



RECORDING AND MAINTAINING SACRAMENTAL RECORDS

Archdiocese of Boston Archives, V.6, 2025

Introduction

This is the sixth version of the Recording and Maintaining Sacramental Records Guide for the Archdiocese of Boston. It supersedes all previous versions. Care has been taken in this guide to provide more extensive information, concrete examples, and Canon Law citations than previous versions, at the urging of parish personnel across the Archdiocese. We are grateful for all the feedback and suggestions we have received over the years and for your partnership in maintaining accurate and well-preserved records.

This document is designed to assist parish clergy and staff with regular entry and maintenance of sacramental records. Please contact the Archive Department with any questions, concerns, or suggestions for future versions of this guide at archive@rcab.org or 617-254-0100. **We are here to assist you.** May God continue to bless you and your work.

Violet Hurst
Director, Archive & Library
Archdiocese of Boston

Acknowledgements

In creating this much-expanded guide, we are grateful to the many archivists, chancellors, canon lawyers, pastors, and (arch)diocesan staff who have drafted and made publicly available their own handbooks for sacramental recordkeeping. Three Archdioceses kindly granted us permission to use their excellent guides as models and starting points for our own; thank you to: Angelique M. Richardson, Archivist for the Archdiocese of Atlanta; Julie Motyka, Archivist for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis; and Rev. Jason A. Williams, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

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Finally, over the years we have received hundreds of questions from the record-keepers across the Archdiocese – too many pastors, priests, parish secretaries, administrative assistants, business managers, faith formation directors, pastoral associates, and volunteers to name. Each of these questions guided our thinking as we drafted this new handbook. We are grateful for the diligence and dedication of all parish staff and volunteers who keep records and keep them well.

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Sacramental Registers: General Norms

Canon Law Related to Sacramental Records in General

CAN. 491

§1. A diocesan bishop is to take care that the acts and documents of the archives of cathedral, collegiate, parochial, and other churches in his territory are also diligently preserved and that inventories or catalogs are made in duplicate, one of which is to be preserved in the archives of the church and the other in the diocesan archives.

§2. A diocesan bishop is also to take care that there is an historical archives in the diocese and that documents having historical value are diligently protected and systematically ordered in it.

§3. In order to inspect or remove the acts and documents mentioned in §§1 and 2, the norms established by the diocesan bishop are to be observed.

CAN. 535

§1. Each parish is to have parochial registers; that is, those of Baptism, marriages, deaths, and others as prescribed by the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan bishop. The pastor is to see to it that these registers are accurately inscribed and carefully preserved.

§2. In the Baptismal register are also to be noted Confirmations and those things which pertain to the canonical status of the Christian faithful by reason of marriage, without prejudice to the prescript of Can. 1133, of adoption, of the reception of sacred orders, of perpetual profession made in a religious institute, and of change of rite. These notations are always to be noted on a Baptismal certificate.

§3. Each parish is to have its own seal. Documents regarding the canonical status of the Christian faithful and all acts which can have juridic importance are to be signed by the pastor or his delegate and sealed with the parochial seal.

§5. Older parochial registers are to be carefully protected according to the prescripts of particular law.

Required Records

Each parish is required to maintain records of Baptisms, Confirmations, Receptions into Full Communion*, Marriages, and Deaths. Maintaining records of First Communions and Sick Calls is optional, but **strongly advised** for all Archdiocesan parishes.

Records of confessions or penance should not be kept.

*Receptions into Full Communion are recorded in the Baptismal Register, unless the parish keeps a separate convert register.

Level of Recordkeeping

Generally, only parishes are to maintain sacramental records and registers. Non-parochial institutions must obtain the express approval of the Archbishop to maintain sacramental records and registers. If a chapel or pastoral center operates under the authority of the local pastor, its sacramental records should be kept in the parish registers rather than separately.

Parishes containing multiple churches should maintain one set of sacramental registers under the name of the parish. If desired, the name of the church may be written in the notations of a baptismal or marriage record, or near the date and officiant at the beginning of each first communion and confirmation class record.

Multi-parish collaboratives should maintain a separate set of sacramental registers for each parish.

Sacraments administered in a ceremony arranged by an ethnic apostolate / multicultural ministry should be entered into the parish register where an event took place, **not** in each recipient's home parish.

Even when a priest serves as pastor of more than one parish, separate registers are to be maintained for each parish. For security and convenience, however, the registers may all be stored at one of the parishes. The Archive Department should be notified of the storage of registers out of the parish.

Persons Responsible for Recordkeeping

The pastor of a parish is responsible for seeing to it that sacramental records are recorded accurately, completely, and in a timely manner.

Even in such cases when a pastor delegates responsibility for recording, maintaining, and preserving sacramental records, ultimate responsibility for these important records resides with him.

Record Format

Special registers that are designed for sacramental records are required. Care should be taken to purchase registers that are of high quality. A parish may retain separate Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, and Death registers or combined registers, depending on the needs of the parish.

Each register should be clearly marked. The front page of the register is to include the type of register, the name of the parish, the city, and the range of dates in the register. The pages of the register should be made of acid-free paper.

Retention Period

Sacramental records are permanent records and may never be destroyed or discarded. Registers for closed parishes and open parishes through 1950 should be transferred to the Archive Department, where they will be cared for in accordance with Canon Law and archival best practices.

Digitization and Computer Copies

Electronic records are not an acceptable substitute for records entered into the physical register, though a second copy may be kept in an electronic format to limit handling of the originals and/or for convenience. The physical register is always the authoritative record.

Storage Practices

Sacramental registers are to be stored together in a locked place, preferably one that is fire-proof or fire-resistant. Regardless of their age, registers should not be stored in environments where there are frequent temperature and humidity fluctuations, such as an unfinished basement or attic. They may be removed only by parish personnel for legitimate purposes and may never be taken off parish premises except with the express permission of the Archdiocesan Chancery.

Damage to Registers

As registers become worn, they are to be rebound by a reputable, professional bookbinder. Only if a register is beyond repair may the records be transferred to a new register. The original register is to be retained in as safe a condition as possible. Please consult with the Archive Department about damaged registers, especially in cases where the registers are so damaged they cannot be safely handled.

Preventative measures are essential to ensuring the longevity of sacramental registers. In addition to purchasing high-quality sacramental registers, avoid stress to bindings by ensuring that records are stored upright and with good support. If records must be stored horizontally, do so in **small** stacks (no more than about 3 high). Do not use duct tape or other adhesives on registers. Do not interleave registers with extraneous paper. Do not use paperclips, staples, or rubber bands in registers. Take care to keep registers away from food and/or beverages.

Lost or Destroyed Registers

The destruction or loss of any sacramental register must be reported *immediately* to the Archive Department. The Archive Department will inform the Chancellor of any destroyed or lost sacramental registers.

Access and Confidentiality

Public vs. Private Nature of Records

Sacramental records are both public and private in nature. They are recorded to document sacred acts, and as such they are private records. Sacramental records are also private because the information they contain is often confidential, and they are created with the presumption of privacy. Baptismal records, in particular, are to be treated with the utmost care, as they may include parent or relative information that was later sealed in a closed adoption.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that sacramental records are frequently needed for civil uses, because they are accepted as valid evidence when appropriate civil records do not exist or when they were recorded incorrectly. In this way, sacramental records can be considered public records, at least by civil authorities. We must strike an appropriate balance between the confidential nature of records and the legitimate needs of the faithful to obtain their sacramental records. The passage of time is a major consideration in determining the need to restrict records.

