



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

PARISHES



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

Policy on the Pastoral Council

Effective 2005

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

A Pastoral Council is to be established and is to be operative in every parish and mission in the Diocese of Austin.

I. Nature and Purpose

- A. The Pastoral Council is to be a representative body of the faithful whose focus is on the whole community – its beliefs, its hopes, its joys, its needs, its sorrows, its concerns, its gifts, and its pursuit of the mission of the Church.
- B. The council provides a means for uniting the parish community in expressing its collective wisdom concerning pastoral plans and activities. The Pastoral Council is to guard against serving special interest groups.
- C. By reason of its existence, the Pastoral Council must read and reflect the "signs of the times" to those planning and/or implementing short-term and long-term pastoral policies and activities in the parish.
 - 1. Ordinary administration of the parish will be the responsibility of the administrative staff.
- D. By the fact that it is convoked by the pastor, the Pastoral Council must respond to his call and questions and offer the best consultation possible.
- E. The Pastoral Council's task is to give counsel and seek consultation.
 - 1. Good counsel is the result of full, holistic, and active consultation. Thus, the members of this group, along with the pastor, are called to reflect and consider pastoral issues for the common good and for the future. Their role is to understand, to reflect carefully and prayerfully and to seek consensus. However, under certain circumstances, the pastor and council may choose to attain a majority through voting to decide a course of action.

II. Consultation

- A. Consultation acknowledges that all the Christian faithful share, in diverse ways, the mission of Christ.
- B. Consultation accepts that each of the Christian faithful is formed, reformed, and endowed by the Spirit with qualities and gifts that can strengthen the community.
- C. Consultation recognizes that both the ordained and the non-ordained have distinct roles.
 - 1. The ordained priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful are different not only in degree, but in essence.
 - 2. The roles of each are complementary in community because of their common bond in the Body of Christ.
- D. Because of its representative nature and consultative role, because it has been uniquely provided by the Church and convoked by the pastor, and because of its consensus-seeking process, the Pastoral Council should be a distinct group.
 - 1. The Pastoral Council function should not be assigned to a group that has a different function within the parish.

III. The Diocese

- A. Ongoing training and workshops relating to the Pastoral Councils are available and accessible to clergy and laity throughout the diocese.

IV. The Pastor

- A. The pastor, as the chief governing person and accountable to the Bishop, must preside at the Pastoral Council meetings and participate in its activities.
- B. The pastor is called to consultation by the Church. In this call, he must:
 - 1. In turn, call the Pastoral Council and seek counsel on pastoral matters affecting the life of the parish
 - 2. Experience and participate in the interaction that follows
 - 3. Be open, respectful, and receptive to the voice or voices of the parishioners
 - 4. Weigh seriously and respond appropriately to the collective wisdom or consensus of the Pastoral Council
 - 5. Make every effort to ensure the membership of the council is truly representative of the whole parish community
 - 6. Assist in the proper formation, training, and orientation of all council members

7. Ensure that the council's concerns reflect the whole Church (diocesan and universal) and its mission
 8. Facilitate council members' building their own community of faith, trust, and respect
 9. Assist in the preparation of council agenda
- C. The pastor should carefully consider the recommendations of the Pastoral Council and provide proper explanation to the council when acting contrary to its recommendations.
1. However, in matters that violate Church teachings or discipline, or in matters contrary to diocesan policy, the pastor, after appropriate explanation to the Pastoral Council, must withhold acceptance.
 2. In cases of non-acceptance of counsel, for whatever reason, the pastor's position and reasons for it shall be presented to the Pastoral Council in writing.
 3. Appeals may be made to the Bishop or his designee for clarification, consideration, or arbitration.
 - a. The Bishop or his designee will provide a written response to the appeal.
- D. In the absence of the pastor, the Pastoral Council can discuss matters but cannot make final decisions.
1. When a pastor leaves a parish through transfer, retirement, or death, all activity of the Pastoral Council ceases until the new pastor or assigned administrator reconvenes the council.
 2. A new pastor should seek counsel from the existing Pastoral Council to become more informed about the nature of the community.
 - a. He should be reluctant to dissolve the Pastoral Council, even though it is his prerogative to do so.

V. The Pastoral Council

- A. Each Pastoral Council is to develop in writing its own organizational and functional norms as prescribed within the limits of diocesan norms.
1. These parish norms make clear the purpose, scope, and role of the Pastoral Council as well as address the size of the council, membership criteria, selection process, and leadership.
 2. Unnecessary complexity is to be avoided and the procedure for amending the parish norms should be defined within them.

- a. These norms and subsequent amendments will be reviewed by the dean or Bishop's designee.
- B. Each Pastoral Council is to formulate a parish vision/mission statement, goals, and objectives (after gathering input from the members of the parish).
 1. The vision/mission statement, goals, objectives, and norms will be readily available to the members of the parish and evaluated at least annually by the Pastoral Council.
- C. Each Pastoral Council should determine its leadership by an appropriate process.
 1. Such leadership should include a Chair and a Recorder.
- D. Because of the Pastoral Council's unique existence, there is a perpetual eliciting of the needs and concerns of the community.
 1. Each Pastoral Council, therefore, has the dual obligation to perceive and to deliberate.
 2. Thus, each Pastoral Council should meet a minimum of once a quarter as well as when called by the pastor.
- E. Each Pastoral Council member must make a special effort to understand and to implement the consultative process.
 1. In this process, all members are to share their wisdom regarding the issues before the council.
 2. Although a common conclusion among the members is not required when functioning as a consultative body, the process of seeking consensus is very helpful in providing quality consultation.
- F. Each Pastoral Council must take time to develop spiritually so as to be more keenly aware of the Spirit's presence and functioning within the council and within the whole parish community.
- G. Each Pastoral Council needs to interact closely with the parish Finance Council to assure the pastor and the parish membership that finances are available to support the council's goals and objectives.
- H. Each Pastoral Council is to ensure that social justice starts at the parish by striving for openness and ethical accountability in its business practices.
- I. Each member of the Pastoral Council must attend the necessary training that provides a full understanding of the functions of the council, its interrelationships with other parish organizations, and its responsibility to the Church as a whole.

- J. If any parishioner feels strongly that the pastor or Pastoral Council has not followed the intent of these diocesan norms, the parishioner may appeal through the following process:
1. A formal letter signed by the parishioner(s) will be submitted to the Pastoral Council describing their concerns and why they feel the intent of the diocesan norms were not followed.
 2. The pastor and the Pastoral Council have an opportunity to correct or resolve the appeal.
 3. If resolution of the appeal is not obtained to the satisfaction of the parishioner(s), the Pastoral Council will vote either to reconsider the appeal or send it to the Dean for resolution.
 - a. Simple majority vote of the Pastoral Council will prevail.
 - b. The parishioner's letter, the minutes of the Pastoral Council meeting discussing the appeal, and a statement by the pastor and/or the Pastoral Council on their position in the matter are forwarded to the dean for his deliberation.
 4. If not resolved by the dean, all documentation, including the dean's position, is sent to the Bishop for deliberation and ultimate resolution.
 - a. The Bishop will respond in writing within 30 days.

VI. Membership Qualifications

Members must:

- A. Be baptized Catholics (in rare circumstances an exception can be made with the approval of the pastor)
- B. Be registered in the parish
- C. Have demonstrated a commitment to the parish community
- D. Commit themselves to spiritual growth
- E. Commit themselves to skills development as part of the Christian leadership process
- F. Be willing to commit the necessary time and energy to offer effective consultation
- G. Be familiar with programs of various diocesan commissions or standing committees
- H. Be willing to participate in group training and formation

VII. Determination of Council Members

- A. For adequate representation and effective operation, the Pastoral Council should consist of at least five (5) and no more than twelve (12) lay representatives.
- B. Pastoral Council members are to be determined by the parish community using an appropriate process as specified in the parish norms.
- C. Although each council member represents the whole parish, each Pastoral Council should be representative of all ages, ethnic groups, and genders.
 - 1. In addition, the pastor may supplement the council by appointing other members for balanced representation of the parishioners.
 - a. The number of such appointments may not exceed one-third of the number of council members determined by the parish community.
 - 2. In regard to representation, involvement of active and interested parishioners, who are open to the needs of the whole parish community, has to be a high priority.
 - 3. A strict representation of all age groups or certain special interest areas seems to place emphasis in popular vote rather than what is most important and best for the operation of the council in carrying out its mission.
 - 4. Sound judgment needs to be exercised to reflect sensitivity to the representation issue.
- D. The Pastoral Council may be formed through a process of discernment, election, or by a combination of appointed and elected members provided that the number of appointed members does not exceed one-third of the membership.
 - 1. The members should be people that are willing to commit themselves toward improvement in parish life.
- E. Each Pastoral Council will include in its norms a procedure for dealing with council members who fail to uphold their responsibilities.
- F. Pastoral Council members and/or pastors will develop a procedure on how to fill vacancies.
 - 1. This procedure is part of the Pastoral Council's norms.

