



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

Decree Issuing Revised Instruction for Sacramental Registers

I am pleased to issue the following revised instruction to assist pastors and parish staff who are responsible for maintaining parish sacramental registers. Changes in canon and civil law and a realized need to address issues related to confidentiality necessitated that certain clarifications be made. Also, information has been added to answer related questions which are frequently fielded by diocesan offices.

My first version of this instruction was issued in 2009 at the request of the vicars forane, to whom I have delegated the responsibility of making sure that all parish registers are inscribed correctly and protected appropriately in their vicariates (canon 555, §1, 3°). I believe that having all the details of sacramental record keeping in one place has resulted in greater efficiency, more cooperation, and less errors. I appreciate the efforts of all involved in achieving these goals.

With the transition to original order of the sacraments of initiation and occasional combination of parishes for the celebration of Confirmation and First Holy Communion, I would note that the principle remains that sacraments are always recorded in the place where they occur.

Nonetheless, to aid parishioners who search for their records in the future, it is acceptable to add a note in the register of a parish where the sacrament did not occur that a number of parishioners received the sacrament in another parish. This note should take this form, written across one of the horizontal entry lines of the register:

On [date] a number of parishioners from this parish received [Confirmation/First Holy Communion] at the Church of [Name of church where sacraments were celebrated], [City].

I have delegated the Vicars Forane to conduct an annual review of sacramental registers of all parishes and oratories in their vicariates.

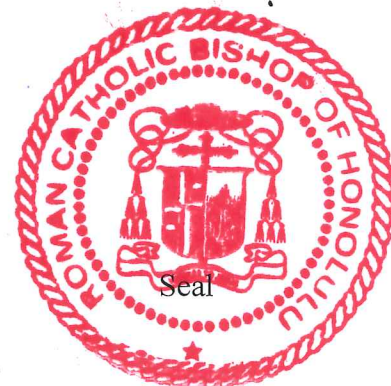
This revised instruction is being issued through distribution to all pastors and parish office staff and as an available internet download from the diocesan website to anyone in the diocese.

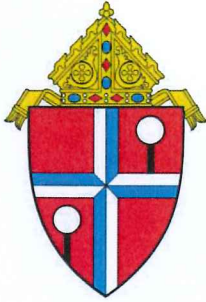
Given at the Office of the Bishop on November 12, 2019.

+ Clarence Silva

Most Reverend Clarence (Larry) Silva
Bishop of Honolulu

Denise R. Oliveira
Notary





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Instruction for Sacramental Registers

I. Registers in General

1. The pastor is responsible for completing and safeguarding the sacramental registers of the parish (canon 535, §1). He may fulfill his responsibilities personally or through another.
2. Sacramental registers are to be kept in a secure and fireproof location, such as in a safe, vault, or fireproof file cabinet (canon 535, §§4-5). An electronic database, although helpful for practical purposes, cannot be a substitute for register books.
3. Although sacramental registers are public ecclesiastical records of events in the life of the Church, the information contained in the registers is confidential. The pastor is to maintain strict access to the sacramental registers, which is limited to the pastor, parochial vicar, deacon assigned to the parish, and those expressly authorized by the pastor (e.g., the parish secretary). The pastor is to remind those who record in or access the parish registers that the information is confidential. The registers may not be removed from the parish office.
4. The following registers are to be maintained in all parishes (canon 535, §1):
 - Baptism
 - Reception into full communion of the Catholic Church
 - Confirmation
 - First Holy Communion
 - Marriage
 - Death
5. The sacrament of penance is not recorded in a sacramental register and certificates are not issued.
6. The following apply to sacramental registers:
 - Celebrations are to be recorded within a week after the celebration.
 - Registers are not to be completed before the celebration has taken place.
 - Registers are to be indexed.
 - All information recorded in sacramental registers is to be printed (not in script) in a legible manner, including the name of the celebrant. The register does not need to be "signed."
 - Care should be taken to ensure that all information is complete and that names are spelled correctly and in full.
 - The recording of women's names must always include their maiden last names (except for godmothers/sponsors). Married last names may be added in parenthesis after the maiden name. The same applies to men who change their surnames.