Persons Authorized to Request Records

Sacramental records can only be requested by clergy or parish staff for legitimate church use or by individuals requesting their own sacramental records. Parents or legal guardians of children under 18 may request records on behalf of their children.

Individuals (other than parish staff) may only request someone else's sacramental record if the sacrament took place in 1950 or earlier; please see the information below regarding genealogical research.

Genealogical Research

Access to registers for genealogical research is permissible for sacraments occurring **through 1950**. The Archdiocese of Boston follows the United States Census Bureau's "72 year rule" in making records accessible through this date; as such, records will become open through 1960 in 2032.

When providing records for genealogy, parish staff or volunteers must handle the registers themselves and not provide the books to researchers for "self-service." Parishes are strongly encouraged to transfer all sacramental registers through 1950 to the Archive Department in order to alleviate the burden that genealogy requests can pose.

General Norms for Entries

See sections for specific registers for more detailed information on how to record entries for a given sacrament.

Type of Data

Only that data required by Canon Law and otherwise necessary for the complete and accurate maintenance of sacramental records is to be entered in the sacramental registers. Do not include extraneous information or comments.

Printing/Ink

Entries should be made in fade-proof, waterproof, acid-free, blue or black permanent ink. Felt-tip pens and pencils are not acceptable. Never use white-out or other “corrective” fluids in sacramental registers, as these will crack or flake off over time and can damage the register. (See “changes to entries” for more information about how to properly correct an error.)

Entries should be printed, not written in cursive, as neatly as possible.

Style for Names

Entries are to include full names. The last and first names are to be spelled out, and at least the middle initial is to be included. For baptismal records, please include the full middle name, where applicable, for the baptized individual. The last name of the entry’s subject should be printed in upper case, e.g. “SMITH.”

Abbreviations, nicknames, or other informalities should never be used.

Where applicable, generational suffixes are to be included after the first or middle name in an entry, e.g. “SMITH, Thomas Jr.” or “JONES, Paul Thomas III.”

For baptisms, please place a small “M” or “F” in parenthesis in the bottom right corner of the “name” field to clarify the sex of each child.

Maiden Names

Where applicable, always use a woman’s maiden name (surname at birth) when she is listed as a mother in a sacramental record.

When entering a Baptismal, First Communion, or Confirmation record for an adult woman, record

the record with her legal name at the time of the sacrament. Include her maiden name, if applicable, in the “notations” column. Use the maiden name when entering a convalidation of marriage, even if the woman has already changed her legal surname.

List the current legal names, rather than the maiden names, of married women standing as godparents, sponsors, or Christian witnesses.

Style for Dates

Printing the name of the month is preferable to using the month’s number, e.g. “August” or “Aug.” instead of “8.”

Timeliness

Entries are to be recorded in the sacramental register as soon as possible after the sacrament is received. Entries may never be recorded in advance.

Place of Entry

Entries are to be recorded at the parish in which the sacrament took place. In cases where sacraments take place outside of a parish building, e.g. in a hospital, a private residence, or a chapel, sacraments are to be recorded at the parish within whose geographical boundaries the sacrament took place. For assistance determining the parish for a given location, please contact the Archive Department.

Chronological Order

Entries are to be made in chronological order. If the chronological order cannot be kept in some particular case, a small note cross-referencing the entry should be made in the proper chronological location in the register and in the index, e.g. “For Caswell, Lauren, see page 92.”

Specific Columns

Care is to be taken to ensure that entries are placed in the proper titled column in a given sacramental register. Please enter all information requested and do not leave any fields blank. At least the Baptismal register will have a column titled “Notations,” “Remarks” or something similar. This column is referenced many times throughout this handbook. For the sake of convenience and standardization, this handbook will refer to it as “Notations.”

Index

Every entry must be listed in the register's index, according to the person's last name. For marriages, entries should be listed in the index under the groom's last name. The bride's last name should be included next to it, e.g. if William Smith is marrying Catherine Slein, the index will be under "S" and read "Smith – Slein, page 92."

Excess Data

If there is inadequate space for all the data to be entered, the excess data may be recorded elsewhere on the same page or even on a different page of the register. Cross-referencing is essential, e.g. see "SMITH, bottom of page 11." Space issues arise most often in the "Notations" column.

"Sacramental Records" File

Discursive material should not be written in sacramental registers. Such material or related documents (e.g. civil records, correspondence, etc.) should be retained securely in a file in the parish archives marked "Sacramental Records." Discretion must be exercised in deciding which material to place in this file; not everything has to be retained. Please contact the Archive Department for assistance determining which materials are to be kept, and for how long.

Confidential Data

Data which is confidential and which is not to be included on certificates is to be clearly marked as such when entered in the register.

Minister of the Sacrament

The actual minister of the sacrament does not need to sign the register if the person making the entry personally witnessed the sacrament or has available a document (e.g. a Sacristy Record of Baptism) signed by the minister. In these cases, the name of the minister is printed in the register clearly and legibly.

ParishSOFT

Parishes using ParishSOFT should enter all the same required data for each sacrament detailed in this guide. Parishes are reminded that certificates should never be issued directly from ParishSOFT without first verifying the data in the original register, which is always the authoritative record.

Changes to Entries

Introduction to Changes

Once entered into a sacramental register, data is considered official and permanent. It may not be modified except under special conditions, as detailed in this section. Original data should never be scratched out, erased, “whited out,” or otherwise destroyed or obliterated.

Persons Authorized to Request Changes

An individual may only request changes to their own or to their minor child’s record.

From time to time, parishes may receive requests to alter historical records needed for genealogy (e.g., if someone notices that an ancestor’s birth and Baptismal names do not match). These requests should not be fulfilled. If a researcher needs the records to match for a valid civil purpose (e.g. a dual citizenship application), the original entry should still not be altered but a **certificate** may be issued with a corrected name or spelling, provided that the researcher can provide at least one form of government-issued documentation showing the correct information. Ideally, the researcher will be able to provide more than one document to prove the information correct.

Minor Changes

Minor changes (e.g., correcting a name, date of birth, or a misspelling) may be made directly to the original entry. Such changes are to be made by drawing a straight, simple line, through the word, number, or letter to be changed and printing the change immediately above or below it.

Individuals needing to correct an incorrectly entered name or date of birth or a misspelled name must provide at least one form of government-issued identification showing the correct information to be entered. Ideally, the person will be able to provide more than one document to prove the entry correct.

In the case of a name change, be sure to update the register’s index.

Major Changes – Adoption

If a child was Baptized prior to an adoption, place parentheses around the child’s birth name, birth parents, and birth sponsors. Then, in the same respective fields, enter the adoptive name of the child, adoptive parents’ names, and adoptive sponsors’ names. Clearly mark the entry with the following label: “DO NOT ISSUE PRE-ADOPTION INFORMATION IN PARENTHESIS.”

Documentation of the legal adoption must be provided before any changes can be made in the register. Please record the legal adoption information into the notations field, including the date and place of adoption, the case number, and agency.

In the case of a name change, be sure to update the register's index.

If a child was Baptized after an adoption, all details should reflect the adoptive information (see the section on Baptisms later in this guide).