- G. It is important that the parochial vicars (associate pastors) participate in these council meetings.
1. Their roles are distinct from that of the parish staff persons employed by the pastor due to appointment by the Bishop. “As co-workers with the pastor and sharers in his solicitude, they are to offer service in the pastoral ministry by common counsel and effort with the pastor and under his authority.”
(c. 545, § 1)
 2. The parochial vicar shares in the pastoral care of the parish and assists the pastor in his pastoral duties.
- H. The Pastoral Council provides consultation and support to the parish staff.
1. Staff members assist the pastor in the administration of various parish programs.
 2. In light of their administrative role, it is inappropriate that they would also serve as members of a body whose express purpose is counsel and consultation.

VIII. Terms of Office

- A. Terms can be from two (2) to five (5) years.
- B. Pastoral Council members’ terms may be staggered by year or all members’ terms may expire simultaneously.
- C. The specifics of the terms of office and the number of consecutive terms that a Pastoral Council member may serve should be addressed in the parish norms.

IX. Meeting Agendas

- A. An agenda should be prepared prior to each meeting to enhance conducting the meeting in a professional manner.
 1. The pastor and chair should set the agenda.
 2. It should be posted in a place convenient for inspection by the parishioners at least one week prior to the council meeting.
 3. Names and phone numbers of council members may be listed on the posted agenda so parishioners can contact council members and express their views on the agenda items to be discussed.
 4. Special meetings are exempt from the posting requirement.

X. Openness and Confidentiality

- A. Meetings of the Pastoral Council should, to the extent possible, be open to parishioners who may wish to attend as observers unless their input is requested from the council.

1. The parish norms should emphasize that active participation in the consensus building process during the meeting is reserved for the Pastoral Council members.
- B. Confidentiality is another major issue that the Pastoral Council must address in their norms. An atmosphere of openness is important but some situations and matters discussed by the council should be kept confidential.
1. For some circumstances requiring confidentiality, the council may choose to meet in a "closed" or "executive" session.

XI. Communicating Council Proceedings

Each Pastoral Council will establish a procedure of reporting to the parishioners the results of the council meetings.

- A. This may be accomplished through the weekly bulletin, through a newsletter, by assembly, by published meeting minutes, or other means of communication appropriate for the parish.

XII. Commissions

The effectiveness of the Pastoral Council can be enhanced by the development of commissions.

- A. Additional participation of parishioners in parish administration can be increased by having parishioners as members of commissions.
- B. The structural configuration of commissions of the pastoral council can vary depending on the explicit needs of the parish. Each parish should consider the configuration that best meets its needs. Two possible alternatives are presented here.
1. A parish may have the following commissions:
 - a. Spiritual Development Commission
Areas of concern: liturgy, ecumenical activities, retreats, etc.
 - b. Community Concerns Commission
Areas of concern: community activities, social action, interparochial, and diocesan cooperation.
 - c. Education Commission
Areas of concern: all formal educational efforts of the parish, adult, religious education, school, etc.

d. Family Life Commission

Areas of concern: marriage preparation, marriage encounter, social activities of the parish, recreational programs, family counseling, etc.

e. Youth/Young Adult Commission

Areas of concern: youth programs, active involvement of youth/young adults in parish life and leadership, need for clergy, etc.

f. Administration Commission

Areas of concern: communications (bulletins, public relations), studying, recommending, undertaking financial programs as determined by the Parish Council, maintaining parish properties, programs, activities, facilities, etc.

g. Evangelization Commission

Areas of concern: spreading the Gospel, reaching out to non-Catholics and alienated Catholics, etc.

h. Stewardship Commission

Areas of concern: Giving of time, talent, and treasure in support of local parish, diocese, and universal Church.

2. Since Our Lord was a priest, a prophet and a king, the Pastoral Council may have as a minimum the following list of commissions:

a. Priest Commission

Areas of concern: all committees, organizations, and matters dealing with worship

b. Prophet Commission

Areas of concern: all matters dealing with teaching

c. King Commission

Areas of concern: all matters that deal with service

C. It is recommended that the coordinators of each committee or organization actually participate in his or her respective commission.

D. The pastor is an *ex-officio* member of all commissions.

- E. A Pastoral Council member may serve on one or more of the various commissions.
 - 1. Commission chairs and commission members are appointed by a process outlined in the norms for the Pastoral Council. Members of commissions, who are not Pastoral Council members, do not actively participate in the consensus building process at council meetings.
- F. The Pastoral Council and the commissions are units of service not of authority.



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

Policy on the Finance Council

Effective 2005

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

A Finance Council is to be established and is to be operative in every parish and mission in the Diocese of Austin.

I. Nature and Purpose

- A. The preceding document on Pastoral Councils relates to consultation in the parish.
 - 1. Consultation is at the heart of the decision-making process.
 - 2. Consultation does not pertain to the issue of who holds authority in the Church; it does pertain to the way that authority is exercised.
 - 3. Consultation recognizes that all the baptized are called to share in the governance of the Church, each in a way proper to that person.
- B. The 1983 Code of Canon Law has introduced a new and separate consultative body to parish life. "In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan Bishop." (c. 537)
- C. The purpose of the parish Finance Council is to provide the pastor with a group of Christian faithful who will aid him in the administration of parish goods according to these norms.
 - 1. While distinct from the Pastoral Council of the parish, this Finance Council is to serve the goals and objectives set forth by the Pastoral Council, both being guided by the mission statement of the parish.

II. Consultation

The consultation of the Finance Council is parallel to consultation of the Pastoral Council.

III. The Diocese

- A. Training will be conducted at the diocesan level for pastors and laity in regard to the duties and responsibilities of Finance Councils.
 - 1. These training sessions include budgeting, accounting, financial management, and financial reporting.
- B. When Pastoral Council workshops are held, the Finance Council will also be included in those workshops.
 - 1. One of the workshop agenda items may be the interrelationship of the two councils.

IV. The Pastor

- A. The pastor, as the chief governing person and accountable to the Bishop, must preside at the Finance Council meetings and participate in its activities.
- B. The pastor is called to consultation by the Church. In this call, he must:
 - 1. In turn, call the Finance Council and seek advice on financial matters affecting the life of the parish
 - 2. Experience and participate in the interaction that follows
 - 3. Be open, respectful, and receptive to the voice or voices of the parishioners
 - 4. Weigh seriously and respond appropriately to the collective wisdom or consensus of the Finance Council
 - 5. Assist in the proper formation, training, and orientation of all council members
 - 6. Insure that the Finance Council's concerns reflect the whole Church (diocesan and universal) and its mission
 - 7. Facilitate Finance Council members in building their own community of faith, trust, and respect
- C. The pastor should consider carefully the recommendations of the Finance Council and provide proper explanation to the council when acting contrary to its recommendations.
 - 1. However, in matters that violate Church teachings or discipline or in matters contrary to diocesan policy, the pastor, after appropriate explanation to the council, must withhold acceptance.
 - 2. In cases of non-acceptance of counsel, for whatever reason, the pastor's position and reasons for it shall be presented to the council in writing.

3. Appeals may be made to the Bishop or his designee for clarification, consideration or arbitration.
 - a. The Bishop or his designee will provide a written response to the appeal.
- D. In the absence of the pastor, the Finance Council can discuss matters but cannot make final decisions.
 1. When a pastor leaves a parish through transfer, retirement, or death, all formal activity of the Finance Council ceases until the new pastor or assigned administrator reconvenes the council.
 - a. A new pastor should seek counsel from the existing Finance Council to become more informed about the nature of the community.
 - b. He should be reluctant to dissolve the Finance Council, even though it is his prerogative to do so.
- E. Each Finance Council is to develop in writing its own organizational and functional norms as prescribed within the limits of diocesan norms.
 1. These parish norms make clear the purpose, scope, and role of the council as well as address the size of the council, membership criteria, selection process, and leadership.
 2. Unnecessary complexity is to be avoided, and the procedure for amending the parish norms should be defined within them.
 3. These norms and any subsequent amendments will be reviewed by the dean or Bishop's designee.
- F. Each Finance Council member must make a special effort to understand and to implement the consultative process.
 1. In this process, all members are to share their wisdom regarding the issue being considered.
 2. Although a common conclusion among the members is not required when functioning as a consultative body, the process of seeking consensus is very helpful in providing quality consultation.
- G. Each council must take time to develop spiritually so as to be more keenly aware of the Spirit's presence and functioning within the council and within the whole parish community.
- H. Each council needs to interact closely with the parish Pastoral Council to assure the pastor and the parish membership that finances are available to support the council's goals and objectives.

- I. Each council is to ensure that social justice starts at the parish by striving for openness and ethical accountability in its business practices.
- J. Each individual member of the Finance Council must attend the necessary training that provides a full understanding of the functions of the council, its interrelationships with other parish organizations, and its responsibility to the Church as a whole.

V. Membership

- A. The Finance Council is to consist of not less than three (3) parishioners who are Catholic (in rare circumstances an exception can be made with approval of the pastor) and are known contributors of their time, talent, and treasure.
 - 1. If possible, they should possess experience or expertise in business, finance, or law and be committed to the work of the Church.
 - 2. They should also represent the whole parish community to the extent feasible.
- B. Members are freely appointed by the pastor for a minimum of three (3) years, with renewable terms or until there is a change of pastors.
- C. Persons who could have a conflict of interest are excluded from membership.

