

GUIDELINES FOR SACRAMENTAL RECORD KEEPING

(Apr., 1994 1st ed.)
(Rev. 10/2006)

GENERAL NORMS:

These general norms pertain to all sacramental registers. Additional guidelines that are specific to a particular sacramental register can be found under the title of that register.

Types:

Every parish is required to maintain records of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and deaths. Many also maintain a register of First Communion, although this is not required by Church law. **While parishes may use computer databases or indexes to track sacramental records, the registers themselves are the *only official records* and must be maintained.** The registers are never destroyed or discarded. Recording of sacraments, and notification sent to the parish of baptism, should be done promptly in these registers according to the norms set out in Canon Law (canons 535, 877, 895, 1121, 1122).

Safe Storage:

Sacramental registers belong to the individual parish and are to be stored in a locked place, preferably one which is fire-proof or fire-resistant. They may be removed only by authorized personnel and only for legitimate purposes. The only persons to have access to the registers are the pastor/administrator, parochial vicar, the Episcopal Vicar, or the pastor's designee (the one charged with the responsibility for inscription, retention, and release of sacramental records). The registers may not be taken off the parish premises except for microfilming by the diocese or for safe-keeping by the pastor in the event of a disaster.

Confidential Information and Access:

Although sacramental records contain information about public events, they also contain information which is very personal and confidential. They are maintained for the good of the Christian faithful, but they are *private* documents, not public ones. The person designated in the parish to have regular access to the registers must be capable of careful work and of protecting confidentiality. No information from sacramental records is to be provided over the phone or by other electronic means. Sacramental registers are never made available to genealogical researchers.

Any member of the Christian faithful has a **right to obtain** a certificate of a sacrament he or she has received and which was recorded in a sacramental register. But only that person, the parents of a minor, one with legal guardianship of another, a pastoral minister at another Catholic parish, or a diocesan official have this right. If the person is deceased, the spouse or adult child may also request the record. When the parents of a child are separated or divorced, both parents, regardless of legal custody, have the right to their child's certificate. Once an adoption has been completed, only the adoptive parents have a right to the child's certificate until the child reaches the age of majority.

When agencies or other **third parties** request someone else's records, they should provide a release form (**Appendix #1**) signed by the individual whose record they are requesting. The completed release form is kept on file in case of a violation of privacy claim. The individual can also obtain his or her own certificate and provide it to the third party that is requesting it.

The most important sacramental record is that of Baptism, since it contains not only data concerning a person's baptism but also data about reception into full communion, confirmation, marriage, dispensation, nullity of marriage, adoption, reception of sacred orders, laicization, perpetual religious profession, change of rite, and formal departure from the Catholic Church. All of these annotations are to be noted on a baptism certificate every time one is issued.

The baptism certificate also has value beyond strictly ecclesiastical use. For example, some persons are helped in Social Security benefit claims through presentation of an authentic record of Baptism to a public agency, since such a record will have notations with respect to date and place of birth. It is also conceivable that a Baptism record might contain information that would be pertinent in a civil or criminal matter, and if so, the individual can obtain his or her own certificate for use in court. When a record is sought by a *third party* for purposes of litigation, or, in any event, *without* the expressed written consent of the subject, this request is ordinarily to be declined for these reasons:

- the sacramental nature of the record,
- the proprietary right of the subject in that record,
- the very real danger that the pastor will be held liable for undue disclosure.

Entries:

All entries in sacramental records must be made by **neat printing** (rather than script) and in **black ink** (rather than colored and "rolling inks"). In addition to facilitating the microfilming process, ball-point ink lasts longer and does not wash off in case of water damage. Economy of size in the printing is recommended because of limited space in the registers, especially in the "Notations" section, where future changes or corrections will be entered.

Entries should be made **as soon as possible** after the event to be recorded. The signature of the minister is no longer required. Where the name of the minister is requested, the secretary (or person responsible for maintaining sacramental records) is to print the name.

Entries are to be made in **chronological order**. If this order cannot be kept in a particular case, a small note should be made in the proper chronological location in the register, cross-referencing the actual entry (e.g. "See JONES, page 37, entry #7").

The last name or surname is to be entered first in upper case (e.g. "JONES"), followed by the given name(s) in lower case (e.g. "William"). Printing the name of the month is preferred to using the month's number (e.g. "Aug." rather than "8").