Major Changes – Legal Name Change

In the case where an unwed mother later marries and the mother and child take the husband's surname, place parenthesis around the birth surname of the child and enter the new surname. Update the index to reflect the new last name.

If an individual legally changes his/her name (not through adoption or marriage), likewise place parenthesis around the former name and record the new name. In the case of a name change, be sure to update the register's index.

In either of these cases, documentation must be provided before changes are made to the entry. Record the date, location, and other information related to where the legal name change was approved in the Notations column.

Major Changes – Sacramental Information

In rare cases when an error involves data pertaining directly to the celebration of a sacrament (e.g. date, identity of a godparent/sponsor) such that no external verifying documentation exists, individuals may provide a notarized affidavit attesting to the facts of the sacrament in order to request a change.

Changes are to be made by drawing a simple line through the incorrect information and printing the change immediately above or below it. In the notations column, note that an affidavit was provided to support the change, the name of the person giving the affidavit, and the date of the affidavit.

Non-Permitted Changes

We do not fulfill requests to change the parents, sponsors, or witnesses entered into a sacramental record due to death or severed family/friend relationships. The entry informs us that the individuals were present at the time, a historical fact we cannot alter. In these situations, parents can ask someone else to serve in the role, but no changes will be made in the permanent record or on certificates.

We do not enter non-adoptive parent or guardian names into registers.

Nicknames, customary names, or other non-legal names are not to be entered into registers.

We do not change, cross out, or erase sacramental records due to “defection from the church” or an individual’s desire to no longer be a member of the Catholic Church.

Entering a Missing Record

If a sacrament was received, or believed to have been received, and there is no record in the parish register, a careful attempt must be made to confirm that the event did happen at the stated place and time.

In these instances, please contact the Archive Department at archive@rcab.org and we will be glad to investigate and, if necessary, provide instructions for entering an after-the-fact record.

Data on Certificates after Changes

Once specific data has been changed in the sacramental register, the original data is no longer transcribed onto certificates.

Baptism Records

Canon Law Related to Baptismal Records

CAN. 535

§1. Each parish is to have parochial registers; that is, those of Baptisms, Marriages, Deaths, and others as prescribed by the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan bishop. The pastor is to see to it that these registers are accurately inscribed and carefully preserved.

§2. In the Baptismal Register are also to be noted Confirmation and those things which pertain to the canonical status of the Christian faithful by reason of Marriage, without prejudice to the prescript of Can. 1133, of Adoption, of the reception of Sacred Orders, of perpetual profession made in a religious institute, and of change of rite. These notations are always to be noted on a Baptismal certificate.

CAN. 852

§1. The prescripts of the canons on adult Baptism are to be applied to all those who, no longer infants, have attained the use of reason.

CAN. 869

§2. Those baptized in a non-Catholic ecclesial community must not be baptized conditionally unless, after an examination of the matter and the form of the words used in the conferral of Baptism and a consideration of the intention of the baptized adult and the minister of the Baptism, a serious reason exists to doubt the validity of the Baptism.

CAN. 870

An abandoned infant or a foundling is to be baptized unless after diligent investigation the Baptism of the infant is established.

CAN. 873

There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

CAN. 874

§2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the Baptism.

CAN. 876

To prove the conferral of Baptism, if prejudicial to no one, the declaration of one witness beyond all exception is sufficient or the oath of the one baptized if the person received Baptism as an adult.

CAN. 877

§1. The pastor of the place where the Baptism is celebrated must carefully and without delay record in the Baptismal Register the names of the baptized, with mention made of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses, if any, the place and date of the conferral of the Baptism, and the date and place of birth.

§2. If it concerns a child born to an unmarried mother, the name of the mother must be inserted, if her maternity is established publicly or if she seeks it willingly in writing or before two witnesses. Moreover, the name of the father must be inscribed if a public document or his own declaration before the pastor and two witnesses proves his paternity; in other cases, the name of the baptized is inscribed with no mention of the name of the father or the parents.

CAN. 878

If the Baptism was not administered by the pastor or in his presence, 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 Can.877 §1.

CAN. 1685

As soon as the sentence is executed, the judicial vicar must notify the local ordinary of the place in which the marriage was celebrated. The local ordinary must take care that the declaration of nullity of the marriage and any possible prohibitions are noted as soon as possible in the marriage and Baptismal registers.

Source of Data

A government-issued birth certificate, or another document that would appear valid to a reasonable person, should be used to complete the sacristy record and to verify the baptized person's name, date of birth, and place of birth. However, inability to provide a birth certificate or other verifying document should not be cause for denial or delay of baptism.

Before the data is transferred to the Baptismal Register, a parent, guardian, or adult candidate should verify the data written on the sacristy record (usually at the time of Baptism) as correct, and the minister must sign the sacristy record verifying that the sacrament was conferred. There should be a clear procedure in place for assuring that the data is transferred from the sacristy record to the Baptismal Register as quickly and as accurately as possible.

Types of Data

For Baptism celebrated under normal circumstances, the following information is to be entered in the Baptismal Register:

1. The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the parent(s)/adoptive parents or the legal name of the adult

- a. Include first name, middle name (if any), and last name. The last name should be printed in all capitals.
 - b. Place a small “M” or “F” in parenthesis in the bottom right corner of the “name” field to clarify the sex of each child.
2. The name of the father
 - a. Include first name, at least middle initial (if any), and last name
3. The name of the mother
 - a. Include first name, at least middle initial (if any), and maiden name (if any)
4. The date and place of birth.
 - a. Do not substitute a child’s current residence for place of birth.
5. The name(s) of the sponsor(s), godparent(s), or witness(es)
 - a. Please see norms for godparents and witnesses below.
6. The place and date of the Baptism.
 - a. The parish and city of the Baptism register should clearly be indicated on a register’s title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a Baptism took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
7. The name of the minister performing the Baptism.

Clergy from Outside the Parish

When a priest or deacon baptizes in a parish church to which he is not assigned, he is responsible for the filing of the necessary records at that parish. The Baptism shall be recorded in the parish where the Baptism took place.

Supporting Documentation

Certain notations in the Baptismal register are accompanied by legal documents that serve as evidence and should also be preserved. Examples include adoption documents proving paternity, affidavits concerning previously omitted Baptisms, and notarized court and governmental documents concerning name and/or date changes. After the appropriate notations are made, the items must be kept permanently in a separate file corresponding to each register and page number. The Sacramental Records File must be referred to in the Notations and the file itself should be stored physically near the sacramental register.

Please do not interleave documentation in the physical register.

Recipients from More than One Parish

When persons from more than one parish are baptized or received into full communion with the Catholic Church at a single ceremony, the record for all the persons should be recorded at the parish where the actual ceremony occurred.

Godparents, Christian Witnesses, and Proxies

No more than two names (one male and one female) may be entered in the "Godparents" or "Sponsors" column. Canon 874 §2 allows a baptized person, who is not a member of the Catholic Church, to serve as "a Christian witness." The designation "Christian witness" should be added for clarity in these instances.

Church law holds that a baptized member of an Eastern Orthodox Church is properly a Godparent and not a Christian witness.

When a godparent or sponsor appoints a proxy to participate in the rite of Baptism, both names should be entered in the register, with "Proxy" written after the proxy's name.