VI. Meetings

- A. The council shall have a minimum of four (4) meetings per year.
 - 1. Additional meetings are held as needed.

VII. Responsibilities

The Finance Council shall:

- A. Assist the pastor in the administration of parish goods in accordance with the norms of Canons 1281 through 1288
- B. Assist the pastor in the preparation of a yearly budget of income and expenditures
 - 1. The proposed budget is to be shared with the parish Pastoral Council.
- C. Assist the pastor in the preparation of an annual financial report of revenues and expenditures for dissemination to the parishioners.
 - 1. A parish may choose to provide more frequent reports.
- D. Review the parish income and expense report quarterly and make recommendations as necessary to see that the expenses are in within the limits of income received and available

- E. Assist parish commissions, boards, and organizations in preparing and submitting annual budgets
- F. Study parish revenues and make recommendations for increasing revenue to meet both parish and diocesan goals and objectives
- G. Study parish expenses and make recommendations to minimize expenditures within the parish
- H. Familiarize themselves with all diocesan fiscal policies and assist the pastor in meeting these obligations
- I. Encourage support of parish and diocesan stewardship programs
- J. Be consulted on all expenditures other than normal operating expenditures

VIII. The Finance Council, like the Pastoral Council, is a unit of service, not authority.



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

Parish Record Keeping Manual

Effective February 2002

This manual was originally written by Kinga Perzynska, a past archivist of the Texas Catholic Conference Archives.

I. Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide parishes with a practical guide to the creation, maintenance, and disposition of parish records.

- A. On Feb. 2, 1997, the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church issued the *Circular Letter on the Pastoral Function of Church Archives*. With this circular letter, the Commission underlines that, in addition to the production of cultural goods, the Church is interested in the pastoral use and the protection of what the Church produces in order to express and carry out her mission.
 1. In the mind of Church, archives are places of memory for the Christian community and storehouses of culture for the new evangelization.
 2. As places of memory, archives must systematically gather all the data making up the articulated history of the Church community so that what has been done, the results obtained, including omissions and errors, may be properly evaluated.
 3. In terms of specific content, archives preserve the sources describing the historical development of the Church community as well as those relating to the *liturgical, sacramental, educational, and charitable* activities which the clergy, religious, and lay members of the Church have carried out throughout the centuries up to the present day.

- B. The Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists (ACDA) in the United States of America has been involved in the creation of basic standards for diocesan archives and guidelines for access to diocesan records since its creation in 1981. These standards can also be used and applied by the smaller Catholic communities, organizations and parishes.
 1. The concise manual by James O'Toole, *Basic Standards for Diocesan Archives: A Guide for Bishops, Chancellors and Archivists*, offers detailed guidance for establishing, maintaining, or evaluating diocesan archives and provides insightful information on the design and structure of a sound archival program.¹
 - a. This publication addresses the basic issues concerning personnel, budget, and physical space criteria; it also provides important information on a variety of other issues from the establishment of archival policies and forms to the description of records.
 - b. This important manual also highlights possible solutions to the problems of modern information management by offering practical suggestions on the management of current records and the uses of automation.

¹ Guidelines for Access to Diocesan Archives. Drafted by: Standard Access Policy Committee, Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists. 1991; James M. O'Toole. *Basic Standards for Diocesan Archives: A Guide for Bishops, Chancellors, and Archivists*. Chicago: Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists, 1991.

II. Archives and Records Management Program

A. Archives

1. In accordance with Canons 491 and 535, the Bishop of a diocese is to see that the acts and documents of the archives of cathedral, collegiate, parochial, and other churches in his territory are diligently preserved.
 - a. The term "other churches" is customarily interpreted in different dioceses in the United States of America as: mission, station, chapel, or faith community.
 - i. A "mission" and a "chapel" (in a hospital or jail) is a part of the territory of a given parish with its own place of worship.
 - ii. The term "faith community" is a local response of the diocese to the concepts found in Canon 516, § 2: *When certain communities cannot be established as a parish or quasi-parish, the diocesan Bishop is to provide for their pastoral care in another manner.*²
2. Inventories or catalogs are to be made in duplicate, one of which is to be kept in the church's own archives and other in the diocesan archives.³
3. The term *archives* refers to the non-current records of a parish or institution preserved because of their continuing, permanent, or historical value.
 - a. Archives may also be the physical plant or building where such materials are stored.
 - b. Materials found in an archives document the growth and history of a local faith community, parish, or school.

B. Records Management Program

1. A records management program is necessary for legal, administrative, fiscal, and canonical reasons.
2. Records management is the administration of a program that supports the systematic creation, organization, maintenance, and disposition of the records.
3. The records management program allows for the appropriate transfer of records to the church or school archives or, later, to the diocesan archives.

² The Code of Canon Law. Ibid.

³ The Code of Canon Law, A Text and Commentary. Edited by James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, Donald E. Heintschel. Canon Law Society of America. New York, 1985.

4. The passage of time affects the value of these records.
 - a. It is important that the records management program identify records that are permanent or archival and require the transfer of those records to the parish archives. At that moment, proper description and preservation of these records can take place.
- C. Parish archives usually contain several types of records, such as sacramental registers, correspondence, meeting minutes, memoranda, parish bulletins or newsletters, and parish school records.
 1. In addition to the written records, parish archives may also contain artifacts (e.g. altar linens, vestments, liturgical objects), photographs, audiotapes, videotapes, and digital media that illustrate the nature and development of the community.

III. Sacramental Records

- A. Sacramental records are both public and private in nature.
 1. Baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funerals are recorded to document sacred acts; as such they are private records.
 2. Sacramental records are also private because the information they contain is often confidential, and they are created with the presumption of privacy.
 3. Generally, the Catholic Church maintains that none of the records of Catholics are closed to the believers.
 4. Sacramental records are not civil records, but in some cases the records are accepted as valid evidence when another civil record is not available (e.g. birth records).
 5. The passage of time, however, is very important in affecting access to these records and the need for restricting their use diminishes.
- B. In the case of sacramental records creation and access, three kinds of norms need to be considered:
 1. Canonical
 - a. The Code of Canon Law says each parish or "other churches" are required to have and maintain baptism, confirmation, marriage, and death registers (c. 535).
 - b. This Canon also lists other registers prescribed by the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan Bishop.
 - i. The requirement to keep additional registers can be set by the ecclesiastical body or bodies within the diocese.

- ii. Optional registers commonly kept are: First Communion registers and Sick Call registers.
 - iii. Other additional and optional registers are listed in [Appendix II: Additional Registers](#) (Page E-51).
- c. Missions, chapels, or faith communities historically created their own sacramental registers and kept them on their premises. However, presently most of these worship places keep written records in the parish registers at the parish in whose jurisdiction the mission, chapel, or community is located.
- i. This happens generally with missions, hospitals, and chancery and jail chapels.
 - ii. Faith communities in the Diocese of Austin may, with the permission of the pastor, keep their own sacramental registers provided that the parish has access to and is aware of the location of the sacramental records.

2. Civil Law and Common Practice

In maintaining sacramental registers and access to them, the diocesan administration may need to respond to the civil law and common practice requirements.

- a. Privacy is by far the most pervasive consideration in restricting materials in archives.
 - i. Privacy tests involving written materials, especially unpublished ones, are a special category of privacy questions. While there is some disagreement over the application of privacy principles to documents, there are a few points on which most archivists and lawyers can agree.
 - First, medical and psychiatric files relating to an individual are usually withheld from public access by privacy considerations.
 - Second, certain materials containing information developed or imparted during a client relationship (such as with a lawyer or clergyman) are also normally assumed to have a privacy element.
 - Third, the right to privacy is a right of living individuals; there is normally no privacy right for the dead.

- Finally, once information about an individual is in the public domain, it usually remains open to subsequent users.⁴ (The last point regarding “an individual in the public domain” is related to the sacramental and birth records.)
- C. Sacramental registers should be kept in a safe place with a stable environment (a temperature of 70° F or below, and 65 percent relative humidity).
 - D. Access to these records is restricted.
 - E. The original registers are never to be destroyed and the accuracy and authenticity of the information recorded in the registers must never be questioned.
 - F. All sacramental registers more than 100 years old, or in deteriorating condition, should be removed from the parish and housed at the diocesan archives.
 - G. Diocesan archives should maintain also two copies (microfilm, digital media, or photocopy on acid free paper) for future retrieval.
 - H. The only persons to have access to the sacramental registers at the parish, mission, chapel, or small faith community are the pastor/administrator, parochial vicar, chaplain, or pastor's designee charged with the responsibility for inscription, retention, and release of a sacramental record.
 - I. Record Retention in PDS*
 1. In 2015, PDS become the official database used by the Diocese of Austin.
 2. Parishes were encouraged to use PDS as an auxiliary method of preserving sacramental records in the event of a disaster.
 - J. See [Record Retention Schedules for Parish and School § XVI.C](#) (Page E-48).

⁴ Gary M. Peterson, Trudy Huskamp Peterson. Archives and Manuscripts: Law. Society of American Archivists, Chicago. 1985.