If there is inadequate space for all the data to be entered, the excess data may be entered elsewhere on the same page or even on a different page of the register. **Clear cross-referencing is essential** (e.g. "See SMITH, bottom of page" or "See SMITH, page 59, entry # 13").

In the case of a **mistake** during the inscription process, a single line drawn through the entire entry will invalidate the record. A new record on the next line in the register is to be inscribed.

- e.g. ~~Maria Garcia, d.o.b. May 1, 2000~~ (mistake made while making entry)
- Mario Gracia, d.o.b. May 11, 2000 (correct information)

"White out," erasers, or other cosmetic correcting products may never be used in sacramental registers.

Certificates:

A certificate is an official document certifying that a particular individual has received a sacrament. It is an exact duplicate of information already entered in a sacramental register,

not of information stored in a computer database or index. The one who signs the certificate attests to its being an authentic copy of the original register.

Certificates of sacraments received are intended primarily for **internal church use**. They should have an official appearance and be issued in a consistent format, bearing the name and address of the parish. They are to be typed, printed by computer, or hand-printed in ink, signed by the pastor or his delegate (no rubber-stamp signatures), and impressed with the parish seal. The authorized secretary can sign the pastor's name if she adds her initials and places the seal above both initials and the pastor's name. Photostatic and facsimile copies of certificates are not considered to be authentic documents.

With increased computer capability, some parishes throughout the country are creating their own certificates by **computer**. This is acceptable; however, the Baptism certificate **MUST** include all notations relative to reception of other sacraments (i.e. reception into full communion, confirmation, marriage, dispensation, nullity of marriage, adoption, reception of sacred orders, laicization, perpetual religious profession, change of rite, and formal departure from the Catholic Church). If there is no data in the "Notations" column of the register, the words, "No Notations" should be printed on the certificate.

Before releasing a certificate, it is important to verify the identity of the person requesting the document (e.g. driver's license, passport, other photo I.D., etc.). Great care should be taken not to give records indiscriminately to persons who have no legitimate right to them. (Refer to the section: "Confidential Information and Access" beginning on p. 1.) When requests come through the mail, e-mail, or the telephone asking that the certificate be mailed to them, special care should be taken. If the person requesting the record is unable to provide proof of identity at that time or if he or she lives in another city or state, the certificate can be mailed to that person's parish, where he or she will be asked for proof of identity before receiving the certificate.

The ordinary **request** for a sacramental record from **parish to parish** or from a **diocesan office** (e.g. Tribunal, Chancellor's Office) presents no problem. The record is mailed directly to the parish or diocesan office, without requiring a signed release.

Changes to Original Entries:

Once entered into a sacramental register, data is considered official and permanent. Original data should never be scratched out, erased, "whited out" or otherwise destroyed or obliterated.

If a **spelling or date error** is discovered in an entry, before an alteration can be made, the parish must first have legal proof of the correct information (e.g. birth certificate). Once receiving proof, the correction should be made directly in the original entry by drawing one line through the incorrectly spelled word or number and printing it correctly. **It is not permitted that any changes be made of a substantial nature without authentic proof.** A notation is made in the remarks column: e.g. "information changed to agree with birth certificate." A copy of the source document from which the correction is made is retained in the parish files.

<p>A secure file marked "Sacramental Records" is to be kept in the parish files where source documentation is maintained. Such documentation would include copies of civil or court records, notarized affidavits, and official correspondence which are the basis for making corrections or changes in the original entry in a sacramental register. When the correction or change is made, the words "See Sacramental Records File" are printed in the "Notations" column of the sacramental register.</p>
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Major changes (e.g. to record an adoption after baptism) may require that a new entry be created. In these cases, the original entry is to be preserved without change; a new entry, with all the data from the original entry reproduced (except the relevant change or changes), is to be made in the same register as close to the original entry as possible; both entries, as well as listings in the index, are clearly to be cross-referenced. The words "Do not Issue Certificate from This Record" are to be printed carefully across the face of the original entry with an indication of where the revised entry is located.

Changes to an original entry that ARE permitted include: 1) correct name, 2) correct date, 3) correct spelling, 4) new legal name, and 5) adoptive parent(s). Changes that are NOT permitted include: 1) new godparents or sponsors, 2) non-adopting stepparents, 3) customary name or nickname.