Unmarried Parents

It is important that the provisions of Canon 877 concerning unmarried parents be followed. It is unjust to enter unauthorized names of parents in the Baptismal Register. If a child is born of an unmarried mother, the name of the mother is to be inserted in the Baptismal register, if her maternity is established publicly (e.g. birth certificate) or if she seeks it willingly in writing or before two witnesses.

Likewise, the name of the father shall be inserted in the register if his paternity has been proved either by some public document (e.g. birth certificate) or by his own declaration before the pastor and two witnesses.

If these conditions are not met, the child is to be recorded as being of "Unknown Mother" or "Unknown Father," in Latin "mater ignota" or "pater ignotus". It is not permitted to make a notation that states "Illegitimate."

Unknown Parents

For children whose parentage cannot be known (Canon 870) or is unknown (Canon 877 §2), the following information is to be entered in the baptismal register:

1. The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the guardian(s).

- a. Include first name, middle name (if any), and last name. The last name should be in all capitals.
 - b. Place a small “M” or “F” in parenthesis in the bottom right corner of the “name” field to clarify the sex of each child.
2. The date and place (city and state) of birth, if known, or of when child was found or placed under guardianship.
 - a. Do not substitute a child’s current residence for place of birth.
3. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) selected by the guardian(s)
 - a. Please see norms for godparents and witnesses above.
4. The date and place of the Baptism.
 - a. The parish and city of the Baptism register should clearly be indicated on a register’s title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a Baptism took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
5. The name of the minister who performed the Baptism.

Emergency Baptisms

When a Baptism is conferred in an emergency situation, ceremonies may be supplied at a later date. The Baptism, if it is a Catholic Baptism, is recorded properly in the territorial parish where the emergency baptism occurred; that is where the hospital, residence, or other location of baptism is located. For assistance determining the parish for a given location, please contact the Archive Department.

If the ceremonies are supplied at a later date, a notation should be made in the margin indicating the date and place the ceremonies were supplied. A new record should not be created.

Conditional Baptisms

When conditional Baptism is conferred, "baptized conditionally" is to be written in the "Notations" column. Otherwise the entry is the same as for any other Baptism.

Conditional Baptism is to be administered only if there is a doubt whether a person has been baptized or whether baptism was conferred validly and the doubt remains after a serious investigation. If the original attempt at Baptism was celebrated in a Catholic Church, the conditional Baptism should be noted in the margin of the entry that recorded the original Baptism. If the original attempt was in a non-Catholic community, a new entry should be made in the register of the parish within whose boundaries the conditional Baptism was celebrated. In such cases the date and place of Baptism should be noted instead of the purported earlier Baptism.

Please contact the Archdiocese of Boston Office of Canonical Affairs for assistance determining if a Conditional Baptism is appropriate.

Baptism Before Adoption

Instructions for amending records of a baptism taking place before adoption can be found in the “Changes to Entries” section of this handbook.

Baptism After Adoption

Baptism shall be postponed until after the child has been placed with the adopting parent(s), except in extraordinary circumstances, such as a serious threat of imminent death. Such a postponement should be made with the understanding that it would be for a relatively short time only. For children baptized after adoption, no reference to the adoption or the natural parents is to be made in the Baptismal Register. Any such data which has been recorded is to be treated as confidential and is not to be included on any certificate.

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.

The following information shall be entered in the Register:

1. The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the adoptive parents
 - a. Include first name, middle name (if any), and last name. The last name should be in all capitals.
 - b. Place a small “M” or “F” in parenthesis in the bottom right corner of the “name” field to clarify the sex of each child.
2. The name of the adoptive father
 - a. Include first name, at least middle initial (if any), and last name
3. The name of the adoptive mother
 - a. Include first name, at least middle initial (if any), and maiden name (if any)
4. The date and place of birth.
 - a. Do not substitute a child’s current residence for place of birth.
5. The name(s) of the godparent(s), or witness(es) chosen by the adoptive parents.
 - a. Please see norms for godparents and witnesses above.
6. The place and date of the Baptism.
 - a. The parish and city of the Baptism register should clearly be indicated on a register’s title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a Baptism took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
6. The name of the minister performing the Baptism.

Ascription to Proper Church Sui Iuris

If the pastor has concerns or questions regarding the proper ascription of the person to be baptized, please contact the Office of Canonical Affairs of the Archdiocese of Boston for assistance.

Same Sex and Transgender Couples Presenting a Child for Baptism

Please contact the Archive Department or the Office of Canonical Affairs for guidance in instances where same-sex or “transgender” individuals present a child for Baptism.

Surgical Gender Change

Please contact the Archive Department or the Office of Canonical Affairs for guidance when an individual requests that their Baptismal record be changed following a surgical gender change.

Notifications added to the Notations Column

Unlike other sacramental registers, Baptismal registers should document the full sacramental life of a Catholic. When a Catholic is confirmed, married, or ordained, the churches where the sacraments are made notify the church of Baptism, so the new sacraments can be noted in the Baptismal register. First Communion notifications are optional, but advised when First Communion registers are kept. If an individual receives additional sacraments at the parish of Baptism, the baptismal record should still be updated to reflect the later sacraments.

Types of notifications include First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage(s) (including convalidations), reception of Holy Orders, perpetual profession in religious institute, and change of rite. Notations of annulment (and prohibitions on future marriages), laicization, and dispensation from vows shall also be entered when requested officially by the appropriate authorities.

For First Communion and Confirmation notations, please include the date and place of the sacrament and the officiant’s name (if provided). For Marriage notations, please include the name of the spouse, the date and place of the sacrament, and the officiant’s name (if provided). For annulment notations, please include the date the annulment was finalized, the name of the Tribunal, and the protocol number (typically, a combination of the year and the case number); also include any prohibitions on future marriage, as noted in the notification of annulment. For Holy Orders, include the date and place of the ordination, the type of ordination received (i.e. priesthood, diaconate) and the name of the Ordinary conferring the sacrament. For religious profession, include the date and place of the profession and the name of the witness to the vows.

Once a notation has been entered, the notice of entry, if requested, should be returned to the notifying parish. Any remaining papers should be securely discarded; please do not leave papers interleaved between the pages of the register, as this causes stress to the binding.

First Communion Records

Under Canon Law, it is not required that parishes maintain First Communion registers; however, the Archdiocese of Boston strongly urges all parishes to maintain First Communion Registers to document the full sacramental lives of the individuals we serve.

Because they are a non-canonical record, unlike Confirmation records, First Communion records cannot be required for the administration of other sacraments, including Marriage.

Baptismal Verification

Since much of the data needed for First Communion records is derived from baptismal records (see “Types of Data” immediately below), parishes should verify the Baptismal information of all individuals who are to make First Communion. This can be done by:

1. Requesting a Baptismal certificate from families when their children enroll in religious education classes
2. Requesting that families provide Baptismal information for their children when they enroll in religious education classes (on a registration form, or some other document) and verifying this information is correct by contacting the church of Baptism

Types of Data

The following information should be recorded in a First Communion register:

1. The legal and Christian name of the child as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
2. The parents named on the Baptismal certificate.
3. The date and place of Baptism.
4. The church and date of the First Communion.
 - a. The parish and city of the First Communion register should clearly be indicated on a register’s title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a First Communion took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
5. The name of the main celebrant of the Mass.

Notification of Church of Baptism

Since it is not a canonical requirement to keep First Communion registers, it is likewise not a canonical requirement to notify a church of Baptism that an individual made their First Communion. However, it is a good practice to notify the church of Baptism, as it helps to create a full record of an individual’s sacramental life in the Church.