* On July 1, 2007, Bishop Aymond issued a decree that all sacramental records were to be recorded in ChurchDB, the official database used by the Diocese of Austin, in order to preserve the records from any disaster. The records in ChurchDB were to be the official record of the sacrament. After consultation with the parishes and the Vatican, of February 17, 2009, Bishop Aymond rescinded the expectation that all sacraments be recorded in ChurchDB. It was made clear that all parishes must record all sacraments in the parish sacramental books. Parishes were to go back and assure that handwritten entries were made in sacramental registers for any sacraments recorded in ChurchDB during the period between July 1, 2007 and March 1, 2009.

IV. Sacraments and Registration Procedures

A. Baptism

The baptismal register is the primary document for recording a person's status within the Church (c. 535, § 2).

1. In general, the baptismal entry into the register is to include:
 - a. Full name at birth
 - b. Date and place of birth
 - c. Minister of the sacrament
 - d. Full names of the parents (including mother's maiden name)
 - e. Names of the sponsors or witnesses
 - f. Date of the conferred baptism (c. 877)
2. Notations to be entered in the baptism register include confirmation, marriage, and holy orders.
 - a. It does not matter at what parish these sacraments were conferred; they are to be noted in the same parish where the baptism took place.
3. Additional notations to the baptism record include those regarding conditional baptism, religious profession, annulments, rites supplied, laicization (departure), change of rite, and dispensations from vows.
4. In some cases the baptized may have multiple sponsors (godparents).
 - a. When this occurs, the original certificate issued may list all sponsors, but the register itself is to list only two of them.
 - b. The parents of the baptized are to choose the sponsors that are to be listed in the register, keeping in mind that at least one sponsor must be Catholic (c. 874, § 2).
 - c. New "godparents" cannot be added or altered to the baptism register after the fact.
 - i. They can assist with the faith development of an individual, but the entry in the register cannot be changed.

5. For the baptism entry to the register, a state birth certificate needs to be used as a source document.
 - a. If such is impossible to obtain, a hospital record or an affidavit from a person knowledgeable about the birth and parents may verify information (See [Appendix I: Forms](#) (Page E-49)).
 - b. If there is no possibility to obtain any record of birth, a note "No legal documents were presented for information on date of birth" needs to be entered in the notation space.
 - c. Entering information into the baptismal register based on verbal statements, without reference to the birth certificate or some authentic document, has proven to be problematic in some cases. This may result in the recording of inaccurate information and the creation of inauthentic records.
 - i. Proper spelling of names and places is necessary since baptism records may be the only proof of identity.
6. The baptismal certificate should include all information of a public nature, but may not include any confidential notations (such as reference made to adoption or legitimacy).
7. The baptismal certificate should be signed, dated, and sealed.
8. The reverse of the baptismal certificate is to be completed as the notations indicate.
 - a. If there are no notations, the reverse of the certificate should be completed with the phrase "no notations."

9. Adoption

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States of America, in accord with the prescription of Canon 877, § 3, issued a decree effective on Dec. 1, 2000, stating that the entry in these cases should include the following:

- a. For children baptized after their adoption is finalized, the following information entry into the register is to include
 - i. Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the adopting parent(s)
 - ii. Full names of the adopting parent(s)
 - iii. Date and place of birth

- iv. Names of sponsors
 - v. Place and date of baptism
 - vi. Name of the minister performing the baptism
 - vii. Fact of adoption but not the names of the birth parents
- b. Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for adopted children will be no different from other baptismal certificates. No mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the baptismal certificate.
- c. In the circumstance of adoption, a revised birth certificate from the state with adoptive family's name should be issued.
- d. At least one parent of the persons who lawfully take the place of parents (adoptive parents, legal guardians) must give consent for baptism.
- i. This person is also responsible to see that the child is raised in the Catholic faith (c. 868).
- e. Unless an emergency exists, baptism is to be delayed until the process of adoption is complete and a revised birth certificate, or other suitable document, can be presented.
- f. Once the child has been adopted, the names of the adoptive parents are recorded.
- g. Following the civil law in this area, if the names of the birth parents have not been sequestered the names of the birth parents may be recorded as well.
- i. Once the adoption is completed, recording the names of the birth parents becomes the option of the adoptive parents.
 - ii. For this reason, it is recommended that the adoptive parents wait until the completion of the adoption process to baptize the child.
- h. For children baptized before their adoption is finalized, the following notations shall be added to the baptismal register, but only after the adoption has been finalized and with due regard for civil law of the jurisdiction:
- i. Parentheses shall be placed around the names of the birth parents
 - ii. Name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) shall then be added
 - iii. Child's former surname shall also be parenthesized and the new surname added

- iv. Notation shall be made that the child was legally adopted
- i. Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for these individuals should give only the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) the child's new legal surname, the date and place of baptism, and the name of the minister who conferred the sacrament.
 - i. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) should not be given, and no mention of the fact of adoption should be made on the baptismal certificate.
 - ii. For future ease in reference, and to provide what may often be the only possibility of reference after the adoption has been finalized, a baptismal entry for the adopted child can be made in the baptismal register of the adoptive parent's parish, citing the date and location of the original baptismal record and listing only the name of the adoptive parents and the date and place of birth.
 - Names of birth parents are at this point confidential and restricted information.

10. Unwed Parents

- a. The name of the mother is to be entered in the baptism register if there is public proof of her maternity (e.g. birth certificate) or if she states this in writing before two witnesses (c. 877).
- b. The name of the father is to be inserted only if there is a public proof (e.g. birth certificate) or by his own sworn declaration before the pastor and two witnesses.
 - i. If no public proof is available, the name of the father and/or the mother is not recorded.
 - The phrase "father unknown" or "mother unknown" is to be used.
 - The certificate for that individual in such case needs to record the appropriate phrase. The use of the phrase "illegitimate" is not recommended.
 - The supporting documentation is to be kept in the permanent files of the parish archives.

11. Profession of Faith

- a. Profession of Faith should be recorded in the Reception into Full Communion register or in a separate and clearly marked section at the back of the baptismal register.

- b. When confirmation has been received, the name of the person making the profession is to be recorded in the confirmation register, with a reference in the index to the page and entry number in the baptismal or Reception into Full Communion register.
- c. An optional certificate may be issued as soon as possible after the event.
- d. If already validly baptized in a non-Catholic Church, the date and denomination of baptism, along with the date of Profession of Faith and other pertinent information, is to be entered in the notation section.
- e. With the promulgation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in the United States, the creation and maintenance of new registers relating to catechumens has been required.
 - i. These are Registers of Catechumens, the Book of the Elect, and Reception into Full Communion (See [Appendix II: Additional Registers](#) (Page E-51)).

12. Emergencies

- a. When baptism occurs in an emergency situation (e.g., at home or in a hospital) 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 the c. 877, §1 (c. 878).
 - i. The notice should include the name of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses, if any, the place and date of the conferral of the baptism, and the date of and place of birth.
 - ii. The minister of the baptism or the pastor of the parish where the baptism occurred may also send notice to the parish of the parents of the baptized in cases of infant baptism, or to the parish in which the baptized resides in cases of adult baptism.

B. First Communion

1. The use of the first Communion register is optional.
2. Many parishes are currently maintaining these registers and are encouraged to continue.
3. The entry is to include:
 - a. Full name of the first communicant as found on his/her baptismal certificate
 - b. Date and place of the reception of first Communion

4. A current copy of the baptismal certificate is required as supporting documentation.
 - a. A certificate is to be issued as soon as possible after the event is recorded in the register.
 - b. Notification of the reception of this sacrament is to be sent to the place of baptism.
 - c. The date and place of the reception of this sacrament is to be noted in the baptismal register, even if the sacrament took place in the same parish.

C. Penance

1. Canon law does not require or permit a record to be kept of the sacrament of penance (reconciliation), unlike first Communion.
 - a. This sacrament pertains exclusively to the internal forum and, therefore, registers are never created.

D. Confirmation

1. In general, the confirmation register is to include:
 - a. Full name of the confirmed
 - b. Confirmation name
 - c. Name of parents
 - d. Name of sponsor
 - e. Date and place of the celebration
 - f. Name of the minister (c. 895)
2. A notation regarding the date and place of baptism may be placed in the notation section.
3. A copy of the baptismal certificate is required as supporting documentation.
 - a. The certificate of confirmation should be issued as soon as possible.
 - b. In case of joint celebrations, each parish that sends candidates is responsible for the completion of its own register, which is to include the name of the parish in which celebration took place.
 - c. Notification of the reception of this sacrament is to be sent to the place of baptism.