Once specific data has been changed/corrected in the sacramental register, the original data is not transcribed onto certificates (e.g. incorrect spelling, incorrect date, former name before adoption).

Missing Records:

Sometimes when a certificate is requested, the record in question cannot be found. If there is any possibility that the sacrament may have been conferred in some other parish in the same locale, the inquirer should be encouraged to contact that other parish. Occasionally, the inquirer will have photographs or a video of the event. These can be supportive documentation to establish the conferral of the sacrament. Perhaps the parish of confirmation has a notation in the Confirmation Register about the place and date of baptism, if the baptism record is missing. If there was a godparent or sponsor or a witness present, a notarized affidavit submitted by that person (verifying their role, the place and date of the conferral of the sacrament, etc.) can be supportive documentation (**Appendix #2**). **Only that data which can be vouched for with certainty should be entered in the sacramental register, even though this may leave an incomplete entry.** The name of the witness, the date of his or her affidavit, and the words, "Based on the testimony of" should be printed in the "Notations" column of the register. Any supportive documentation that is provided is to be retained in the "Sacramental Records" file at the parish.

Inspection of Sacramental Registers:

Every fiscal year the Episcopal Vicar shall make a pastoral visitation of each parish/mission. During this visit, he will inspect the sacramental and death registers for accuracy (including completion of entries). He will date and sign his name (using E.V. as his title) after the last entry of each register. He will verify that sacramental registers are securely stored and that access is limited. He will also inspect the Mass offering book to insure that Mass stipends are recorded and fulfilled according to canonical stipulations and diocesan policy. ("Episcopal Vicar: Canonical and Pastoral Functions", rev. July 6, 2006)

Questions Regarding Sacramental Records:

If these Guidelines do not provide adequate direction to address a particular situation, the pastor or parish secretary (or the person responsible for maintaining the sacramental records) is to contact the Vicar General or the Chancellor of the Diocese for guidance.

BAPTISM REGISTER:

Making Original Entries:

Where the **parents** of the child to be baptized are **not personally known**, it is recommended that the parents be asked to provide to the parish a copy of the birth certificate (or some other document verifying name of child, birth date/place, and parents' names) along with the registration form. This ensures that the parish can verify the accuracy of the information that is to be entered into the Baptism Register. Many errors that later on have to be corrected are made because certain data was entered into the Baptism Register based purely on the word of someone else without certifying its accuracy. The birth certificate or other document can be returned to the parents once the information is verified. Inability, however, to provide documentation, in a particular case, should not be cause for denial or delay of baptism.

Where the **parents** of the child to be baptized are **unmarried**, the name of the mother is to be inserted in the register if there is public proof of her maternity or if she adds this willingly, either in writing or before the pastor and two witnesses. It is unjust to enter unauthorized names of parents in the Baptism Register. Likewise, the name of the natural father is to be inserted if his paternity has been proved either by some public document or by his own declaration before the pastor and two witnesses. A copy of the public proof is retained in the "Sacramental Records" file in the parish. If no public proof is available, the name of the child baptized is recorded without any indication of the name of the father or the parents. (c. 877.2)

Ways to prove paternity of the child:

- a. Parents are married at the time of conception.
- b. If not married at the time of conception, but DO marry before or after the birth of the child, at the time the couple procures the marriage license, they can complete and file an acknowledgment of paternity form. Once filed, the couple can then request an amended birth certificate from the Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.
- c. If the couple is NOT MARRIED and the father wants to confirm his paternity, he can file an acknowledgment of paternity form with the Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics. The mother cannot file this form on behalf of the father.
- d. Court action.

In circumstances of an **adoption-in-process**, the baptism is to be delayed until the final order of adoption and the amended birth certificate have been issued. Canon 868 states that at least one parent or the person who lawfully takes the place of parents (e.g. adoptive parents, legal guardians) must give consent for baptism. This person is also responsible to see that the child is raised in the Catholic faith. The final order of adoption and the amended birth certificate are the source documents for the entry in the Baptism Register. The child's new legal name is entered, with the names of the adopting parents. NO notation is made about the names of the natural parents. In the "Notations" column an entry is made e.g. "Legal Adoption (date), See 'Sacramental Records' File". A copy of the final order of adoption and the amended birth certificate are retained in the "Sacramental Records" file in the parish, and the information is treated as *strictly confidential*. A baptism certificate issued for an adopted child will be no different from other baptism certificates. No mention of the fact of adoption or of the identity of the natural parents shall be made on the certificate.