In cases where notifications of First Communion are sent, the following information is to be included: the name of the individual, their place and date of baptism, the date and place of the First Communion, and the celebrant.

Confirmation Records

Canon Law Related to Confirmation Records

CAN. 894

To prove the conferral of Confirmation the prescripts of Can. 876 are to be observed.

CAN. 895

The names of those confirmed with mention made of the minister, the parents and sponsors, and the place and date of the conferral of Confirmation are to be recorded in the Confirmation Register of the diocesan curia or, where the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan bishop has prescribed it, in a register kept in the parish archives. The pastor must inform the pastor of the place of Baptism about the conferral of Confirmation so that notation is made in the Baptismal Register according to the norm of Can. 535-§2.

CAN. 896

If the pastor of the place was not present, the minister either personally or through another is to inform him as soon as possible of the conferral of Confirmation.

Baptismal Verification

Parishes should verify the Baptismal information of all individuals who are to make Confirmation.

This can be done by:

1. Requesting a Baptismal certificate from families when their children enroll in religious education classes
2. Requesting that families provide Baptismal information for their children when they enroll in religious education classes (on a registration form, or some other document) and verifying this information is correct by contacting the church of Baptism

It is important for parishes complete this step well in advance of planned Confirmations, since:

1. The fact of valid Baptism and membership in the Catholic Church will be established.
2. Any previous reception of valid Confirmation, especially in the case of Catholics who were baptized in Eastern Catholic Churches, will be uncovered.
3. Any discrepancies between name and parentage provided in the Baptismal Register and given at the time of Confirmation will be discovered.
4. The parish will be better able to fulfill the requirement to send a Notice of Confirmation to the church of Baptism after the Confirmation ceremony.

Types of Data

For Confirmation celebrated under normal circumstances, the following information is to be entered in the Confirmation register.

1. The legal and Christian name of the child as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
 - a. Include first name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)

2. The chosen Confirmation name.
3. The name of the father as it appears on the Baptismal certificate
 - a. Include first name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
4. The name of the mother as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
 - a. Include first name, last name (maiden name if applicable), and at least middle initial (if any)
5. The date and place of Baptism.
6. The name of the sponsor selected by the person.
7. The place and date of the Confirmation.
 - a. The parish and city of the confirmation register should clearly be indicated on a register's title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a confirmation took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
8. The name of the minister performing the Confirmation. If a priest is delegated by the archbishop to perform the confirmation, a notation should be made of that fact.

Emergency Confirmation

As in the case of emergency Baptism, the record of an emergency Confirmation is to be kept in the territorial parish in which the Confirmation occurred. For assistance determining the territorial parish, please contact the Archive Department.

Large Group of Recipients

When several persons are confirmed at the same ceremony by the same minister, the date of conferral and the name of the minister may be written only once in the register, so long as it is clear that the references apply to all the confirmed.

Multiple Ministers of Confirmation

If there is more than one minister at a single ceremony, the record should show clearly which ministers confirmed which recipients.

Recipients from More Than One Parish

When Confirmation is conferred upon persons from several parishes at one ceremony, all records are made at the parish where Confirmation was celebrated. This is the case even when candidates are prepared for the Confirmation at a different parish; in such cases, it is advisable for parishes to create a brief note in their own Confirmation registers, noting that Confirmations for candidates prepared in a given year are recorded at a different parish (e.g. "[Parish 1] Confirmation candidates

for the year [YYYY] received the sacrament at [Parish 2] on [Date], [Name] officiating. Please refer to the records of [Parish 2] for a list of recipients.”)

Notification of Church of Baptism

Notification of the church of Baptism about the fact of Confirmation should be made as soon as possible by the pastor, or his delegate, of the place where the record of Confirmation is retained. This notification is to include the name of recipient and the date and place of baptism, as well as the place, date, and celebrant of the Confirmation. The names of the parents, sponsor, and Confirmation name are not required.

When a person previously baptized in another Christian communion is received into full communion and confirmed, the church of Baptism is not notified.

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA)

Definition of Terms

OCIA

Outside of emergency situations, adults and children over seven years of age entering the Church are required by canon law to participate in a process of formation governed by the “Order of Christian Initiation of Adults.” OCIA culminates in the celebration of all three sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and first reception of the Eucharist in the same ceremony. Information concerning those who receive the sacraments of initiation shall be recorded in the appropriate individual registers; that is, Baptism, First Communion (optional; if parish registers kept), and Confirmation.

Catechumen

A catechumen is a person who is not yet baptized and who has celebrated the “Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens” as part of the OCIA. The name of a catechumen, along with the names of the sponsor, officiating minister, and date and place of the celebration, is entered into a special register of catechumens. Note that already-baptized candidates for full communion and Confirmation technically are not catechumens and that these persons’ names are not placed in the catechumenal register. (See next section: “Reception into Full Communion”)

Elect

An “elect” person is a catechumen who has subsequently celebrated the “Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names” as part of the OCIA, and so has been chosen by the Church to receive the sacraments of initiation. The name of an elect catechumen, along with the names of the sponsor, officiating minister, and date and place of the celebration, is entered into a special “Book of the Elect.” Note that already-baptized candidates for full communion and Confirmation technically are not catechumens and do not become members of the Elect, and that these persons’ names are not placed in the “Book of the Elect.” (See next section: “Reception into Full Communion”)

Sacraments of Initiation Register Entries

Once the elect receive the Sacraments of Initiation, their names shall be recorded in the Baptismal Register and Confirmation Register (First Communion Register optional) of the parish **in which the sacraments were celebrated**. To clarify: the Baptism should be entered into the Baptismal register, the First Communion should be entered into the First Communion Register, and the Confirmation should be entered into the Confirmation register.

For the Baptism of the elect, the following information is to be entered in the baptismal register:

1. The legal name of the person

- a. First name, last name, and middle name (if any). The last name should be written in all capitals.
 - b. When entering a baptismal record for an adult woman, record the record with her legal name at the time of the sacrament. Include her maiden name, if applicable, in the “notations” column.
2. The name of the father
 - a. First name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
3. The name of the mother
 - a. First name, maiden name (if applicable), and at least middle initial (if any)
4. The date and place of birth
 - a. Do not substitute current residence, or residence at time of birth, for place of birth
5. The name(s) of the sponsor(s)
 - a. For Christian Witnesses, add “Christian Witness”
6. The date and place of the Baptism
 - a. The parish and city of the Baptism register should clearly be indicated on a register’s title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a Baptism took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
7. The name of the minister who performed the Baptism
8. Notation of reception of Eucharist, Confirmation, and Marital status (either current valid marriage or the convalidation of the current civil marriage). Any decree of annulment or dissolution (including where granted and protocol number) should also be noted.

For the First Communion of the Elect, the following information is to be entered into the First Communion Register (if kept):

1. The legal name of the person
 - a. First name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
 - b. When entering a First Communion record for an adult woman, record the record with her legal name at the time of the sacrament. Include her maiden name, if applicable, in the “notations” column.
2. The name of the father
 - a. First name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
3. The name of the mother
 - a. First name, last name, and maiden name (if applicable)
3. The date and place of Baptism
4. The church and date of the First Communion.
 - a. The parish and city of the First Communion register should clearly be indicated on a register’s title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not

necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a First Communion took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.