E. Marriage

1. In general, the marriage register is to include:
 - a. Full names of the spouses
 - b. Full names of witnesses
 - c. Name of officiant
 - d. Date and place of the marriage celebration (c. 1121, § 1)
 - e. Date and place of baptism as it applies
2. Marriage registers may also include names of parents of both spouses and place of residency of parents.
3. The prenuptial file is to be retained permanently in the parish archives. Supporting documentation in the prenuptial file or "marriage data envelope" includes:
 - a. Current (dated less than 6 months prior to request for marriage) baptismal certificates for baptized parties
 - i. If the person was baptized in another country, an attempt to obtain the baptism certificate should be made
 - If the baptism certificate is not available after a diligent attempt to locate it, affidavits regarding the baptism by knowledgeable individuals should be obtained (See [Appendix I: Forms](#) (Page E-49)), the chancellor should be consulted, and affidavits regarding freedom to marry should be obtained from two knowledgeable individuals
 - b. Completed prenuptial forms, civil marriage license, civil marriage certificate
 - c. Death certificate (when necessary)
 - d. Documentation providing necessary dispensations, permissions, or delegations, tribunal documents (when necessary)
 - e. A copy of a rescript (when necessary, c. 59)
 - f. Any additional prenuptial forms or documentation required by the parish

4. It is the responsibility of the officiant to promptly file all civil documents with the appropriate county.
 - a. The sacramental certificate is to be issued as soon as possible after the marriage has been recorded and notification of the marriage sent to the place of baptism of the Catholic parties.
 - b. There are several notations that may be used for the marriage record. The most common of these include:
 - i. Dispensations from impediments
 - ii. Permissions
 - iii. Decrees of dissolution or nullity
 - iv. Convalidations
 - v. Sanations

(See [Appendix III: Glossary](#) (Page E-53))
5. The recommended format for the notations is as follows:
 - a. Dispensation from disparity of cult granted by Father N., date
 - b. Permission for a mixed marriage granted by Father N., date
 - c. Dispensation from canonical form granted by chancery, date
 - d. Dissolution granted, date. Protocol number. Diocese of tribunal
 - e. Decree of nullity granted, date. Protocol number. Diocese of tribunal
 - f. Declaration of Freedom to Marry granted, date. Protocol number. Diocese of tribunal
 - g. Convalidation
 - h. Radical sanation issued by chancery, date
6. Marriages are to be recorded in the register of the parish in which the ceremony takes place.
 - a. In cases where the ceremony occurs in the chapel of a chancery, other Catholic institution, a university, or private home, the marriage is to be recorded at the parish in which the institution or home exists.

- b. In cases where a wedding is celebrated with dispensation from canonical form, the record of the marriage is made at the parish in which marriage preparation takes place and at the chancery of the diocese that granted the dispensation (c. 1121, § 3).
- c. Notification of the marriage is to be sent to the place of baptism of the Catholic party by the party responsible for marriage preparation.
- d. The index of the marriage register is to be arranged alphabetically by the last names of both spouses.
 - i. The format is "male surname/female surname."
- e. The name to be used for the bride's surname is that which is found on her baptismal certificate or, if not baptized, her legal name.
- f. In Texas, if the wedding ceremony does not take place before the 31st day after the date that the license is issued, the license expires.
 - i. With a few exceptions, the wedding ceremony must not take place during the 72 hours immediately following the issuance of a license. Parishes may contact the chancellor to determine if exceptions apply.
 - ii. Governing law in Texas is found in Chapter 2 of the Texas Family Code.

NOTE: A pastor/administrator of the parish who receives notification that a person baptized in the parish has been married must enter the fact of marriage in the baptismal register.

- i. If such a pastor/administrator, at the time of inscription sees that the party was already lawfully married to another party who is still living, and no tribunal action is noted, the pastor/administrator must notify the parish that sent notification.
- ii. A pastor/administrator who receives a notification that any type of annulment has been granted for a person who was baptized and/or married in that parish must inscribe the fact in the baptism/marriage register(s).
- iii. The same procedure is to be followed when a priest/deacon is dispensed from the obligations of ordination and the vows.

F. Death

- 1. In general, the death register is to include:
 - a. Full name of the deceased

- b. Date of death
 - c. Name of the presider
 - d. Date and place of burial
2. Notations may include additional information such as next of kin, cause of death, or the name of the funeral home and plot number at a burial place.
 3. In cases when a priest presides at the burial of a non-Catholic, an entry may be made in the parish's death register and include notations relating to the religion of the deceased and the services provided.
 4. In cases where the funeral rites are celebrated in another parish, it is suggested that notification be sent to the pastor of the deceased.

G. Inscription and Changes Procedures

1. Once a sacrament has been celebrated, the record of sacramental reception is to be entered into the appropriate register.
2. The following elements should be a part of the inscription process:
 - a. Use of black ink only (archival pen recommended)
 - b. Use of block (print) lettering
 - c. Name of the minister is to be printed clearly
 - i. The signature is no longer required
 - d. Last names or surnames are to be entered first, followed by given name(s)
 - e. Name of the month is to be spelled
 - f. Abbreviations in all forms are to be avoided
 - g. Mistakes made in the inscription process are to be crossed out by a single or double line drawn through the entire inscription.
 - i. A new record on an entirely new line in the register is to be inscribed
 - h. "White out," erasure, or other deletion methods may never be used in sacramental registers
 - i. A computer is not to be used instead of sacramental book registers

- i. Computers may only be used for improving access to the sacramental records, not as a primary register
3. Changes of a substantial nature are to be made only with authenticating evidence
 - a. g. civil records).
 - b. Notations are to be made along with the date and signature of the person authorizing the emendation.
 - c. Copies of the documents giving evidence to the change are to be kept in the permanent files of the parish archives.

H. Missions and Stations

It is recommended that, if a parish is responsible for a mission or station, separate registers be kept for each mission or station.

1. These registers are to be clearly marked.
2. It is also recommended that the registers be kept at the parish church office and not at the other communities.
3. In cases where mission or station sacramental records are incorporated into the parish register, the mission's or station's name is to be clearly noted and the register is to indicate the inclusion of such records.

I. Eastern Churches

Special attention should be paid to situations involving members of Eastern Catholic Churches since they are subject to the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*.

1. Whenever Roman Catholic ministers lawfully celebrate the sacraments for them, these sacraments are entered in the appropriate registers of the Roman Catholic parish as outlined above.
2. The name of the particular Eastern rite (e.g. Maronite, Byzantine) is to be noted in the remarks column.

J. School Records

Some Catholic parishes provide elementary and secondary level schools.

1. Records of schools should be stored at the parish school office.
2. Some of the school records are kept permanently.
3. A records management program for school records should be provided and, in the case of a school closing, permanent school records should be transferred to the diocesan archives for permanent storage.

4. Student transcripts can be microfilmed or saved on digital media for future access.

V. Access and Release of Information Procedures of Sacramental and School Records

- A. All individuals have a right to obtain an official certificate of their own sacramental records or school transcripts.
 1. Information that is public in nature and deals with a person's status in the Church (c. 54, § 2) is to be transcribed from the register to the appropriate certificate.
 2. Official certificates are issued only to individuals requesting their own records or to a person who has a legitimate reason for requesting a family record (e.g. the parent of a minor child).
 3. Sacramental records are not to be released to persons other than those about whom they were made (this includes parents of adult children).
- B. The certificate must duplicate the information as it appears in the register.
 1. If the register is in Latin or another language and the certificate is issued in English, it is recommended that a notation be added attesting to the translation.
 - a. If the record is incomplete, the certificate should indicate such by using the words "not given" rather than by leaving the space blank.
 2. Some diocesan archives and state Catholic archives may issue an abstract of the information included in the register, instead of the certificate, in the cases when they keep photocopies of registers.
 3. The certificate is to be legible and authenticated; that is, it is to be issued in the vernacular, signed by the pastor or his delegate and stamped with the parish seal (c. 535, § 3).
- C. It is required that identification be presented in order to release a record.
- D. The request for a record needs to be made in writing and signed by the individual requesting the record.
- E. Authorized recipients of a sacramental record include the party or parties named in the record as having received the sacrament; a Roman Catholic clergyman or his delegate involved in canonical procedures, the parents of the subject, if the subject is a minor, and government agencies (such as the Social Security Administration) who present a signed release from the person whose record is requested.
- F. In the case of sacramental records handled by the diocesan archives, an authorization form for release of information needs to be signed by the party or parties named in the record or their family (mother, father, present spouse, or next of kin).

1. An *Authorization for Release of Information* form may be found in on Page E-50.
- G. The routine request of records between parishes and other diocese and from chancery offices (e.g. the tribunal) for canonical purposes presents no conflict and can be conducted without a release form.
1. The bottom of the certificate should reflect that it is for informational or canonical purposes only and not include a parish seal.
- H. If the person seeking information from the sacramental register represents a civil authority (law enforcement, court official, lawyer, etc.), who is requesting the information for civil or legal purposes, the pastor/administrator should immediately contact the diocesan attorney who will handle the request for information through more formal procedures.
1. In general, without the express consent of the subject in writing, these kinds of requests may be validly declined for sacramental and legal purposes.
 2. It is important to note that the incorrect release of sacramental or school records may put the parish in legal or financial jeopardy.
- I. It is recommended that requests for genealogical research be synchronized with the last U.S. Census release (at least 80 years ago) and handled in writing in compliance with the procedures in place at the individual parish or diocese.
1. When microfilm copies of these records are stored at the diocesan archives, personal genealogical research and copies can be provided.
 2. A parish may respond to these requests by transcribing the information into letter format rather than issuing individual certificates or photocopying pages from registers.
 3. It is appropriate to charge a fee for this service.
 4. The registers themselves are not open to examination by outside parties.
 5. Similar procedures should be followed regarding parish school records (See the *School Records Retention Schedule* on Page E-46).
- J. Records created by and for a parish, mission, chapel, faith community, or school belong to that institution and not to the individual.
1. The majority of the records created during the course of conducting business are not considered confidential but, at the same time, are not open to general research for 25 years after the creation of the record.

