

Diocese of Shreveport

PARISH GUIDE TO  
RECORDKEEPING AND  
THE SACRAMENTS

A Quick Reference  
Handbook

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**Diocese of Shreveport**  
3500 Fairfield Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71104  
Phone: 318-868-4441 or 800-256-1541;  
Fax: 318-868-4469  
Randy G. Tiller, Chancellor  
Email: [rtiller@dioshpt.org](mailto:rtiller@dioshpt.org)  
[www.dioshpt.org](http://www.dioshpt.org)

## I. Sacramental Records and Canon Law

- A parish must keep registers for baptisms, marriages, confirmations and deaths. A first communion register is recommended in addition to those mandated by canon law.
- Maintenance of these registers is the responsibility of the pastor. He may delegate day-to-day administration of the records to a responsible person. A secure archives is required for parish books.
- Each parish is to have a seal that is used to certify documents of legal importance. These are signed by the pastor.
- Older parish books are to be preserved.

## II. The Baptismal Record

- A. The baptismal record is the **primary sacramental record** - the central location for information on the reception of other sacraments. The pastor of the church where a confirmation or marriage takes place is to notify the pastor of the church of baptism so that the information may be entered into the baptismal record.
- B. Information to record for baptism includes: name of person baptized, minister's name, parents' names, sponsors' names, place and date of baptism, place and date of birth.
- C. For catechumens (those not previously baptized), baptism is recorded in the register at the date of conferral of the sacrament with entries made also for the reception of first communion and confirmation.

- E. Because an individual has the right to his/her own sacramental information, no fee should be assessed for a certificate. A minimal handling charge is permitted for preparation of a certificate. This charge is to be waived in cases of hardship.

### Other Information

- Recording sacramental entries should be done promptly and accurately. It is helpful to use printed letters, not cursive handwriting, and a good quality pen instead of pencil, colored inks or felt-tipped marker.
- It is recommended that separate registers be purchased and maintained for mission churches/quasi-parishes.
- When a parish or quasi-parish is merged into another parish, entries stop in the registers of the closed church. All future entries are recorded in registers of the existing parish. The parish receiving the closed church maintains the former registers and provides information from them as needed.
- If a person makes a personal, formal request in writing to withdraw from the Church or to be removed from Church membership, consult with the Chancery for appropriate response. Specific church laws pertain in such cases.

### **SOURCES**

Canons 220, 535, 876, 877, 895, 1121, 1122, 1123, 1182

Mrs. Christine Rivers, Chancellor, Diocese of Shreveport, "Parish Guide to Recordkeeping and the Sacraments", April 2008.

- D. For candidates for full communion, a record of the profession of faith is entered into the baptismal register at the date of profession with the candidate's date and place of baptism, date and place of birth, and parents' names. Entries are made also for the reception of first communion and confirmation.
- E. There are specific instructions for recording the baptism of a child of unmarried parents and for recording the baptism of an adopted child. *Contact the Chancery for more information.*

### III. The Marriage Record

- A. The marriage record lists the names of the spouses, the name of the person who assisted at the ceremony, witnesses' names, date and place of marriage, and if a dispensation was issued from canonical form.
- B. Also to be noted on the marriage record (as well as the baptismal record) are decrees of dissolution or nullity as well as any restriction on future marriage.

### IV. The Confirmation Record

- A. A confirmation record lists the name of the person confirmed, minister's name, names of parents, name of sponsor, date and place of confirmation.

### V. The First Communion Record

- A. It is strongly recommended that each parish maintain a register for first communion. This register lists the date of the sacrament, the name of the communicant, names of parents, and date and place of baptism.

## VI. The Death Record

- A. The death register lists information on all persons buried from that parish.
- B. It includes the person's name, date of death, date and place of burial, date of anointing and minister's name. Other helpful information is the name of the funeral home, the next of kin and cause of death.
- C. If an individual is buried from a parish other than his/her own, an effort should be made to notify the person's pastor.
- D. The death register also records services in funeral homes or other locations outside of the church building. Services for those not of the Catholic faith are to carry a notation of the religion, or if unknown, the notation of non-Catholic.

## VII. Cases of Errors and Omissions

- A. When a correction or change is needed in a register, the information is added by notation. The original entry should not be marked out.
- B. Obvious errors such as evident misspellings or transposed dates may be corrected without additional information.
- C. Corrections should be annotated with explanatory remarks. Documentation received as verification should be kept in a separate, secure file.
- D. Omitted entries require the same circumstance of proof, that is, one witness, the testimony of the individual if the sacrament was received as an

adult, or other appropriate documentation. The omitted entry is added in the nearest available space in the register, and notation made at the proper place for the entry indicating the location of the information (usually by giving page number and item number.)

## VIII. Preparation of Certificates

- A. Certificates are to be legibly prepared with the parish seal affixed over the signature of the pastor or his delegate.
- B. A certificate lists the same information as provided in the sacramental register with certain exceptions (adoption and records without notation of parents' names). *Contact the Chancery for more information.*
- C. An individual has the right to an authentic, sealed certificate of his or her own sacramental information. The parent(s) of a minor child or a legal guardian has the right to the same access. Access may be given for other valid reasons with the permission of the person named in the record.
- D. General access for research or genealogy inquiries is permitted for specific records according to the following guidelines: records created prior to 1997 are open after 72 years; records created in 1997 and after are open after 90 years.