5. The name of the main celebrant of the Mass.

For the Confirmation of the Elect, the following information is to be entered in the Confirmation register:

1. The legal name of the person
 - a. Include first name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
 - b. When entering a Confirmation record for an adult woman, record the record with her legal name at the time of the sacrament. Include her maiden name, if applicable, in the “notations” column.
2. The chosen Confirmation name
3. The name of the father
 - a. Include first name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
4. The name of the mother
 - a. Include first name, last name (maiden name if applicable), and at least middle initial (if any)
5. The date and place of Baptism.
6. The name of the sponsor selected by the person.
7. The place and date of the Confirmation.
 - a. The parish and city of the Confirmation register should clearly be indicated on a register’s title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a Confirmation took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
8. The name of the minister performing the Confirmation.

Once the Sacraments of Initiation have been received and recorded in the appropriate sacramental registers, that parish becomes the parish of record for future certificate requests.

Reception into Full Communion

Register Entries

When persons are received into Full Communion with the Catholic Church, after having been baptized previously in another Christian church, an entry must be made in the Baptismal register *or* in a separate parish register for Receptions into Full Communion. When entered into a Baptismal register, the data concerning the Rite of Reception should be entered in the spaces provided for Baptism, and the data concerning the original Baptism should be entered in the "Notations" column, especially the date and place. The following information is to be entered into the baptismal register:

1. The legal name of the person
 - a. First name, last name, and middle name (if any)
 - b. When entering a baptismal record for an adult woman, record the record with her legal name at the time of the sacrament. Include her maiden name, if applicable, in the "notations" column.
2. The name of the father
 - a. First name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
3. The name of the mother
 - a. First name, maiden name (if applicable), and at least middle initial (if any)
4. The date and place of birth
 - a. Do not substitute current residence, or residence at time of birth, for place of birth
5. The name(s) of the sponsor(s)
 - a. For Christian Witnesses, add "Christian Witness"
6. The date and place of the Rite of Reception are entered into the date and place of baptism column
 - a. The parish and city of the Baptism register should clearly be indicated on a register's title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a Baptism took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
7. The name of the minister who led the Rite and welcomed the candidate into full communion with the Church
8. Notations giving the date and place of the original Baptism, reception of Eucharist and Confirmation, and marital status (either current valid marriage or the convalidation of the current marriage). Any decree of invalidity or dissolution (including where granted and protocol number) should be noted.

Bringing a Baptized Child into the Church (Children's Initiation)

For baptized children before age seven who are being received into the Church, the following information is to be entered in the Baptismal Register:

1. The legal name of the child as designated by their parent(s)
 - a. First name, last name, and middle name (if any)
2. The name of the father
 - a. First name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
3. The name of the mother
 - a. First name, maiden name (if applicable), and at least middle initial (if any)
4. The date and place of birth
 - a. Do not substitute current residence, or residence at time of birth, for place of birth
5. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) now selected by the parent(s)
 - a. For Christian Witnesses, add "Christian Witness"
6. The date and place of the reception into the Church are entered into the date and place of baptism column
 - a. The parish and city of the Baptism register should clearly be indicated on a register's title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a Baptism took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
7. The name of the minister who lead the Rite and welcomed the candidate into full communion with the Church
8. Notations giving the date and place of the original Baptism

Notification of Original Church of Baptism

The original (non-Catholic) church of Baptism is not notified in instances of reception into full communion / children's initiation.

Marriage Records

Canon Law Related to Marriage Records

CAN. 1081

The pastor or the priest or deacon mentioned in Can. 1079 §2 is to notify the local ordinary immediately about a dispensation granted for the external forum; it is also to be noted in the Marriage Register.

CAN. 1121

§1. After a marriage has been celebrated, the pastor of the place of the celebration or the person who takes his place, even if neither assisted at the marriage, is to note as soon as possible in the Marriage Register the names of the spouses, the person who assisted, and the witnesses, and the place and date of the celebration of the marriage according to the method prescribed by the Conference of Bishops or the diocesan bishop.

CAN. 1122

§1. The contracted marriage is to be noted also in the Baptismal Registers in which the Baptism of the spouses has been recorded.

CAN. 1123

Whenever a marriage is either convalidated in the external forum, declared null, or legitimately dissolved other than by death, the pastor of the place of celebration of the marriage must be informed so that a notation is properly made in the Marriage and Baptismal Registers.

CAN. 1685

As soon as the sentence is executed, the judicial vicar must notify the local ordinary of the place in which the marriage was celebrated. The local ordinary must take care that the declaration of the nullity of the marriage and any possible prohibitions are noted as soon as possible in the Marriage and Baptismal Registers.

Source of Data

The pastor is responsible for seeing to it that the necessary information is recorded in the parish where the marriage was celebrated. The premarital file ordinarily contains all the necessary information. However, the celebrant should be alert to any last minute changes or corrections to the information contained in the premarital file.

Types of Data

All marriages (including marriages convalidated in the external forum) are to be entered in the Marriage Register. For weddings celebrated with recognition by the Catholic Church, the following information is to be entered into the Marriage Register:

1. The legal name and Christian name of the groom as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
 - a. Include first name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
2. The name of the father of the groom as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
 - a. Include first name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
3. The name of the mother of the groom as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
 - a. Include first name, maiden name (if any), and at least middle initial (if any)
4. The legal and Christian name of the bride as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
 - a. Include first name, maiden name, and at least middle initial (if any)
 - b. The bride's maiden name should always be used, even if a second marriage
5. The name of the father of the bride as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
 - a. Include first name, last name, and at least middle initial (if any)
6. The name of the mother of the bride as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
 - a. Include first name, maiden name (if any), and at least middle initial (if any)
7. The place and date of Baptism of the groom as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
8. The place and date of Baptism of the bride as it appears on the Baptismal certificate.
9. The date and place of the wedding.
 - a. The parish and city of the marriage register should clearly be indicated on a register's title page, applying to all records contained within. It is not necessary to record the place again in each entry. However, if a marriage took place at a multi-church parish or a chapel under the purview of a parish, it is advisable to record this location in the notations field for clarity.
10. The legal names of the witnesses
 - a. Note "Christian Witness" when applicable for a non-Catholic witness to a marriage
11. The name of the Church's witness: the priest or deacon asking for and receiving the couple's vows
12. Notations of any permissions, dispensations, and delegations obtained for the valid celebration of the wedding (including the protocol number, if applicable)

Convalidation

If the ceremony is a convalidation, follow the norms above ("Types of Data"). In the notations column, note that the ceremony is a convalidation and include the date, place, and officiant of the original civil marriage.

Sanation

If the ceremony is a sanation, follow the norms above (“Types of Data”). The date, diocese, and protocol number of the sanation are to be noted in the notations column.

Dispensation from the Canonical Form

For a marriages outside of the parish church, only in cases where there is a dispensation from the canonical form, record the marriage record in the register of the Catholic party’s home parish.

Notation of Dispensations and Annulments

When a dispensation is granted prior to marriage, or an annulment or a dissolution (Pauline Privilege, Petrine Privilege, Ratified but Non-Consummated) is granted after marriage, the date, diocese, and protocol number, along with the type of dispensation (e.g. "Dispensation from Disparity of Worship") or the word "Annulment," or “Dissolution” are to be noted in the "Notations" column. Also to be included are any permissions granted; the delegation given to assist at marriage; and any restrictions on future marriages as set forth in the decree of nullity. Any special recording directions contained in the dispensation or annulment document are to be followed as well.