7. Celebrations that take place at a mission church are to be recorded in the sacramental registers of the principal parish church.
8. Celebrations by chaplains of ethnic communities are to be recorded in the parish register of the church where the celebration took place.
9. Celebrations by hospital, school, and prison chaplains are to be recorded in sacramental registers of the parish within whose boundaries the institution is located. (The only exception to this is for Mystical Rose Oratory at Chaminade University/St. Louis School, which has permission to maintain its own sacramental registers.)
10. Celebrations that take place outside of a sacred place are to be recorded in the parish within whose boundaries the celebration took place.
11. Celebrations conducted on military bases are recorded with the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, according to their norms.
12. Notice of the fact of confirmation, first Holy Communion, and marriage, along with the pertinent information, is to be sent to the church(es) of baptism within a week after the celebration (canon 535, §2; 895; 1122, §2).
13. If a proxy is designated because a godparent (sponsor) cannot be present for an actual baptism or confirmation celebration, the godparent's name, not the proxy's, is recorded in the parish register and on the certificate. The proxy's name may be noted in the margin of the register and added as a notation on the certificate.

II. Baptismal Registers

14. The following are to be noted in the margins of the baptismal register as they may occur (canons 535, §2; 877, §1; 1054; 1122; 1685):
 - Reception of confirmation and first Holy Communion
 - Reception of marriage, reception of holy orders (deacon, priest, bishop), and/or profession of final vows in a religious institute
 - Declarations of marital nullity, with name of the Tribunal and protocol number
 - Dispensations, departures or dismissals from clerical state or religious institute, along with issuing authority and protocol number
 - Eastern Catholic Church *sui iuris* enrollment¹ and notices of any transfersSuch facts are always to be noted at the bottom or on the back of baptismal certificates issued by the parish.
15. With regard to married adults who are baptized, the name of the person's spouse and date and place of marriage are to be recorded in the margin in addition to the usual information.
16. Parents who are married in the Catholic Church are not required to provide copies of birth certificates for their children. Birth certificates may be requested from others seeking baptism for their children.

¹ A child may be Eastern Catholic even if baptized in a Latin parish. If the father of a child under the age of 14 is a member of an Eastern Catholic Church *sui iuris*, the child is enrolled in the Eastern Church of the father. However, if the father is Eastern Catholic and the mother is Latin Catholic, the parents may decide that their child will be Latin Catholic, and this is to be noted in the margin. If only the mother is Catholic, the child is enrolled in the Church *sui iuris* of the mother. See canons 111-112 and consult the Office for Canonical Affairs for more information.

17. Regarding the baptism of children of unmarried mothers (canon 877, §2), the name of father is to be omitted unless:
- The birth certificate includes the name of the father
 - Or the father makes a declaration of paternity before the pastor, parochial vicar, or deacon assigned to the parish, and two witnesses
18. In the event that two women are listed on the birth certificate, the one who gave birth is to be listed as the mother. In the event that two men are listed on the birth certificate, the one who can provide proof of paternity is to be listed as the father. In both situations, the same-sex partner or civil “spouse” is to be listed in the notations in the register and on the certificate as “partner.”
19. Civil adoption papers are to be requested in situations of adoption (canon 110). According to United States Conference of Catholic Bishops norms, the recording of the baptism of adopted children (whose adoption is finalized), is to be done in the same manner as of other children, with the following considerations:
- The fact of the adoption is to be included in the notations, but not the names of the natural parents. Only the names of the adoptive parents are to be recorded.
 - No mention of the fact of adoption is to be made on any baptismal certificates issued.
 - Parish personnel having access to parish registers have an obligation not to disclose to any person any information that would identify or reveal, directly or indirectly, the fact that a person was adopted.
 - If the adoption papers list a father and a mother, then they are considered to be the parents. A single adoptive parent is to be considered the father or mother. In situations of adoption by a same-sex couple where neither are biological parents, both names are to be listed in the notations as “partners” with the place for the father and mother left blank in the register and on the certificate.
- In the situation where baptism takes place before adoption is finalized at the request of the natural parents, see the USCCB website for instructions.
20. Paper files, in addition to the sacramental register, do not need to be maintained for baptism.

III. Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church Registers

21. With regard to those validly baptized in a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community who are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church, the following are to be entered into the full communion register (*RCIA* no. 486):
- Complete baptismal information (date, place, minister), insofar as possible
 - The date of reception into full communion of the Catholic Church, confirmation and first Holy Communion in the margin
 - Name of spouse and date and place of marriage, if already married, in the margin
22. The following are to be noted in the margins of the full communion register as they may occur (canons 535, §2; 877, §1; 1054; 1122; 1685):
- Reception of marriage, reception of holy orders (bishop, priest, or deacon), and/or profession of final vows in a religious institute
 - Declarations of marital nullity, with name of the Tribunal and protocol number
 - Dispensations, departures or dismissals from clerical state or religious institute, along with issuing authority and protocol number

- Eastern Catholic Church *sui iuris* enrollment² and notices of any transfers
Such facts are always to be noted at the bottom or on the back of full communion certificates issued by the parish.

