

# Keeping Parish Records



**In the Diocese of Thunder Bay**

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## Diocesan Policy re: Retention of Parish Records

*“All documents concerning the diocese or parishes must be kept with the greatest of care.” (Canon 486 #1)*

### **These documents include:**

- √ Registers
- √ Financial records
- √ Episcopal letters / Documents and Correspondence
- √ Parish history / Historical events
- √ Inventory

## Registers

*“In each parish there are to be parochial registers, that is, of baptisms, of marriages, and of deaths, and any other registers prescribed by the Episcopal Conference or by the diocesan bishop. The parish priest is to ensure that entries are accurately made and that the registers are carefully preserved. (Canon 535 #1)*

### **Baptismal Register** (Canon 877 #1)

- √ Names of baptised / parents / sponsors
- √ Minister of Baptism
- √ Place and date of birth and of baptism

### **Confirmation Register** (Canon #895)

- √ Names of confirmed / parents / sponsors
- √ Minister of Confirmation
- √ Place and date of confirmation

### **Marriage Register** (*Canon 1121 #1*)

- √ Names of spouses / witnesses
- √ Minister who assisted
- √ Place and date of marriage.
- √ Blue civil registers are to be kept

### **First Holy Communion Register**

- √ Names of first communicants / parents
- √ Place and date of reception of sacrament

### **Register of Funerals** (*Canon 1182*)

- √ Name of deceased
- √ Place and date of death and burial

## **Financial Records**

### **Documents concerning finances include:**

- √ Financial statements
- √ Bank accounts
- √ Ledgers (income / expenses)
- √ Cancelled cheques
- √ Annual budgets
- √ Loans
- √ Investments
- √ Collections / Fundraising
- √ Donation envelopes (to be kept for 2 years)
- √ Personnel employed / payroll
- √ Wills / Donations
- √ Insurance
- √ Court cases, etc.

## **Documents concerning property / buildings include:**

- √ Plans
- √ Construction and renovation files
- √ Deeds
- √ Major repairs and purchases
- √ Taxes and assessments
- √ Mortgages

## **Episcopal Letters / Documents**

*“In each parish there is to be an archive, in which the parochial books are to be kept, together with episcopal letters and other documents which it may be necessary or useful to preserve.” (Canon 535 #4)*

*“Each parish is to have its own seal. Certificates concerning the canonical status of the faithful and all acts which can have juridical significance are to be signed by the parish priest or his delegate and secured with the parish seal.” (Canon 535 #3)*

## **History of the Parish / Historical Events**

- √ Establishment / dedication / blessings
- √ Pastors / Deacons / dates of service
- √ Parish bulletins / publications / newsletters
- √ Parish ministries / committees / personnel / minutes
- √ Special workshops, celebrations, anniversaries
- √ Photographs of special events

## Inventory

*They (administrators) are to draw up a clear and accurate inventory of all immovable goods, of those movable goods which are precious or of a high cultural value, and of all other goods, with a description and an estimate of their value. (Canon 1283 #2)*

*They must be vigilant that no goods placed in their care in any way perish or suffer damage. (Canon 1284 #1)*

Description of “goods”:

√ “Immovables” — buildings, residences, property, etc.

√ “Movables” — paintings, sculptures, statues, vestments, liturgical furnishings, sacred vessels, musical instruments, historical artifacts, photographs.

√ Any concerns or questions relating to the disposal of these items should be directed to the diocesan archivist.

*...two copies are to be made of inventories or catalogues. One of these is to remain in its own (parish) archives and the other to be kept in the diocesan archive. (Canon 491 #1)*

## Storage of Sacramental Registers and Documents

**It is vital that parish sacramental registers and documents be stored in a dry and secure environment, preferably in spaces that are not prone to water or fire damage. If it is absolutely necessary to store registers or marriage files in the lower levels of rectories or churches (i.e. basements), then they should be kept in sealed waterproof, plastic box containers on shelving off the floor.**

## Closure of a parish

If a parish is closed, documents should be transferred to the parish taking over or sent to the diocesan chancery. Other parishes may request the use of artifacts such as vestments, sacred vessels, etc.

## Archival Record Storage Boxes



*The above photo illustrates the types of document storage boxes that are commonly used in parish or diocesan archives. The light coloured boxes are Neutracor™ (made in Canada) record and storage boxes. The darker coloured boxes are referred to throughout the archival world as “The Hollinger Box”. Both may be ordered online from Carr McLean ([www.carrmclean.ca](http://www.carrmclean.ca)). Order numbers: Neutracor™ (M95-370) and “The Hollinger Box” (MH-10360)*