Notification of Church of Baptism

When the marriage of a Catholic is celebrated, convalidated, or sanated, the pastor of the parish where the record of marriage is retained must notify the church of Baptism. This notification is to include the names of the spouses, their places and dates of baptism, and the date and place of the wedding, convalidation or sanation; the name of the Church’s witness is optional but advised.

Premarital Files or “Marriage Envelopes”

Each parish is required to maintain a file of the papers collected during the period of marriage preparation. The file typically will include prenuptial forms, questionnaires, correspondence, sacramental notifications, relevant notes, dispensation documents, and affidavits. A copy of the civil license also is retained in the file.

The premarital file for each couple should be retained by the parish or mission where the marriage is recorded in the Marriage Register. If the marriage preparation takes place at a different parish from the wedding, a copy of the premarital file should be sent to the parish where the marriage is recorded in the Marriage Register. The priest at the parish who performed the preparation may retain a copy of the premarital file for up to two years; after this, the file should be securely destroyed and only retained by the church where the wedding took place.

The file for each couple is to be kept in its own envelope or folder, clearly marked with the parties' names and the date of the marriage. The files should be kept together, chronologically by date of marriage, in a locked file cabinet or safe. Marriage envelopes are permanent records and may not be discarded or destroyed.

If a legitimate request for the copy of the file is made by an ecclesiastical Tribunal, a photocopy or digital scan of the file should be sent. The original file should remain at the parish.

Sick Call Records

Under Canon Law, it is not required that parishes maintain Sick Call / Anointing of the Sick registers; however, the Archdiocese of Boston strongly urges all parishes to maintain these registers to document the full sacramental lives of the individuals we serve.

Types of Data

Records, when they are kept, include name, and frequently the address and notation of the person's condition, as well as a notation of confession and viaticum. If a priest administers the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick to a person from outside his parish, he should notify the parish of the person who was anointed (a matter of courtesy and may avoid repetition of the sacrament).

If priests rotate visiting the sick in a hospital, an anointing record should be kept in the chaplain's office to avoid repeated anointing.

Notification of Church of Baptism

It is not required to send a notice of a Sick Call to the church of Baptism.

Death/Funeral Records

Canon Law Related to Death/Funeral Records

CAN. 1182

When the burial has been completed, a record is to be made in the register of deaths according to the norm of particular law.

Source of Data

The data needed for the Death Register is ordinarily provided by the funeral director.

Types of Data

Death registers are required to be kept by all parishes. All Catholic funeral liturgies, even if celebrated outside the church building, should be entered in the parish Death Register.

For deaths where the funeral is celebrated in the parish or in the parish boundaries, the following information is to be entered into the Death Register:

1. The legal and Christian names of the deceased person.
2. The residential address of the deceased person.
3. The date and place of death.
4. The date and place of burial (which may be the same as the funeral date).

Additional optional information may include the name of the funeral home, next of kin, the cause of death if known (should be taken from an official Certificate of Death only), vigil place and celebrant, and funeral place and celebrant.

Cremation

When the body has been cremated, no reference to the date or place of cremation is made in the Death Register. However, the fact of the cremation should be noted in the notations column. Include the date and place of the ashes' interment in the date and place of burial column.

Memorial Services

There is no canonical requirement to record a memorial service in the death register. It is left to the discretion of the pastor whether or not to record this information in the register.

Non-Catholic Burial

If a priest or deacon is called upon to preside at a non-Catholic burial, an entry can be made in the Death Register. A notation should be included concerning the religion of the deceased and the services that were provided.

Burial Permits

Burial permit books do not satisfy the conditions of a death register.

Notification of Church of Baptism

It is not required to send a notice of death to the church of Baptism.

Sacramental Record Certificates

A sacramental record certificate is an official document certifying that a particular individual has received a sacrament. It should be an exact duplicate of data already entered into a sacramental register, excepting certain confidential fields and notations, as discussed in this section.

Accuracy Required

As an authenticated (i.e. signed and sealed) transcript of the original record, every certificate must be accurate, legible (preferably typed), and complete.

Absence of Information

The absence of information to fill a line or item on a certificate is best expressed by writing the words “none,” “not listed,” or “none given,” rather than leaving the field blank.

Authorized Source of Records

Only the parish or other locations (i.e. Archive Department; Chancery) holding the original sacramental record may issue a certificate. Only the actual paper register, rather than a reproduction or computer record, should be used in verifying information needed in preparing certificates. Do not use ParishSOFT to render certificates without verifying the accuracy of the information with the physical register.

Procedure for Requests

Requests for certificates should be submitted in writing, although telephone requests from a Catholic parish or agency are acceptable. If the identity of the person is in doubt, the request should include a copy of a photo ID. Care for the privacy of persons is paramount.

Format

Certificates should appear official and be issued in a consistent format. The Archdiocese of Boston Archive Department provides certificate forms suitable for printing on parish letterhead to all parishes for Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, and Marriages. All certificates must bear the name and address of the parish, be signed by the pastor, and include the parish seal.

Data on Certificates after Changes

Once the specific data has been changed in the sacramental register, the original data is not transcribed onto certificates (e.g. the natural parents' names after an 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 another parish, the inquirer should be encouraged to check the sacramental records of that other parish. If the person has difficulty pinning down a specific parish, please refer them to the Archive Department for assistance.

If the record has not been located after an investigation, the Archive Department will assist in determining whether it is appropriate to enter an After-the-Fact record.

Baptism Certificates

Parishes are advised to take special care when issuing Baptism certificates, since there is always the possibility of there having been an adoption or an individual not knowing their true parentage. When issuing baptismal records, there are two main forms:

Long Form Baptismal certificates *may only be issued to church offices* for sacramental or other legitimate Church use. Long form baptismal certificates contain all of the information from an individual's record, including parent and godparent names and notations.

If an individual requests a Baptism certificate be sent to them directly, for personal or any other use, a **Short Form Baptismal certificate** must be used. Short form baptismal certificates include only an individual's name, their date and place of birth, the date and place of baptism, and the officiating priest. They do **not** include parent or godparent information.

In some cases, an individual will request a baptismal record be sent to them for civil use, such as to amend a vital record or to file a citizenship application. Most state agencies accepting baptismal records as documentation require that a person's parents be included on the baptism certificate. In these cases, please contact the Archive Department for guidance.

The above restrictions do not apply for records from 1950 and earlier, which may be given out in full in accordance with our access policy.

Additionally, these restrictions do not apply for a certificate issued to the parents **at the time of baptism**, when parent and godparent information may certainly be included.

First Communion, Confirmation, and Marriage Certificates

First Communion, Confirmation, and Marriage certificates may be sent directly to individuals on the basis that they would have been old enough to recall details related to the event. Nevertheless, please be mindful of any potentially sensitive information included in these records.

Appendix A: Example Baptismal Records

The records in this section are intended for visual example only to assist parish staff and volunteers. None of these records draw upon real individual's records. Parishes are advised that sacramental registers will vary in terms of layout and columns; please follow the headings in your register, so long as they include all required fields.