2. However, there are many records of a parish, mission, faith community, or school that are confidential in nature. These records already described include:
 - a. Sacramental Registers
 - b. Transcripts
 - c. Marriage records
 - d. Donor files
 - e. Counseling and medical records
3. Access to these records is legally and canonically restricted and the privacy of the Christian faithful and the confidentiality of the records must be protected.

VI. Historical File

To facilitate research on a parish history, the parish should maintain a historical reference file.

- A. While preparing inventories, separating records for permanent and temporary storage, or doing preservation work, parish secretaries or administrators may find historically significant documents.
- B. A photocopy may be made for the historical file with a note indicating where the original document can be found.
- C. Even if the preparation of a parish or school history is not done for several years, hours of research will be saved for the future parish historian to publish an anniversary book.
- D. For the purpose of presenting such a history, black and white photographs of parish or faith community activities, architecture, or clergy should be preserved.

VII. Security and Preservation

- A. The archives of a parish, faith community, or school may be located in many places, such as a vault in the parish office or a fireproof filing cabinet in the school library.
- B. The archives may not be located in the home of an individual or staff member or in any space separate from the physical location of a parish or school.
- C. The most important factor in the preservation of records is the environment in which they are stored.
 1. Sacramental records and records reflecting the history of the parish should be stored in a building with climate controls.
 2. Out-buildings, including garages, do not protect papers from heat, cold, insects, or high humidity.

3. Papers stored under these conditions are far more likely to become yellowed and brittle; attract silverfish, roaches, and other pests; or become mildewed.
 - i. Records should be periodically inspected for contamination by insects, especially before moving them from other locations to a parish vault or school office. If there is an insect problem, records need to be fumigated by an exterminator.
- D. Other than the environment, the most frequently encountered problem is the deterioration of unstable or highly acidic materials.
 1. Newsprint and other low quality papers will deteriorate much more quickly than cotton rag paper.
 2. Newsprint clippings, old brown quick copies, slick quick copies, and fading dittos should be photocopied on acid free paper.
 3. In most cases, the original does not need to be saved, with the exception of items having legal and/or intrinsic value.
 - i. In such cases, the document should be placed in a plastic archival sleeve.
 4. Newsprint should not be stored with other less acidic paper.
- E. It is recommended that black and white copies of color photographs be made and stored in separate archival plastic or paper sleeves in adequate size acid free boxes.
 1. Many photo albums are not recommended for permanent storage of photographs because they contain poly-vinyl-chloride pages or sleeves. PVC's cause photographs to deteriorate.
 2. Albums with sticky or glued surfaces also damage photographs and should not be used.
 3. Color photographs are not recommended for archival purposes. They fade after approximately 20 years, as do color negatives.
- E. Permanent records or material should be stored in acid free boxes, folders, and sleeves.
- F. While building a new church or parish hall, it is recommended to prepare a "time capsule" with several items designated by the parish and faith community, important for its history.
 1. Time capsules may contain: copies of photographs of the first church and pastor; erection and deed document (archival copy); roster of first parishioners; and other significant parish items.
 2. Time capsules and other archival quality supplies can be purchased from several vendors listed in [Appendix VI: Resources for Archival Products](#) (Page E-59).

G. It is vital that the process used to preserve and protect archival materials does not harm them and that "what is done can always be undone." In summary the following basic steps are recommended to preserve these materials:

1. Food and beverages are not allowed in the processing space or in the archives
2. Pencils are to be used for notations and labels
3. White cotton gloves are to be worn when handling textiles and photographs
4. Acid free folders and acid free boxes are to be used to contain archival materials
5. Acid free tissue is to be used to support and cover textiles (vestments, objects)
6. Acid free paper is to be used to interleave photographs.

VIII. Records Management and Archival Program

- A. A record management program and archival program in a parish or school must have adequate support and resources to succeed.
- B. Establishing and maintaining a program requires organization and planning, as well as staff, monetary commitment, and support from the administration.
- C. It is recommended that the local parish finance council be involved in this process.
- D. It is also recommended that the program be clearly outlined and that the records management and archival programs be coordinated.
- E. The following is a sample policy statement that may be adopted at a particular parish:

"The purpose of the archives of [Name of Institution] is to collect, organize, preserve, and make available for research, the official records of [Name of Institution]. The purpose of the records management program is to assure that the active and inactive records of [Name of Institution] are managed in a manner in keeping with the standards of the records management profession, and to assure the transfer of the appropriate records to the archives. The records management program is established in accordance with Canon 535, § 4 which states that *"In each parish there is to be a storage area, or archive, in which the parochial registers are protected along with the letters of Bishops and other documents which are to be preserved for reasons of necessity or advantage."* "Other documents" may be defined as any recorded information (including artifacts and photographs) regardless of format (printed or electronic) that are made, received, or maintained by the community as a result of conducting business pursuing legal obligations, and have been determined to be permanent or historically significant by the records retention schedule or basic appraisal criteria. The pastor is canonically responsible for the records of a parish, faith community, or parish school. This responsibility has been delegated to [Name of Individual] in order to assure the appropriate administration of the program."

IX. Archival Arrangement and Description

Once records are placed in the archives, proper provenance procedures are needed to preserve their original order.

- A. The purpose of the arrangement of archival records of the parish, faith community, or school, is to reflect the functional organization of the institution.

For example: St. Mary's Parish
Administration Office, Correspondence, 1980-1985

- B. If there is no arrangement to the records originally collected for the archives, they are to be arranged according to function, type, and date:

For example: St. Mary's Parish
Altar Guild, Minutes, 1935-1940.

- C. It may be necessary to identify or describe certain records further if the parish has a school or if the faith community has aspects that require additional description.

For example: St. Mary's School
Development Office
Fund-raising Campaign, Financial records, 1996.

1. The addition of "St. Mary's School" adds another level of identification to the file or records that specifically originate from the school rather than the church, even though a development office may exist in both areas.

X. Records Management and Archives Program Outline

- A. It is recommended that the archives and records management policy be reviewed and coordinated by the diocesan archivist and records manager and then approved by the local pastor or administrator, school principal, or superintendent of schools.

- B. After the approval of archival policies and records management program, it is recommended that the records management program for a parish or school be conducted in the following steps:

1. Locate and survey all records, from sacramental registers to canceled checks.
2. Create an inventory or list of the records.
 - a. The inventory will include the name of the department, the name of the file or record, the date range of materials in the file, and the location of the file or record.

NOTE: The surveys and inventories of records provide a basis for future decisions, such as revising the current filing system, creating retention schedules, and appraising the records.

3. The following criteria for appraisal (or determination of records' value) are to be considered when making decisions about the disposition of records.

a. Administrative value

- i. Records that document the establishment of policy and operations have administrative value.
- ii. Policy records are generally retained permanently.
- iii. Operations records are usually considered short-term.

b. Legal value

- i. Records that document legal or property rights of individuals or of the entity that created or maintained the records (e.g. deeds, leases, architectural drawings) may have legal value.
- ii. All documents that have legal value must be retained.

c. Fiscal value

- i. Records that usually relate to financial transactions and usually have a short-term retention (checks) may have short-term fiscal value.
- ii. Records documenting fiscal policy may have permanent fiscal value (e.g., ledgers).

d. Historical value

Records that are retained permanently to provide documentation on the origins, organization, development, functions, policies, and events of the originating entity (parish) and/or provide information on associate individuals, subjects, and events (e.g. deeds, erection acts, minutes) have historical value.

e. Intrinsic value

Records having value that is inherent in the document itself because of "some unique factor, such as age, content, usage, or circumstances surrounding its creation, signature, or attached seals" (e.g. pastor's appointment letter on parchment) have intrinsic value.

f. Canonical or sacramental value

Records that document the administration of sacraments are always retained permanently (e.g. sacramental registers).

NOTE: Some records have more than one of the above values and some of these values indicate short-term records retention over permanent retention or placement in the archives. Appraise records based on criteria above.

4. Determine which records are active, inactive, or archival.
 - a. Active records are records necessary for current business or those referenced on a daily basis.
 - b. Inactive records are referenced fewer than ten (10) times per year or those records that are required to be kept for a short period of time (such as many financial records).
 - c. Archival records are those records determined to be permanent or historically significant.
- C. After all records identified in the inventory have been appraised, a retention period is established and assigned to each records series.
- D. Information concerning each records series and its retention is then detailed in the records retention schedule.
 1. The retention of records is based on various legal, administrative, and canonical requirements.
 2. The modified [Records Retention Schedule](#) (Page E-42) may be used to form the basis of a records management program in a parish or faith community, or parish school.
 - a. This schedule addresses the disposition of common parish records.
 3. There may be reasons to keep records longer than legally required, such as historical or reference purposes.
 4. For retention requirements established by Federal laws and regulations, see the current [Guide to Record Retention: Requirements](#)⁵ annually published in the Federal Register.