IV. Marriage Registers and Prenuptial Paperwork

23. The following are to be noted in the margins of the marriage register (canons 1123; 1685):
- Permissions and/or dispensations granted at the time of the marriage, along with the protocol number
 - If the marriage is a (con)validation
 - If a marriage is convalidated by a radical sanation, the original marriage information (place, date, officiant) is to be recorded, along with the date of the sanation decree and protocol number
 - If the marriage is later declared invalid, this is to be noted along with name of Tribunal and protocol number
24. Marriages celebrated with a dispensation from canonical form by a non-Catholic religious minister or civil official are to be recorded in the marriage register of the church where the couple was prepared for marriage (canon 1121, §3).
25. Marriages celebrated outside of a Catholic Church building by a Catholic priest or deacon, are to be recorded in the parish marriage register in whose territory the marriage took place (canon 1121, §1).
26. Marriage prenuptial paperwork is to be archived permanently in a secure location. This paperwork includes:
- Prenuptial investigation
 - Authentic newly issued baptism certificates for Catholics
 - Other proof of baptism for baptized non-Catholics
 - Dispensations or permissions as needed
 - Affidavits of freedom to marry
 - Proof of death, nullity or dissolution for prior marriages
 - Engaged Encounter certificate or permission for equivalent
 - Photocopy of civil marriage certificate
- However, preparation inventories (e.g., FOCCUS, PMI) and liturgy planning papers may be shredded after the marriage has taken place.

V. Sacramental Certificates

26. Sacramental certificates are to be signed by the pastor, parochial vicar, deacon assigned to the parish, or the pastor's delegate, and sealed with the parish seal (canon 535, §3).
27. The baptized have a right to certificates for the sacraments they have received. Requests for certificates from interested parties (e.g., parents, fiancées) and clerics or Catholic Church employees may also be honored. In situations of doubt about a person requesting a certificate, the certificate is to be mailed directly to the parish or church institution requiring it.

² When members of non-Catholic Eastern Churches are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church, they are received into the corresponding Eastern Catholic Church *sui iuris*, even if received at Latin parish. Consult the Office for Canonical Affairs for more information.

VI. Requests for Genealogical Information and Data for Civil Purposes

28. Requests for information for genealogical purposes may only be provided with the following conditions:
- The request must be for records more than 70 years old, as suggested by the Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists.
 - Inquiry is to be made regarding the religion of the person requesting the information. Information may not be provided to members of the Mormon (LDS) religion, according to a directive from the Congregation for Clergy.
 - Information may be provided only concerning one's own blood or legal relatives.
 - Pages from sacramental registers may not be photocopied and given to anyone.
 - Notational information is not to be provided in answering requests for genealogical information (e.g., regarding marital declarations of nullity, defections from the Church, adoption inquiries).
29. Sacramental record data may be considered valid by civil governmental authorities. Requests by civil authorities for information must be made in writing and, before the pastor provides the information, the Chancellor is to be consulted. The Chancellor will consult diocesan legal counsel, if appropriate.
30. Death certificates are not to be issued by the parish. Such requests are to be referred to the Vital Records division of the State of Hawaii Department of Health.

VII. Changes and Corrections

31. No changes may be made in past records since they are records of historical events. However, errors may be corrected, provided that the correct information is certain. Incorrect information is to be crossed out with a single line, and the correct information is to be written above it.
32. Requests for changes in sacramental registers as a result of civil legal name changes cannot be honored. However, legal name changes may be noted in the margin of the baptismal or full communion register, along with the date, protocol number and issuing authority of the civil document.
33. According to a response from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, requests for changes in sacramental registers as a result of a "sex-change" cannot be honored. However, upon request, the change in civil status may be noted in the margin of the baptismal or full communion register, along with any civil name change, the date, and protocol number and issuing authority of the civil document.
34. According to the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, requests to be removed from sacramental registers cannot be honored. However, defections from the Church may be noted in the margin in the baptismal or full communion register along with the date. Such a request must be made in writing and signed by the person. For such an act to be valid, it must involve an internal decision to leave the Catholic Church that is made freely and involves an act of apostasy, heresy, or schism. Reconciliation of the person with the Church requires remission of the penalty of excommunication, which is also to be noted in the baptism register, along with sacramental confession.