In the case of a **child's emergency baptism** at a hospital or other facility, the baptism is to be recorded in the Baptism Register of the parish in which the hospital/facility is located (c. 878). If the child survives, the parents should be reminded to contact their parish priest at the earliest convenience to arrange for the ceremonies for supplying of the rite of baptism. The emergency baptism may also be recorded (as a cross-reference) in the Baptism Register of the parish where the parents are registered at the time that the ritual ceremonies are supplied. The date and place where the ritual ceremonies were supplied are indicated in the "Notations" segment of the Baptism Register. The above also applies to baptism conferred in any location outside a parish church (e.g. chapel).

For the **Elect** who have completed the **RCIA Program** and received full initiation (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist), the name is recorded in the Baptism Register with all pertinent information, including reception of confirmation and Eucharist. Entries are also made in the Confirmation and First Communion Registers. A baptism certificate is issued which also indicates reception of Confirmation and Eucharist.

For a validly baptized **Christian** who is **received into full communion** with the Catholic Church (profession of faith, confirmation, Eucharist), the name is recorded in the Received into Full Communion Register or, in its absence, the Baptism Register under the date of the profession of faith. All pertinent information is entered, including reception of confirmation and Eucharist. Data, especially date and place, concerning the original baptism in the non-Catholic denomination is entered in the "Notations" section of the Baptism Register. Also entered in the "Notations" section is data regarding the current marital status (either current valid marriage or the convalidation of the current marriage). Any declaration of invalidity from the Tribunal (including where granted and protocol number) should be noted. Entries are also made in the Confirmation and First Communion Registers. If there was a convalidation of the current marriage, an entry is also made in the Marriage Register. A Reception into Full Communion or a Profession of Faith certificate is issued, with all notations.

Periodically the situation will arise where **Christian parents** who have had a child baptized in a non-Catholic church **want their child to become Catholic**. One reason this could occur is that the parent(s) is brought into the Catholic Church through initiation. If the child is age 6 or younger (i.e. under the catechetical age of 7 yrs.), the parent(s) make a Profession of Faith for the child. Once made, the parish records in the Baptism Register the information on the child's Profession of Faith. Data, especially date and place, concerning the child's original baptism in the non-Catholic denomination is entered in the "Notations" section of the Baptism Register. Once recorded, a Profession of Faith certificate is issued to the parents, and the Catholic parish becomes the place of sacramental record for the child.

Prison baptisms should be recorded in the Baptism Register of the parish within which the prison is located. Special attention should be paid to preparing the incarcerated for full initiation (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist) and not solely baptism.

Making Changes to Original Entries:

The **baptismal record** is the primary sacramental record for Catholics. It serves as a **log for all the significant, public developments** in one's relationship with the Church. As a result, most changes to entries in the sacramental registers will be made in the Baptism Register. The directions for some of these changes can be found in the GENERAL NORMS section at the beginning of these guidelines.

Other changes are additions to the "Notations" column.

For Example:

When a Catholic is confirmed, married, or ordained, the parishes where these sacraments are celebrated notify the parish of baptism, so the new sacraments can be noted in the Baptism Register. Also, when a marriage is declared invalid by an ecclesiastical Tribunal or when a cleric is returned to the lay state, the Tribunal will notify the parish of baptism so that a notation can be made in the person's baptism record. (c. 1685) Notification documents should include a "turn around" document to verify that notations have been recorded. A copy of the notification document is to be retained in the "Sacramental Records" file in the parish.

A parish will occasionally receive a notice from an individual (who was previously baptized a Catholic) or from a non-Catholic church indicating that the individual is no longer a Catholic and even **request** that his or her **name be removed** from all Catholic Church records. While it is appropriate to remove the person's name from the parish membership lists and mailing lists, NO deletions are to be made to the sacramental records. Simply discontinuing attendance at a Catholic Church, attending another church, or stating that one no longer wants to be Catholic is not sufficient for a "Formal Defection from the Catholic Church."