⁵ Guide to Record Retention: Requirements. Annually published in the Federal Register which can be obtained at nominal cost from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

Records Retention Schedules for Parish and School

Key: SUP: Retain until superseded
P: Permanent
FY: Fiscal year
CY: Current year
AR: Annual review
ACT: Active, as long as an issue is current or individual is employed
ST: State legal requirements

Parish Records Retention Schedule

I. Sacramental Records

Marriage files (transfer to diocesan archives after 99 years)	P
Sacramental registers (may be transferred to diocesan archives after 80 years)	P
Sacramental registers, supporting documents (marriages)	P
Supporting documents (correspondence, sacramental and legal documents, affidavits, notes, evaluations)	FY+6
Etc.	

II. Administrative Records

Announcement book (daily or weekly)	P
Annual Reports (parish and diocesan)	P
Appointments, canonical	P
Articles of incorporation	
Census records (including registration cards, parish list, or directory)	P
Communications from the Bishop (<i>Folia Cleri</i>)	P
Correspondence, routine	P
Correspondence, non-routine	AR
Inventories, filing system	P
Inventories, property	P
Inventories, filing system	SUP
Inventories, property	SUP
Personal papers: pastors, parochial vicars (may include correspondence, homilies, notes, diaries)	P
Volunteer files	ACT
Etc	

III. Boards, Commissions, Committees Records

Constitutions and by-laws (for all parish organizations)	P
Finance Council minutes/agendas	P
Pastoral Council minutes/agendas	P
Religious education reports	P
Altar Guild minutes/agenda	P
Scrapbooks	P
Etc.	

IV. Cemetery Records

Account cards (lot ownership and payments)	P
Annual report	P
Burial cards	P
Lot cards	P
Lot maps	P
Etc.	P

V. Financial Records

Audit reports	P
Accounts payable	FY+6
Accounts receivable	FY+6
Bank deposits/registers	FY+6
Cash book (daily records or receipts)	FY+6
Charitable gaming records	FY+6
Check registers	FY+6
Check copies/stubs	FY+6
Contributions and donations (these records need to be kept permanently if other records identifying parishioners, such as census records, are not available or do not exist)	P
General ledgers	P
Journal entries	FY+6
Loan files (mortgages, payment schedules)	FY+6
Payroll journal	P
Pew rent record book (these records need to be kept permanently if other records identifying parishioners, such as census records, are not available or do not exist)	P
Tax exemption (parish)	P
Tax forms (e.g. 1099 W)	FY+6
Trust fund / estate contribution	P
Etc.	

VI. Property Records

Architectural drawings and specifications	P
Construction files	P
Deeds	P
Leases	ACT+10
Property appraisals	P
Etc.	

VII. Personnel Records

Employee files	ACT+6
Immigration and Naturalization I-9 Form	ACT+1
Performance Evaluations	CY+3
Short Term Disability	P
Time Cards	FY+6
Worker's Compensation Insurance Payments	FY+6
W4	FY+6
Etc.	

NOTE: Some of the information in these files has historical and/or legal value. Before destruction, a list of personnel and positions for each year is to be placed in the archives. If legal problems occur, a summary of the issue is to be written, and a separate file kept for at least six years after the individual has left employment or the issue was resolved).

VIII. Photographs

Activities	P
Parish structures	P
Personnel	P
Etc.	

NOTE: Photographs need to be identified and dated.

IX. Publications

Bulletins (may be microfilmed or saved on digital media)	P
Parish directory	P
Parish history, anniversary books	P
Promotional or information packets	P
Etc.	

School Records Retention Schedule

Records retention schedules for schools can be complicated by a number of factors including the definition of the "permanent file." Also, some local regulations regarding private and public schools on the level of state can influence retention schedules of these records (e.g., accreditation files).

X. Administrative Records

Absentee notes	CY
Accreditation files	P
Annual reports	P
Attendance records, student (needs to be consulted with diocesan archivist)	ACT+6
Class lists	P
Class schedules	SUP
Construction files	P
Correspondence, routine	AR
Correspondence, non-routine	P
History file	P
Inventories, filing system	SUP
Inventories, property	SUP
Inventories, textbooks	SUP
Lesson Plans	SUP
Minutes: boards, commissions, committees	P
Newsletters, alumni	P
Newsletters, weekly	P
Statistics: enrollment, grades, etc.	P
Transcripts (cumulative card)	P
School directory	P
Student file (no transcripts)	ACT+6
Etc.	

XI. Memorabilia

Annuals	P
Handbooks	P
Programs, athletics	P
Programs, seasonal	P
Commemorate publications	P
Etc.	

XII. Financial Records

Audit reports	P
Accounts payable	FY+6
Accounts receivable	FY+6
Bank deposits/registers	FY+6
Check registers	FY+6
Check copies/stubs	FY+6
General ledger	P
Grants received	FY+6
Journal entries	FY+6
Payroll journal	P
Tax exemption (school)	P
Tax forms (e.g. 1099, W-4)	FY+6
Tuition payments (This information has historical and administrative value. Before destruction, it is suggested that a list of annual tuition rates be created and placed in the "history file.")	FY+6

XIII. Personnel Records

Contracts	ACT+6
Employee files	ACT+6
Performance evaluations	CY+3
Immigration and Naturalization I-9 form	ACT+1
Short term disability	P
Time cards	FY+6
Volunteer files	ACT+6
Worker's Compensation Insurance payments	FY+6
W4	FY+6
Etc.	

NOTE: Some of the information in these files has historical and/or legal value. Before destruction, a list of personnel and positions for each year is to be placed in the archives. If legal problems occur, a summary of the issue is to be written, and a separate file kept for at least six years after the individual has left employment or the issue was resolved).

XIV. Photographs

Activities	P
School	P
Staff	P
Student	P
Teachers	P
Etc.	

NOTE: Photographs need to be identified and dated.

XV. Some of the above records are kept in parishes, faith communities, and schools in the form of electronic records (diskettes, tapes, CDs) and are not considered archival or permanent.

A. However, some records created or stored on electronic media may be archival.

1. Any electronic records determined to be archival are to be printed out and kept in paper format in the parish or school archives (e.g. general ledgers, membership lists, some correspondence).

B. Electronic databases can be utilized to store and manipulate demographic data, membership lists, and information from the sacramental registers.

C. Electronic records must not replace the register books.

XVI. Parish and School Closure

A. It is recommended that, when a parish or school closes or merges with another, the sacramental registers or school records of the subsumed community be closed on the date the “new” parish or school begins.

1. The closed registers of the parish are to contain a narrative at the appropriate space in the volume outlining what has occurred and at what parish or school the subsequent records can be found.

2. The closed parish registers, school transcripts, and other permanent records are to be turned over to the diocesan archives rather than the newly formed parish or school.

3. Registers and student transcripts can be then microfilmed and further services will be provided by the diocesan archivist.

B. It is recommended that pastors and school administrators and anybody who is designated to record keeping should be in close contact with the chancellor, archivist, or records manager to seek any advice regarding records retention and preservation.

C. The advice of the diocesan lawyer and tribunal should be sought in problematic cases of access and release of parish and school records.

Appendix I: Forms

Affidavit for the Person Baptized as an Adult

I, _____ was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church on the _____ day of _____ in the year _____ at the Church of _____ in _____, with _____ as witness. The minister of baptism was _____.

Sworn and Subscribed

(Signature and date)

(Witness)

Affidavit for the parent or godparent of a baptized child or a witness to the baptism:

I, _____ attest that _____ was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church on the _____ day of _____ in the year _____ at the Church of _____ in _____ with _____ and _____ as witnesses. The minister of baptism was _____. I know this because I am: _____ a parent _____ a godparent _____ a person _____ a minister of baptism present at ceremony.

Sworn and Subscribed

(Signature and date)

(Witness)

Authorization for Release of Information

I, _____,
(Name)

authorize the _____,
(Parish)

located in _____, _____, to release a copy of the
(City) (State)

_____ of _____
(type of record) (name on certificate)

to _____.
(self or name of other person/institution)

I agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Catholic Archives of _____,
the Roman Catholic Church, its dioceses, Bishops and their successors in office, the aforesaid parish
and all other persons connected with them from any liability for releasing this information pursuant to
my request.

Authorization signature Driver's License #

Note: The person authorizing release must be the **person named** in the certificate, **or the parent** if
the named person is a minor child; the **spouse** or **adult child** if the named person is deceased.

Address

City State ZIP Telephone

State of _____

County of _____

This instrument was acknowledged before me on the _____ day of _____, _____
by _____

(seal) Notary Public for the state of _____

Appendix II: Additional Registers

I. Register of the Catechumens

- A. This register is provided for those individuals who have gone through the Rite of Acceptance.
- B. In general, the Register of Catechumens is to include:
 - 1. Full name of the individual
 - 2. Name of the sponsor(s)
 - 3. Name of the minister of the rite
 - 4. Date and place of the rite

II. Book of the Elect

- A. This register lists the names of the catechumens who have gone through the Rite of Election.
- B. The Book of Elect is signed by the catechumens during the Rite of Election.
 - 1. This is considered the official register.
- C. In general, the Book of the Elect is to include:
 - 1. Full name of the individual
 - 2. Name of the sponsor(s)
 - 3. Name of the minister of the rite
 - 4. Date and place of the rite

III. Reception into Full Communion

- A. This register lists the names of those individuals who have been received into full Communion in the Catholic Church.
- B. This register is to replace profession of faith entries in the baptism and/or confirmation registers.
- C. The record is to include:
 - 1. Full name of the individual

2. Date and place of the profession
 3. Name of the sponsor(s)
 4. Name of the minister
 5. Date, place, and minister of baptism
- D. Supporting documentation may include a copy of the individual's baptismal certificate.
1. An optional certificate may be issued as soon as possible after the event.

