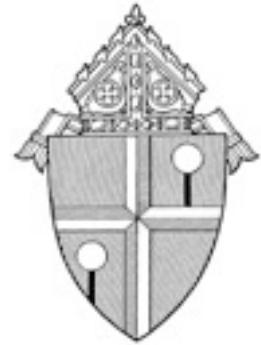


# THE OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

WITH THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS

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## Instruction for Sacramental Registers

### I. Basic Principles

1. The pastor<sup>1</sup> is responsible for completing and safeguarding the sacramental registers of the parish (canon 535, §1). He may fulfill his responsibilities personally or through another.
2. Each parish is to have its own seal. Sacramental certificates are to be signed by the pastor, parochial vicar, deacon assigned to the parish, or the pastor's delegate, and sealed with the parish seal (canon 535, §3).
3. Sacramental registers are to be kept in a secure and fireproof location, such as in a safe, vault, or fireproof file cabinet (canon 535, §§4-5).
4. The following registers are to be maintained in all parishes (canon 535, §1):
  - Baptism (including reception into full communion of the Catholic Church)
  - Confirmation
  - First Holy Communion
  - Marriage
  - Death
5. The following apply to sacramental registers:
  - Celebrations are to be recorded within a week after the celebration.
  - Registers are not to be completed before the celebration has taken place.
  - Registers are to be indexed.
  - All information recorded in sacramental registers is to be printed (not in script) in a legible manner, including the name of the celebrant. The register does not need to be "signed."
  - Care should be taken to insure that all information is complete and that names are spelled correctly and in full.
  - The recording of women's names must always include their maiden last names (except for godmothers/sponsors). Married last names may be added in parenthesis after the maiden name.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "pastor" refers also to parochial administrators as defined in canon 540.

6. Celebrations that take place at a mission church are to be recorded in the sacramental registers of the principal parish church.
7. Celebrations by chaplains of ethnic communities are to be recorded in the parish register of the church where the celebration took place.
8. Celebrations by hospital, school, and prison chaplains are to be recorded in sacramental registers of the parish within whose boundaries the institution is located. (The only exception to this is for Mystical Rose Oratory at Chaminade University/St. Louis School, which has permission to maintain its own sacramental registers.)
9. Celebrations that take place outside of a sacred place are to be recorded in the parish within whose boundaries the celebration took place.
10. Celebrations conducted on military bases are recorded with the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, according to their norms.
11. Notice of the fact of confirmation, first Holy Communion, and marriage, along with the pertinent information, is to be sent to the church(es) of baptism within a week after the celebration (canon 535, §2; 895; 1122, §2).

## II. Baptismal Registers

12. The following are to be noted in the margins of the baptismal register as they may occur (canons 535, §2; 877, §1; 1054; 1122; 1685):
  - Reception of confirmation and first Holy Communion
  - Reception of marriage, reception of holy orders (deacon, priest, bishop), and/or profession of final vows in a religious institute
  - Declarations of marital nullity, with name of the Tribunal and protocol number
  - Dispensations, departures or dismissals from clerical state or religious institute, along with issuing authority and protocol number
  - Changes in ritual Church membership (see canons 111-112)Such facts are always to be noted on baptismal certificates issued by the parish.
13. Regarding the baptism of children of unmarried mothers (canon 877, §2), the name of father is to be omitted unless:
  - The birth certificate includes the name of the father
  - Or the father makes a declaration of paternity before the pastor, parochial vicar, or deacon assigned to the parish, and two witnesses
14. According to USCCB norms, the recording of the baptism of adopted children (whose adoption is finalized), is to be done in the same manner as of other children, with the following considerations:
  - The fact of the adoption is to be included in the notations, but not the names of the natural parents. Only the names of the adoptive parents are to be recorded.

- No mention of the fact of adoption is to be made on any baptismal certificates that are issued.
- Parish personnel having access to parish registers have an obligation not to disclose to any person any information that would identify or reveal, directly or indirectly, the fact that a person was adopted.
- In the situation where baptism takes place before adoption is finalized at the request of the natural parents, see [www.usccb.org/norms/877-3.htm](http://www.usccb.org/norms/877-3.htm) for instructions.

15. With regard to married adults who are baptized as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the name of the person's spouse and date and place of marriage are to be recorded in the margin in addition to the usual information.

16. With regard to those validly baptized in a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community who are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church, the following are to be entered into the baptismal register:

- Complete baptismal information (date, place, minister), insofar as possible
- The date of reception into full communion of the Catholic Church, confirmation and first Holy Communion in the margin
- Name of spouse and date and place of marriage, if married, in the margin

### III. Marriage Registers

17. The following are to be noted in the margins of the marriage register (canons 1123; 1685):

- Permissions and/or dispensations granted at the time of the marriage, along with the protocol number
- If the marriage is a simple convalidation or validation
- If a marriage is convalidated by a radical sanation, the original marriage information (place, date, officiant) is to be recorded, along with the date of the sanation decree and protocol number
- If the marriage is later declared invalid, this is to be noted along with name of Tribunal and protocol number

18. Marriages celebrated with a dispensation from canonical form by a non-Catholic religious minister or civil official are to be recorded in the marriage register of the church where the couple was prepared for marriage (canon 1121, §3).

19. Marriages celebrated outside of a Catholic Church building by a Catholic priest or deacon, are to be recorded in the parish marriage register in whose territory the marriage took place (canon 1121, §1).

20. Marriage prenuptial paperwork is to be archived permanently in a safe and secure location. However, preparation inventories (e.g., FOCCUS, PMI) may be shredded after the marriage has taken place.

#### IV. Requests for Genealogical Information

21. Information in sacramental registers is confidential. Requests for information for genealogical purposes may only be provided with the following conditions:
- Inquiry is to be made regarding the religion of the person requesting the information. Information may not be provided to members of the Mormon (LDS) religion, according to a directive from the Congregation for Clergy.
  - Information may be provided only concerning one's own ancestors.
  - Pages from sacramental registers may not be photocopied and given to anyone.
  - Confidential notational information is not to be provided in answering requests for genealogical information (e.g., regarding marital declarations of nullity, defections from the Church, adoption inquiries).

#### V. Changes and Corrections

22. No changes may be made in past records. However, errors may be corrected, provided that the correct information is certain.
23. Requests for changes in sacramental registers as a result of civil legal name changes cannot be honored. However, legal name changes may be noted in the margins of the baptismal register, along with the date, protocol number and issuing authority of the civil document.
24. According to a response from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, requests for changes in sacramental registers as a result of a "sex-change operation" cannot be honored. However, upon request, the change in civil status may be noted in the margins of the baptismal register, along with any civil name change, the date, and protocol number and issuing authority of the civil document.
25. According to the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, requests to be removed from sacramental registers cannot be honored. However, defections from the Church may be noted in the baptismal register. Such a request must be made in writing and signed by the person. The request is to be noted in the margin of the baptismal register, along with the date and the notation: "defected from the Church by a formal act." The signed statement is to be inserted into the register.
- Notes:
- For such an act to be valid, it must involve an internal decision to leave the Catholic Church that is made freely and involve an act of apostasy, heresy, or schism. Reconciliation of the person with the Church requires sacramental confession and remission of the penalty of excommunication.
  - The only canonical implication of defecting from the Church by a formal act is related to freedom from ecclesiastical laws regarding marriage.