The following are essential requirements for Formal Defection from the Catholic Church:

- a. The person must freely and knowingly have the intention permanently to abandon the Catholic Church (to break all bonds with the Church).
- b. There must be an external manifestation of that decision which brings about the effects of that intention, e.g. participation in a formal rite of reception in another church.
- c. The substance of the act is an act of apostasy, heresy, or schism.
- d. The act of defection must be received by the competent ecclesiastical authority (verbally or in writing to an ecclesiastical authority--the Ordinary, pastor, or their delegate).

It is important that information be carefully recorded since such a declaration changes one's juridical status and may later have a bearing upon the validity of a subsequent marriage (cc. 1086, 1117, 1124). The parish should request that the individual formalize his/her request by completing the "Formal Declaration of Departure" form found in **Appendix #3**. If that is done, an entry in the "Notations" column in the person's baptism record is sufficient (i.e. "Formal defection from the Catholic Church + date). A copy of the completed "Formal Declaration of Departure" is sent to the Chancellor for the diocesan files, and the original is retained in the "Sacramental Records" file of the parish. It must still be understood that once baptized a Catholic, the person remains a baptized Catholic. The permanent ontological change that takes place in baptism is never lost.

The notations mentioned in the two preceding paragraphs should be made neatly and succinctly in the "Notations" column. Names, dates, places, and protocol numbers are usually the only information needed. These notations are usually not confidential and should ordinarily be included on certificates that are issued.

In the case of the baptism of a **child of an unwed mother**, the Baptism Register will most likely show the last name of the child to be that of the mother, and the name of the father may be blank or the word "*ignotus*" (not known) may have been inscribed. Later on, if the mother marries the natural father, they may request that changes be made to the

Baptism Register after following certain steps. When the parents apply for a marriage license, they can complete and file an acknowledgment of paternity form. Once filed, the married parents can then request an amended birth certificate from the Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics. When they present the amended birth certificate to the parish, the secretary can add the father's name and change the surname of the child to that of the father. A copy of the amended birth certificate is retained in the "Sacramental Records" file in the parish. An amended baptism certificate can be issued.

For a child who was **adopted AFTER baptism**, the original baptism record will indicate the name(s) of the natural parent(s). Usually, the adoptive parents will request that the sacramental record be modified to reflect the adoption and the change of names. They must provide to the parish the final order of adoption and the amended birth certificate as source documents for the change in the Baptism Register. A copy of the final order of adoption and of the amended birth certificate are retained in the "Sacramental Records" file in the parish, and the information is treated as *strictly confidential*. Because this is a major change and relates to confidential information, there are two possible ways of amending the baptism record of the child.

Alternative 1:

In the original record in the Baptism Register:

- A. Parentheses () shall be placed around the names of the natural parents;
- B. the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) shall be added above the names of the natural parents;
- C. the child's former surname shall also be parenthesized () and the new surname written above; and
- D. an entry is made in the "Notations" column, e.g. "Legally adopted, (date), See 'Sacramental Records' File".

The parish is to issue to the adoptive parents an amended baptism certificate with no names of the sponsor(s) and no reference to adoption or to the identity of the natural parents. (USCCB Complementary Norm, Dec. 1, 2000)

Alternative 2:

If maintaining the secrecy of the identity of the natural parents is a concern, a new entry can be created. In these cases, the original entry is to be preserved without change. The words "Do not Issue Certificate from This Record" are to be printed carefully across the face of the original entry, and in the "Notations" column a cross-reference entry is made: e.g. "Legal Adoption: (date), See p. 35, line # 14." Then, a new entry is created with some of the data from the original entry reproduced, *except* the legal surname of the child is changed to that of the adoptive parents, and in place of the names of the natural parents, the names of the adoptive parents are listed, and the names of the sponsors are NOT transferred. The new entry is to be made in the same register as close to the original entry as possible; *both entries*, as well as listings in the index, *are clearly to be cross-referenced*. From the new entry, the parish is to issue to the adoptive parents an amended baptism certificate with no names of the sponsor(s) and no reference to adoption or to the identity of the natural parents. This new entry then becomes the primary sacramental record for the child to which data will be added when other sacraments are received in the future.

Once the adopted child reaches the age of legal maturity, he or she has a right to the information contained in his or her sacramental record(s), even if this would disclose the identity of the natural parent(s).