NOTE: All above registers are considered to be permanent records.

Appendix III: Glossary

Baptism	The "gate to the sacraments" and, therefore, the first of the sacraments of initiation. It is the means by which one is reborn in Christ, freed from sin, and incorporated in the Church through water and Holy Spirit (c. 849).
Canonical Form	The means of celebrating marriage in the Catholic Church by which a man and woman exchange their consent according to the prescribed ritual, before two witnesses, in the presence of the competent minister of the Catholic Church (c. 1108).
Catechumen	A non-baptized person who has "manifested a willingness to embrace faith in Christ," and who, therefore, prepares through suitable instruction and liturgical rites to celebrate the sacraments of initiation in the Church (c. 788).
Catechumenate	The process by which the non-baptized are called to the preparation for and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation. One is formally admitted to the catechumenate after a period of inquiry and according to the prescribed rite of acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.
Conditional Baptism	Baptism celebrated "if there is a doubt whether one has been baptized or whether baptism was validly conferred" (c. 869).
Confirmation	One of the sacraments of initiation by means of which the baptized Christian is "enriched by the gift of the Holy Spirit and bound more perfectly to the Church. Through it the person is strengthened to witness to Christ" (c. 879).
Convalidation	A legal remedy by which the original consent of a man and a woman, invalid in some way, is subsequently made valid either through a) renewal of consent in canonical form ("simple convalidation"), b) radical sanation (c. 1156 - 1165).
Decree of Nullity	The declaration by a tribunal of the Catholic Church which, after the completion of the prescribed process, affirms that the consent given in the marriage in question was in fact invalid.
Delegation	The means by which the faculty to govern or perform judicial act is granted to a qualified person by someone who has the power by virtue of his office. In the context of this document delegation refers to the act by which power to witness a marriage is given to a specific person (c. 1111-1114).
Disparity of Worship	An impediment to contracting a valid marriage in the Church which arises because one of the parties is not baptized (c. 1086).

Dissolution	The means by which the Church through one of its tribunals dissolves a valid bond of marriage for a just cause. There are usually only three causes considered: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A marriage never consummated (c. 1142) 2. When one of two non-baptized parties to a marriage wishes to be baptized in the Catholic Church and the other party departs (c. 1143-1147) 3. In favor of the faith when, in the marriage of a baptized and non-baptized person, either becomes a Catholic or wishes to marry Catholic.
Express Permission	Required of the competent authority for the licit celebration of marriage between Catholic and baptized Christian not in full communion with the Catholic Church (c. 1124).
First Communion/ First Eucharist	One of the sacraments of initiation by which a baptized person participates for the first time in the Eucharistic Sacrifice (c. 897)/Eucharistic Banquet (c. 899).
Holy Orders/ Ordination	The sacrament by which men are "constituted sacred ministers" in the Church and "deputed to shepherd the people of God" (c. 1008).
Lack of Form/ Defect of Form	The term used to describe a marriage which, when so required, failed to follow the prescribed canonical form for its valid celebration. When a petitioner submits documentary proof and other required information, a tribunal can issue a Declaration of Freedom to Marry.
Marriage	The sacrament by which a man and a woman "establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life" through consent that is freely given (c. 1055; 1057).
Mixed Marriage	The term employed by the Catholic Church to describe the union established between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic (c. 1124).
Professed Religious/ Vowed Religious	A man or woman who is incorporated into a religious institute by means of public vows, which oblige the observance of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience (c. 654).
Profession of Faith	See <i>Reception into Full Communion</i> (Page E-55).
Radical Sanation	A means by which competent ecclesiastical authority renders an invalid marriage valid without the renewal of consent. Through this process the marriage consent is made valid from the time it was given, the impediment that had made the consent invalid is dispensed, and all canonical effects of a valid marriage are applied retroactively to the beginning of the union. The presumption is that the consent given from the start is still enduring (c. 1161).

Reception in Full Communion	Usually, the means by which an already baptized person affirms through a credal formula the truth of the Catholic faith and thereby becomes a member of the Catholic Church (use for term "profession of faith").
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The process by which an adult is received into the Catholic Church, usually through reception of the three sacraments: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.
Rescript	"An administrative act issued in writing by competent executive authority by which through its very nature a privilege, dispensation, or other favor is granted in response to someone's request" (c. 59). An example of this is permission for a priest to be returned to the lay state.
Rites Supplied	The completion of baptism — usually in the parish church — for infants already baptized when in danger of death.

Appendix IV: Glossary of Latin Terms

Adnotatio	Notation or remark
Adoptio	Adoption
Confirmatio recepta	Confirmation received
Convalidatio matrimonii	Convalidation of marriage
Declaratio nullitatis concessa	Declaration of nullity granted
Defunctus	Deceased
Delegatus	Delegate, delegated
Diaconatus	Diaconate
Dispensatio a M. R. et ad cautelam D.C.	Dispensation from Mixed Religion and, to be careful, also from Disparity of Worship
Dispensatio a tribus bannis	Dispensation from the three banns
Dispensatio consanguinitatis	Dispensation from Consanguinity
Dispensatio affinitatis	Dispensation from Affinity
Extra matr. natus	Born out of wedlock
Fil. illegit.	"Illegitimate" child
Impedimentum	Impediment
Infans	Child
Liber infirmorum	Book of the Sick
Matrimonium contraxit cum _____	Contracted marriage with _____
Pater ignotus	Father unknown
Patrini	Sponsors (Godparents)

Patrinus	Sponsor (Godfather)
Presbyteratus	Priesthood (Presbyterate)
Presbyter	Priest
Procurator	Proxy
Professio Solemnis	Solemn profession (in a religious order of men or women)
Prohibitio	Prohibition
Proles	Child, children (offspring)
Sacerdos	Priest
Sacer ordo Presbyteratus receptus	Sacred Order of Priesthood received
Sacer ordo Subdiaconatus receptus	Sacred Order of Subdiaconate received
Testes	Witnesses
Testis	Witness
Validatio matrimonii	Convalidation of Marriage
Ritus Suppleti	Rites Supplied

Appendix V: Publications

New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law. The Canon Law Society of America. Paulist Press, New York, 2000. John P. Beal, et al., pds.

Guidelines for Access to Diocesan Archives. Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists. 1991.

Guidelines in Record Keeping for Pastors, Secretaries, and Other Support Staff. Diocese of Austin, 1992. Prepared by Kinga Perzynska.

Guide to Record Retention: Requirements. Annually published. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

John Huels. *Catechumenate and the Law.* Liturgical Press, 1994. This book offers a thorough discussion of the rights of the catechumenate and Church law.

Introduction to Archives and Records Management for Parishes, Faith Communities, and Schools. Archdiocese of Seattle, 1997. Prepared by Christine Taylor.

James M. O'Toole. *Basic Standards for Diocesan Archives: A Guide for Bishops, Chancellors, and Archivists.* Chicago: Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists, 1991.

Gary M. Peterson, Trudy Huskamp Peterson. *Archives & Manuscripts: Law.* Basic Manual Series. Society of American Archivists. Chicago, 1985.

The Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church. Circular Letter: The Pastoral Function of Church Archives. Vatican City, February 2, 1997. The Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, Vatican, 1997.

Records Management for Parishes and Schools. Diocese of Bismarck, 1985. Compiled by David P. Gray. Reprinted with permission and distributed by the Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists.

The Rites of the Catholic Church (Volumes I, IA, and II). Pueblo Publishing Co., 1991. This is the English translation of all rituals of the Catholic Church, particularly the sacraments.

Sacramental Records Manual. Archdiocese of Seattle, 1996. Prepared by Christine Taylor.

Appendix VI: Resources for Archival Products

Archival Products

boards, folders, pens, stainless steel staples

P.O. Box 1413
Des Moines, Iowa 50306
(800) 526-5640
www.archival.com

Gaylord Brothers

boards, papers, folders, pens, boxes, plastic sleeves

P.O. Box 4901
Syracuse, New York 13321
(800) 448-6160
www.gaylord.com

Hollinger Metal Edge

boards, folders, papers, and boxes

California:
6340 Bandini Blvd.
Commerce, CA 90040
(800) 862-2228
<http://www.hollingermetaledge.com>

Virginia:
9401 Northeast Dr.
Fredericksburg, VA 22408
(800) 634-0491
<http://www.hollingermetaledge.com>

Light Impressions

supplies and housing for photographic materials

P.O. Box 2100
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
(800) 828-6216
www.lightimpressionsdirect.com

University Products, Inc.

boards, papers, folders, photographic materials, time capsules

517 Main Street
Holyoke, MA 01041
(800) 628-1912
www.universityproducts.com