Baptism – Ordinary Circumstances

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
COUTO, Aaliyah Savannah (F)	August 25, 2021 Revere, MA	Alexander T. Couto Susan G. Meehan	September 17, 2021	Thomas X. Meehan Sophia D. Meehan	Rev. Christian Christiansen	
ADAMS, Oscar III (M)	Nov. 04, 2020 Lynn, MA	Oscar Adams Jr. Christine Smith	Dec. 28, 2020	Anthony A. Broderick Christine Smith	Deacon Samuel Smith	

Conditional Baptism

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
MURRAY, Sophia Elena (F)	Sept. 19, 1968 Haverhill, MA	Edmund I. Murray Elena Martin	April 12, 2019	Neil M. Caswell Rachel Caswell	Rev. Christian Christiansen	Baptized conditionally

Unmarried Parents – No Father Noted

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
CARLSON, John Jacob (M)	Jan. 14, 2012 Malden, MA	Pater ignotus Amelia M. Carlson	Jan. 22, 2012	Sylvester Thomas Anna Rodrigues	Rev. Christian Christiansen	

Unmarried Parents – Father Attested and Noted

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
CARLSON, John Jacob (M)	Jan. 14, 2012 Malden, MA	Jacob Smith Amelia M. Carlson	Jan. 22, 2012	Sylvester Thomas Anna Rodrigues	Rev. Christian Christiansen	

Unknown Parents

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
PATTERSON, Francis Xavier (M)	April 06, 2025 Lawrence, MA	Pater ignotus Mater ignotus	April 17, 2025	George Levigne Sarah Levigne	Rev. Christian Christiansen	

Christian Witness

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
RICHARDS, Hannah (F)	May 12, 2019 Plymouth, MA	Donald P. Richards Gracianna Barbosa	December 26, 2019	Robert Craig Natalie Stevenson (Christian Witness)	Rev. Christian Christiansen	

Proxy Godparent

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
ISAACS, Abigail (F)	Sept. 07, 2024 Boston, MA	Paul G. Isaacs Jacqueline Thomas	December 14, 2024	Leo Godfrey Isidore Marconi - proxy Mia Isaacs	Rev. Christian Christiansen	

One Godparent

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
ISAACS, Abigail (F)	Sept. 07, 2024 Boston, MA	Paul G. Isaacs Jacqueline Thomas	December 14, 2024	Mia Isaacs	Rev. Christian Christiansen	

Emergency Baptism

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
STECK, John Joseph (M)	August 18, 2023 Boston, MA	Michael G. Steck Arianna T. O'Connell	August 19, 2023	Henry Steck Kelsey Steck	Rev. Christian Christiansen	Emergency baptism, Boston City Hospital Ceremonies supplied October 23, 2023, Saint Michael, Lynn, Rev. Ferris LeBlanc

Baptism Outside Church Building

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
STECK, John Joseph (M)	August 18, 2023 Boston, MA	Michael G. Steck Arianna T. O'Connell	October 17, 2023	Henry Steck Kelsey Steck	Rev. Christian Christiansen	Baptized at Bethlehem Chapel, Brandeis University

Baptism Before Adoption

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations

	place of birth					
(HALLORAN, Mary Josephine) MARTINEZ, Mary Josephine (F)	August 18, 2023 Boston, MA	(pater ignotus) Martinez, Louis (Margaret D. Halloran) Kelleher, Marisa K.	October 17, 2023	(Hubert H. Halloran) Nils Uberti (Emily Imogene Halloran) Leisha Uberti	Rev. Christian Christiansen	Legal adoption September 20, 2023. Suffolk Probate Court Case number: SU15A0064AD
DO NOT	ISSUE	PRE-	ADOPTION	INFORMATION	IN	PARENTHESIS

Baptism After Adoption

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
BALBOA, Nora Grace (F)	March 08, 2013 Lynn, MA	Joao G. Baloba Roberta Suarez	June 14, 2013	Timothy S. Harris Lucia A. Harris	Rev. Christian Christiansen	

Ascription to Eastern Catholic Church

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
BALBOA, Nora Grace (F)	March 08, 2013 Lynn, MA	Joao G. Baloba Roberta Suarez	June 14, 2013	Timothy S. Harris Lucia A. Harris	Rev. Christian Christiansen	Ascribed as Maronite

Reception into Full Communion

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
EGGERS, Alejandro Gaston (M)	March 08, 2004 Woburn, MA	Gerald George Eggers Maria P. Gaston	June 14, 2025	Barney F. Hendricks	Rev. Christian Christiansen	Original baptism April 14, 2004, St. Paul Episcopal Church, Boston, MA -- F.C. June 14, 2025, St. Joseph (Boston), Rev. Frederick Coyne -- Conf. June 14, 2025, St. Joseph (Boston), Rev. Frederick Coyne

Bringing a Baptized Child Into the Church

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
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EGGERS, Alejandro Gaston (M)	March 08, 2020 Woburn, MA	Gerald George Eggers Maria P. Gaston	June 14, 2025	George P. Hanson	Rev. Christian Christiansen	Original baptism April 14, 2020, St. Paul Episcopal Church, Boston, MA
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Baptism through OCIA

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
EGGERS, Alejandro Gaston (M)	March 08, 2004 Woburn, MA	Gerald George Eggers Maria P. Gaston	June 14, 2025	Barney F. Hendricks	Rev. Christian Christiansen	F.C. June 14, 2025, St. Joseph (Boston), Rev. Frederick Coyne -- Conf. June 14, 2025, St. Joseph (Boston), Rev. Frederick Coyne

Baptismal Records with Notations of Later Sacraments

Note: Name and city of parish should be clearly noted in the front of the register, to cover all entries in the register

Name of the baptized	Date and place of birth	Parents	Date of baptism	Godparents	Minister	Notations
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VEGA, Christine Marie (F)	August 25, 1990 Revere, MA	Alexander T. Vega Susan G. Meehan	September 17, 1990	Thomas X. Meehan Sophia D. Meehan	Rev. Christian Christiansen	<p>First Communion May 23, 1998, Most Holy Redeemer (East Boston), Rev. Thomas Sullivan</p> <p>----</p> <p>Confirmation April 13, 2005, Most Holy Redeemer (East Boston), Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley</p> <hr/> <p>Married Jacob A. Morrison Nov. 18, 2020, Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Boston), Rev. Louis Donzella</p> <hr/> <p>Declared Null September 18, 2024, Archdiocese of Boston Tribunal Prot. No. 2024-0001</p>
ADAMS, Oscar III (M)	Nov. 04, 1991 Lynn, MA	Oscar Adams Jr. Christine Smith	Dec. 28, 1991	Anthony A. Broderick Christine Smith	Deacon Samuel Smith	F.C. May 10, 1998, St. Isidore, Lexington, KY, Rev. Robert Reed

						Conf. May 30, 2007, St. Mary, Louisville, KY, Most Rev. Stephen Jones
FOX, Paul William (M)	November 05, 1991	George John Fox Priscilla J. Penney	November 18, 1991	Paul G. Kearns Elizabeth I. Kearns	Rev. Chrsitian Chrsitiansen	<p>Conf. May 12, 2006. Most Rev. Joseph Doohar</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Ordained transitional deacon June 20, 2024, Cathedral of the Holy Cross (Boston), Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Ordained to the priesthood, June 19 2025, Cathedral of the Holy Cross (Boston), Archbishop Richard G. Henning</p>