Occasionally, a parish will receive the request by a parent to **change or delete the name of a godparent** from the Baptism Register because the parent has had a falling out with the godparent, or because the godparent has left the Church or is no longer living a moral life. It must be explained to the parent that the Baptism Register records an historical event, and the godparent was physically present and was also a witness to the sacrament, and, thus, that person's name cannot be deleted. In addition, Church law requires only *one* godparent, and if the other godparent can continue to help the child lead a Christian life, then there is no need to add a substitute godparent. If both godparents are no longer acceptable and the parents insist on adding another person to fulfill the role of godparent, the name of that other person may be added in the "Notations" section. No change may be made in the original entry or on the baptism certificate.

At times parishes receive requests to change the baptism records or completely **falsify a record for immigration purposes**. According to U.S. Immigration law, such action on behalf of aliens violates several federal statutes and felony crimes. The U.S. government does accept Church records as authentic documents. To falsify such records threatens those who depend on the baptism record as their claim to U.S. citizenship and presents legal risks for the pastor of the parish. No changes to an existing record are to be made without legitimate documentation to support the change.

At the end of calendar year 2002, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith requested that a clarification be sent to parishes regarding **persons who have had "sex change" operations**, who change their name to reflect their "new" sex, and then request a change in their baptism record to reflect their new name. The Congregation stated that the baptism record may NOT be changed to the new name. The Oct. 15, 2002 letter from the USCCB in which the information from the Congregation was relayed states:

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

CONFIRMATION REGISTER:

For confirmation celebrated under the normal circumstances (conferral by the Bishop upon **9th or 10th graders in their own parish**), the entries are made in the Confirmation Register, and a confirmation certificate is issued to each of the Confirmandi. The parish is responsible for sending notice to the parish of baptism, if that is different. If someone other than the diocesan bishop, who is the ordinary minister of confirmation, celebrates the confirmation (e.g. the Vicar General or Episcopal Vicar), a marginal notation should be made indicating what authorization the celebrant had.

Where **parishes are clustered for confirmation of 9th or 10th graders**, the secretary of the *host* parish will enter into the Confirmation Register of that parish the records of *all* who are confirmed by the Bishop, with a notation about why the confirmation was held at that particular parish - e.g. "Cluster Confirmation". The *individual* parishes in the cluster will be responsible for: 1) entering the information in their own Confirmation Registers for the

youth of their parish, with a notation of the parish where the confirmation took place and why - e.g. "Cluster Confirmation at St. Jane's parish, Bmt."; 2) issuing a confirmation certificate to each of their Confirmandi (with a notation of the parish where the confirmation took place and why); and 3) notifying the parish of baptism of each of their Confirmandi, if that is different. These cross-reference entries will assure proper documentation. (cf. Bishop Guillory's Sept. 6, 2006 letter to Pastors/Parochial Administrators)

For the **Elect** who have completed the **RCIA Program** and received full initiation (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist), the name is also recorded in the Confirmation Register.

For a validly baptized **Christian** who is **received into full communion** with the Catholic Church (profession of faith, confirmation, Eucharist), the name is also recorded in the Confirmation Register.

The Diocese of Beaumont, through the Office of Lifelong Catholic Formation/Education (OLCF/E), provides an **Adult Confirmation** Preparation Program for adult Catholics, 18 yrs. and older, who have received First Holy Communion but have not been confirmed. The adult Confirmation is celebrated by the Bishop every Spring, ordinarily at St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica. Following the confirmation ceremony, the OLCF/E will send a notice to the proper parish of each adult who was confirmed so that the conferral of the sacrament can be entered into the Confirmation Register. Since the adult was confirmed outside of his or her own parish, a notation should be made to indicate the parish where the sacrament was conferred. The OLCF/E will also notify the adult's parish of baptism so that the confirmation can be entered in the Baptism Register.

In order to satisfy the obligation of notifying the parish of baptism about the conferral of confirmation, a baptism certificate for each candidate should be obtained in advance of the celebration of confirmation. It is recommended that the parish and date of baptism be noted in the Confirmation Register in all of the above situations. (This can be especially helpful if a person has difficulty locating a baptismal record later in life.)

As in the case of an emergency baptism, the record of an **emergency confirmation** is kept in the territorial parish in which the confirmation occurred. The territorial parish is responsible for notifying the parish of baptism.

