

## **POLICY 6.1      Parochial Registers and Archives**

*Please refer to **Directive 6.1** for specific guidance and more details regarding the maintenance of parish archives.*

An important role for the parish priest is the maintenance and administration of parish registers and archives. The *Code of Canon Law*, can. 535 §1, says “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 [parish priest] is to see that [parochial] registers are accurately inscribed and carefully preserved.”

The nature of contemporary society and parishes makes it imperative that parish priests are diligent and conscientious about creating, updating, and ensuring the accuracy of these records for individual Christian faithful. This policy has been created to assist and remind priests of what are the canonical and diocesan requirements for sacrament records in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan.

### **Parish Records of Sacraments**

Every parish, quasi-parish and mission of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan use standard sacrament registers, produced by the Archdiocese beginning in 2014. There are four registers, one each for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and marriage and one for Christian burials.

Some of the parishes of the Archdiocese use Parish Friendly software, where they also record sacraments administered there.

- **Creating records**

Parish priests must ensure that the sacrament records, both electronic and paper, are accurately inscribed. The mobility of both parishioners and priests makes it unwise to rely on community memory and relationships to make up for poor penmanship, misspelled names, and partial dates. It is incumbent on the parish priest to get the details of the records’ data absolutely correct.

The cleric (or layperson, as applicable) who administers any sacrament, and baptism in particular, must ensure that names are spelled correctly, that dates are correct, and that all required information is inscribed in the register.

**Note:** The required information for paper registers and Parish Friendly records is different.

- **Sacrament Registers**

The parish sacrament registers must always be secured in the premises of the parish, quasi-parish or mission to which they belong, if there is a resident priest. If there is no resident priest, the registers must be secured in the premises where the assigned parish priest resides.

Parish priests are responsible for ensuring that the information recorded in the sacrament registers is accurate, complete and legible. The Archdiocese recommends that all but the required signatures be clearly printed (i.e. do not use cursive writing).

Annually, as early as possible in January, parish priests will ensure that photocopies are made of all the records created in the registers in the preceding year and forward the copies to the Archives of the Archdiocese.

- **Parish Friendly**

Parish Friendly creates separate records for the following sacraments: Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Marriage; Deaths are recorded in the “Family” section.

The sacrament records created in the preceding year are provided by email or a file sharing program to Archdiocese’s Archivist (archives.agm@outlook.com) each January.

- **Certificates for sacraments** (cf. Policy 7.4.1)

Parish priests are responsible for ensuring that individuals receive a certificate that records the sacrament received with pertinent details, e.g. name, date, place, parents, godparents, priest’s name, parish name. The preference is that the priest, or other person who administers the sacrament, provides the certificate at the time of the sacrament. If that is not possible, then another mutually agreeable time is acceptable.

**For duplicate certificates:** parish priests are responsible for approving all requests for duplicate certificates. The requests **must be made in writing by the person named in the certificate** (as recipient of the sacrament). Form 7.4.1.a may be used for this purpose. The Archdiocese recommends that parishes charge a fee of \$10 for duplicate certificates, except those issued for ecclesial purposes (e.g. a baptism certificate in view of marriage or to confirm a baptism of an individual seeking full initiation into the Church).

Parish Friendly can also be used to create certificates for the individual(s) receiving the sacrament(s).

Can. 535 §3 states that “Each parish is to have its own seal. Documents regarding canonical status of the Christian faithful...are to be signed by the pastor [parish priest] or his delegate and sealed with the parochial seal.” In the Archdiocese, all parishes, quasi-parishes and missions are to have their own seal. The Finance Section can assist a parish priest to acquire the seal if one is needed. The seal may be a dry seal (i.e. impresses a mark on the document) or a wet seal (an inked stamp).

- **Notification of change in canonical status**

To assure the accuracy and completeness of an individual’s record of canonical status, parish priests are responsible for notifying a person’s parish of baptism whenever that status changes (e.g. when sacraments of confirmation, ~~and~~ marriage, and holy orders and religious profession are administered).

### **Other canonical and civil law requirements**

- **Marriages**

Parish priests are responsible for creating the canonical file for marriages (cf. Policy 2.7.1 and Policy 2.7.3) for couples who reside in the parish, regardless of where the marriage is to be solemnized.

The original canonical file is retained in the parish for marriages solemnized in the parish.

The parish priest will ensure that the appropriate portion of the provincial marriage license document is attached to the canonical file and that the entire record is filed for safekeeping with other similar documents. The marriage license document can be destroyed after one year but the canonical file must be retained in perpetuity.

The parish priest is responsible for sending the properly completed marriage license to Alberta Vital Statistics within 48 hours of the marriage being solemnized. This responsibility extends to assuring that the presiding minister of the marriage has properly completed and returned the marriage license to Alberta Vital Statistics as required.

- **Burials** (cf. Policy 7.5)

A burial permit, issued by an authorized person, as defined in the governing legislation, is required before human remains can be buried in a cemetery. The parish copy of the burial permit is filed in the parish office and kept in perpetuity.

- **Parish Archives**

Can. 491 §1. The diocesan bishop is to see to it that the acts and documents of the archives of cathedral, collegiate, parochial and other churches in his territory also are diligently preserved.

Can. 535 §4 and §5 stipulate that parishes must properly safeguard their “parochial registers...along with letters of bishops and other documents which are to be preserved for reason of necessity or advantage...Older parochial registers are also to be carefully protected according to the prescripts of particular law.”

Therefore, in each parish of the Archdiocese there should be a proper and secure place where archive documents and artifacts are stored. Quasi-parish and mission archives should also be stored properly at the main parish centre of which they are a satellite, or with the Chancery.

In most places, storage will be limited to a filing cabinet drawer for paper archives and a cupboard for artifacts. In other places, a fire-proof safe or vault or secure place where archival material and documents can be stored is available. Larger artifacts may need to be stored in closed boxes and placed in a secure place for storage.

Identification information or number should accompany each artifact. An identification number might be placed on the artifact and information kept in a record book. Care should be taken for the good preservation of all historical items and documents.

**Furthermore, with continual evolution in electronics, care should be taken for the preservation of electronic files on parish computers by creating external backups and by ensuring that backup files are constantly updated and accessible. Creation of hard copies of documents, letters, speeches and other written materials as well as photographs should be created and filed properly for preservation.**

Directive 6.1.1 provides more detailed information about how and when to archive the following records:

- Legal documents
- Ceremonial and liturgical documents
- Sacramental records (not included in parochial registers)
- Records of ministers and ministries
- Recording apostasy
- Administration documents
- Financial documents

- Parish bulletins and other publications
- General interest documents
- Artifacts
- Annals

- **Provincial privacy legislation** (cf. Policy 7.4.1)

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.

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