

POLICY 7.4.1 Protection of Personal Information in Archived Records and Documents

The Archives of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan are the repository for all archdiocesan and parochial documents, dating back to the erection of the Apostolic Vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie. The personal information in these documents, including copies of parishes' sacramental registers, is protected by provisions in the *Code of Canon Law* (canon law) and the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) of Alberta.

In the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan, there is an archivist who is delegated to carry out the preservation and ordering of sacramental and historical records.

Canon law and personal information

Under canon law, the bishop of the local Church is responsible for safeguarding all documents related to the "spiritual and temporal affairs" of the diocese and its parishes (c.486). With respect to the release of personal information in these diocesan documents, c.487 §2 states that "Interested parties have the right to obtain personally or through a proxy an authentic written copy or photocopy of documents which by their nature are public and which pertain to their personal status."

The bishop is also responsible for the care and protection of documents in the archives of the cathedral, parochial and all other churches in the diocese (c.491, §1). In addition, c.491, §2 says "The diocesan bishop is also to take care that there is an historical archive in the diocese and that documents having historical value are diligently protected..." §3 of the canon provides that access to the documents in parish and historical archives is governed by "the norms established by the diocesan bishop..."

PIPA and archived documents in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

PIPA limits the release of documents containing personal information to the individual named in the document, except: (1) if the record that contains the information has been in existence for more than 100 years; (2) if the individual identified in the record has been dead for at least twenty years; or, (3) the individual identified in the record has given consent to the disclosure.

The Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan will allow access to the historical documents in the Archives where he is satisfied that there is a legitimate research interest and/or purpose.

Sacramental records and certificates requests

If a person is seeking information about a sacrament performed in a parish, quasi-parish or mission of the Archdiocese, she or he should first contact the parish where the sacrament was performed. The usual fee for a duplicate certificate is \$10 (cf. Policy 3.5.1) If the parish is closed, then she or he can submit a *Certificate Request Form* to the archivist. Please contact the Chancery to obtain the form. In cases of a closed parish, the \$10 fee for a duplicate certificate applies. For other requests for duplicate certificates from the Archives of the Archdiocese there is a \$25 fee. **For certificates being requested to meet Church requirements, such as in view of marriage, there is no re-issuance fee, whether the certificate is provided by the parish or by the Archives.**

PIPA also applies to sacramental certificates. That means, a parish or the Archives of the Archdiocese can release certificates only to the person or people named in the certificate, as having received the sacrament, or to another individual, with the written consent from the named person or people. This includes certificates of minors. A parent or legal guardian may make the request for a certificate on behalf of the minor named in the certificate only where the minor is under the age of 12 years or otherwise deemed unable to understand the nature of the request.

Sacramental certificates may also be released when they meet the other criteria described in PIPA: (1) the sacramental record is at least 100 years old; or, (2) the individual or individuals named in the sacramental record has been dead for at least twenty years.

Requests for historical documents for research purposes

If a person is seeking historical information and/or documents, for personal or non-personal research purposes, an application may be made to the Archdiocese, using form 7.4.a, *Archives Research Request Form*. It is important that the applicant give as much detail about the research as possible.

In these circumstances, canon law, including diocesan norms on access, and PIPA will be applied to the decision whether to permit access.

Please see Policy 7.4.2 Archives access for research purposes for details.

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