Proof that confirmation was conferred is required for reception of Holy Orders; it may also be requested (though not required) prior to celebration of marriage. It is also necessary to establish that a person was confirmed in order for him or her to serve as a godparent or sponsor for baptism or confirmation, since full initiation (baptism, first Eucharist, confirmation) is a requirement. (c. 874 §1, 3°)

MARRIAGE REGISTER:

Entries:

The information in the prenuptial file of the couple being prepared for **marriage** is the source for the entry in the Marriage Register. The "Notations" column is for the purpose of noting any permission or dispensation and other significant factors (e.g. delegation of the officiant). When a permission or dispensation is granted the entry will include the date, diocese, protocol number, and the type of permission/dispensation (e.g. "Dispensation from Disparity of Cult"). When an annulment has been granted before the new marriage, the entry is to include the word "Annulment" and the date, diocese granting it, and protocol number. (c. 1685)

When a civil union is **convalidated** in the Catholic Church, the data concerning the convalidation are to be placed in the usual columns of the Marriage Register. In the "Notations" column is entered the date, place, and officiant of the original ceremony (e.g. the

civil ceremony). [A convalidation is entered into the Marriage Register as a new marriage because this is the validation (not “blessing”) of a previously invalid union.]

After the marriage of a Catholic is celebrated, a notification must be sent to the parish of baptism, including the names of the spouses, the date and place of the wedding or convalidation, and also notations about a permission/dispensation or an annulment granted. (cc. 1122, 1123)

Premarital Files:

Each parish is required to maintain a file of the papers collected during the period of marriage preparation or preparation for convalidation. The file usually will include prenuptial forms, a baptism certificate (issued in the last 6 mos. with all notations), questionnaires, correspondence, notes, permission or dispensation document, annulment document, etc. Retained also is a copy of the signed civil marriage license, and a copy of the Marriage Certificate that is given to the couple.

Ordinarily, the premarital file for each couple should be retained by the parish where the marriage is recorded in the Marriage Register. If the couple was married outside of their proper parish (with permission of their pastor who prepared them for marriage), it may be helpful to keep a duplicate copy of the premarital file in their parish for future reference. The file is kept in its own envelope or folder, clearly marked with the parties’ names and the date of marriage. (See **Appendix #4** for a sample.) The files should be arranged in alphabetical or chronological order and kept together in a locked file cabinet or safe.

The premarital files are to be retained for 60 years or until both parties have died. Expired files are to be shredded so that no one can gain access to them.

If a legitimate request for a copy of the file is made by an ecclesiastical tribunal, a copy of the file should be sent. The original file remains in the parish’s archive.

Civil Marriage License:

According to the Texas Family Code, there are three conditions regarding the civil marriage license that all clergy must observe.

1. “A marriage ceremony may not take place during the 72-hour period immediately following the issuance of the civil marriage license.” (§ 2.204a) In other words, the civil marriage license must be at least 72 hours “old” before the priest or deacon can celebrate the wedding.
2. “If a marriage ceremony has not been conducted before the 31st day after the date the license is issued, the marriage license expires.” (§ 2.201) A person who conducts a marriage ceremony after the marriage license has expired commits an offense--a misdemeanor that is punishable by a fine of not less than \$200 and not more than \$500. (§ 2.207)
3. “The person who conducts a marriage ceremony shall record on the license the date on which and the county in which the ceremony is performed and the person’s name, subscribe the license, and return the license to the county clerk who issued it not later than the 30th day after the date the ceremony is conducted.” (§ 2.206a) A person who fails to comply commits an offense--a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than \$200 and not more than \$500. (§ 2.206b)

APPROVED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE DIOCESE OF BEAUMONT:

Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., D.D.

October 23, 2006

AUTHORIZATION OF RELEASE OF SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION

Please PRINT

I, _____, hereby authorize the Roman Catholic
(Name)

Diocese of Beaumont and _____,
(Parish Name)

_____, Texas, to release to
(City)

_____ a copy of the
(Name of Person or Organization)

_____ certificate of _____.
(Type of Certificate) (Name/Person on Certificate)

I agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Roman Catholic Diocese of Beaumont, its Bishop and successors in office, as well as the above mentioned parish, and all other persons connected with them, from any liability for releasing this information pursuant to my request.

(Authorization Signature)

Date

(Proof / I.D. -- e.g. Driver's License)

(Address)

(Phone number)

NOTE WELL: The person authorizing release should be:
--the person to whom the certificate relates;
--the parent, if the certificate relates to a minor child;
--the spouse or adult child if the person to whom the certificate relates is deceased.

