savannah, GA. <i>[Note: This entry should be made in both the parish where the Catholic party completed marriage prep, and in the Chancery of the diocese that granted the dispensation from canonical form.]</i>

Notation of Declaration of Nullity (Annulment)

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Married Janice Kennedy 14 June 2007, Christ the King CC, Savannah, GA. Decl. of Nullity, Savannah protocol no. 336-24-05

Minor Change – Name correction

Major Change – Termination of original entry- Adoption

		25 Mar 1992; Springfield Co.
Do not issue certificate from this record - see Rutan, page 31.		

Major Change – Replacement of original entry - Adoption

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
RUTAN, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Burt Rutan Tanya Smith		Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Original record at (SIMPSON) RUTAN, page 20

Recreation of a Missing Record

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Recreation of baptismal record based on the testimony of Linda Bouvier, 4 April 2010.

Additional Space Required for Notations

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James	Springfield, IL 19 April 1987	29 May 1987	Mark Simpson Elizabeth Bouvier	Linda Bouvier Herbert Powell	Rev. Timothy Birmingham	Confirmed 12 June 1999, St. Benedict CC, Savannah, GA. Ordained transitional deacon 21 May 2007, St. Stanislaus CC, Rincon, GA. (see pg. 31)

Name of Baptized	Place & Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father name/ Mother's maiden name	Sponsors	Officiating Clergy	Notations
SIMPSON, Michael James						Continued from page 20 Ordained priest 29 May 2008, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Savannah, GA

Appendix IV: Additional Resources

Below are some additional resources that may be helpful. Additional information for all the departments below may be located on the archdiocesan parish resources website.

Office of Archives and Records

The Office of Archives and Records provides a wide array of services for parishes and missions, including but not limited to resources and advice related to recordkeeping, records retention and disposition, sacramental records, preservation, bookbinding and repair, archival records, and more.

Metropolitan Tribunal

The ministry of the Metropolitan Tribunal includes all matters concerning the application and practice of canon law within the Archdiocese of Atlanta as well as the appeals court for the suffragan dioceses of the ecclesiastical province, which includes the dioceses of Charlotte, Charleston, Raleigh and Savannah. By delegation, the Tribunal also handles all matters of permissions and dispensations pertaining to marriage.

Office of Parish Support

Parish Support, which is situated within the Office of Finance, provides training on and administration of the archdiocesan parish management software. The support staff are available to help parish staff find streamlined ways to manage their parish data and accounting systems and to implement best practices in managing this data.

Office of Divine Worship

The Office of Divine Worship provides direct support to parishes and programs designed to aid parish clergy, volunteers, and staff.

Sacramental Registers Vendors

Many church supply vendors in the United States obtain their sacramental registers from the manufacturer F.J. Remey. The two major companies to order sacramental registers from are F.J. Remey (<https://remeychurchgoods.com/>) and Tonini Church Supply (<http://www.tonini.net/>).

Preferred Archival Ink Pen

The Office of Archives and Records highly recommends using an archival quality ink pen when recording the sacraments in the registers. While many pen companies produce pens with permanent ink, we prefer the Sakura brand Pigma Micron 08 (0.50mm) Ink Pens. These can be purchased from a variety of retailers, including [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/).