AFFIDAVIT (RE: BAPTISM)

Please PRINT

I, _____ attest that _____
(Name of Parent, Godparent / Sponsor, Witness) (Person Baptized)

was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church on/about _____,
(Month / Date) (Year)

at _____ Church, in _____
(City / State)

with _____ and _____

as godparents/sponsors or witnesses.

I know this because I am: ___ the parent, ___ the godparent / sponsor,
___ the minister of baptism, ___ a person present at the baptism.

If applicable--

I also have documentation of the event: ___ photo ___ video ___ printed invitation
___ other: _____
which I submit as evidence. (Copy attached)

(Signature of Affiant) (Date)

NOTARIZATION: I, _____, Notary, do hereby certify
that the above named individual making this sworn statement in writing did appear before
me in person on _____, 2____ with sufficient identification.
(date) (year)

(Notary Signature)

SEAL

FORMAL DECLARATION OF DEPARTURE FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Please PRINT

I, _____ (NAME) _____ (Maiden Name)

baptized in _____ Catholic Church
(Parish Name)

at _____ on _____
(City, State) (Date)

do hereby **formally declare that I have knowingly and freely abandoned the Catholic Church and no longer consider myself a Catholic.**

Were you formally enrolled by some external ceremony or sign (e.g. rebaptism, rite of reception, signing of documents) in another church or religion to which you now belong?
___ Yes ___ No

If "yes," please explain the type of external enrollment: _____

When and where did this take place? _____

I understand that after completing this document, my name will be removed from all parish rosters and mailing lists, and a notation will be made in the Baptism Register indicating my formal departure from the Catholic Church and the date.

(Signature) (Date)

(WITNESS: Priest or Deacon's Signature) (Name of Parish/ City)

NOTE: The original of this document is to be retained at the parish of baptism for notation in the Baptism Register. A copy of this document is to be forwarded to the Chancellor's Office. If this is in preparation for marriage, a notation should be made on the preuptial investigation form.

SAMPLE

MARRIAGE ENVELOPE

Appendix #4

GROOM _____ Hm. Ph. _____ **BRIDE** _____ Hm. Ph. _____
 Birthdate _____ Off. Ph. _____ Birthdate _____ Off. Ph. _____
 Religion _____ Religion _____

DOCUMENTATION

If convalidation, date of civil ceremony: _____

PREPARATION SCHEDULE

First Session _____
 Second Session _____
 Third Session _____
 Fourth Session _____
 Pre-Marital Inventory? ____ Type: _____
 Engaged Encounter? ____ Dates: _____
 To Marry For Life? ____ Dates: _____
 Sponsor Couple? ____ Names: _____
 Meeting Dates: _____
 Other: _____
 Natural Family Planning? ____ Date: _____
 Date of Rehearsal _____ Time: _____
 Date of Wedding _____ Time: _____
 Place: _____
 Officiant: _____
 Two Witnesses: _____

	Groom	Bride
Baptism Certificate	_____	_____
Reception into Catholic Church	_____	_____
Affidavits of Free Status	_____	_____
Prenuptial Questionnaire	_____	_____
PREVIOUS MARRIAGE?	_____	_____
Decree of Nullity?	_____	_____
Date & Prot. #:	_____	_____
By diocese of	_____	_____

OR

Proof of Death? _____
 Permission for Mixed Religion _____
 Dispensation from: ____ Disparity of Cult (no bapt.)
 ____ Consanguinity
 ____ Affinity
 ____ Other: _____
 ____ Canonical Form
 Civil marriage license? _____

AFTER WEDDING:

Delegation (if needed) granted to _____ Entered in parish register? ____ (including notice
 RE: decree of nullity, dispensation, etc.)
 by _____ Date: _____ Notice sent to parishes of baptism? ____ (including
 dispensation note, etc.)
 Post-Wedding Mailing Address: _____ Marriage license returned to County Clerk?
 _____ (date) _____

(Rev. 12/2000 Diocese of Bmt.)

***These marriage envelopes may be obtained from the Diocesan Pastoral Center (Vicar General's or Chancellor's Office--no charge).
 Marriage Envelopes + contents are retained in the parish files for 60 yrs. or until both parties have died.***