




Sacramental Recordkeeping

11 March 2025
Julie Motyka, Archdiocesan Archivist


1



Session Overview

- ✓ Reminder of the basics of sacramental recordkeeping
- 📅 Unique scenarios in recordkeeping
- 🔑 Digitization, Preservation, and Access
- 📞 Helpful Contacts
- ❓ Your Questions
- 🧠 Advanced Topics


2



What does canon law say?

- Each parish is to have parochial registers, that is, those of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, deaths, and others as prescribed by the conference of bishops or the diocesan bishop. ~ Can. 535 §1
 - In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, this also includes First Communion records.


3



What does canon law say?

- In the baptismal register are ***also to be noted*** (Can. 535 §2):
 - Confirmation
 - Marriage
 - Adoption (if there is a change to an original sacramental record)
 - Holy Orders
 - Perpetual Profession (members of religious communities)
 - Change of Rite (ascription)
 - Declarations of Nullity & Freedom to Marry

4



Standard Baptismal Entry


Name of Person	Place/Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father's name & mother's maiden name	Sponsor(s)	Priest	Date & Place of Confirmation
Brockman, Richard Mark	Novi, IN/March 4, 1950	March 11, 1950	Robert J. Brockman & Angela Torroni	Philip Brockman & Agnes Lippert	James J. Lee	

- A baptismal record should be created for baptisms that occur within your parish boundaries
- **Baptismal records should also be created for people who are baptized in another Christian tradition and are making a Profession of Faith in the Catholic Church**
 - Use the date of the Profession of Faith in the "Date of Baptism" column & include date of baptism in the notation column

Reception into Full Communion - Previous Baptism and Marriage Notation

5	Moore, John R.	Novi, IN Apr. 3, 1957	Prof. of Faith Michael Moore July 17, 1987	Marie Secrest	Hanski Thompson Beverly Wilkins	T.J. Esler July 17, 1987	Received into Full Communion 12/1/87 Baptized Apr. 19, 1957 United Methodist Church Novi, IN Married Emilee Kahn 14-Jan-88 First Baptist Church Macwell, OH
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5



OCIA (formerly RCIA)

- Revised statutes of OCIA were made available at the end of 2024 and became mandatory as of Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025.
- Statutes can be found at:
<https://www.usccb.org/resources/national-statutes-christian-initiation-adults>
- ***Two new record books now required by OCIA, in addition to the Book of the Elect: Register of Catechumens & Register of Persons Received into Full Communion***

6




OCIA

- Register of Catechumens

Register of				Catechumens		
No.	FULL NAME	DATE OF ADMISSION TO CATECHUMENATE	PLACE	SPONSOR(S)	MINISTER	REMARKS

- For catechumens only; not candidates
- Record should include: Full name, date of admission, place of admission, name(s) of sponsor(s), the name of the priest, and any relevant remarks
- Date of Admission to the Catechumenate: The date of the **Rite of Entrance** for the Catechumenate (OCIA paragraph 45)

7




OCIA

- Register of Persons Received into Full Communion

Register of Persons Received Into Full Communion				Register of Persons Received Into Full Communion			
No.	NAME OF PERSON RECEIVED (Print Last Name, First Name)	DATE OF RECEPTION	FATHER'S NAME MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME	SPONSOR	PRIEST	DATE OF BAPTISM PLACE OF BAPTISM MINISTER OF BAPTISM	REMARKS (Including Marriage, Confirmation)

- For candidates only, not catechumens
- Unlike the Register of Catechumens, this book should be used at the *end of the process* when the person completes the Rite of Reception at the end of their time of formation
- This book largely duplicates the baptismal record, but the baptismal record is still required by canon law, while this book is required by the current OCIA statutes

8



OCIA

- In addition to new record books, all sacraments should be noted in baptismal register

Name of Person	Place/Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father's name & mother's maiden name	Sponsor(s)	Priest	Date & Place of Confirmation	Notations
Moore, John R	Novi, IN/April 3, 1957	July 17, 1987	Michael Moore & Marie Sacrest	Harold Thompson & Beverly Wilson	T.J. Ester	July 17, 1987, St. Odo, Max, OH	Baptized, Confirmed, First Communion on July 25, 1987, St. Odo, Max, OH

If person later marries in the Church or has a previous marriage validated, this information should be added to the notations in baptismal register.

Name of Person	Place/Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father's name & mother's maiden name	Sponsor(s)	Priest	Date & Place of Confirmation	Notations
Moore, John R	Novi, IN/April 3, 1957	Prof. of Faith - July 17, 1987	Michael Moore & Marie Sacrest	Harold Thompson & Beverly Wilson	T.J. Ester	July 17, 1987, St. Odo, Max, OH	Received into Full Communion 7/17/1987; Baptized April 18, 1957; United Methodist Church, Novi, IN

PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO CREATE BAPTISMAL RECORDS FOR CANDIDATES!!!

9



OCIA

- Unbaptized children of catechetical age (7 and up) should be treated as adults, and utilize the OCIA process for receiving Sacraments of Initiation (see OCIA Ch.2)
 - Children baptized in another Christian tradition desiring to make First Communion must make a Profession of Faith prior to receiving first communion.
 - **A baptismal record should be created for them at that time using the date of their profession of faith.**

10



Baptism Administered Outside of Church Building

- Emergency Baptisms
 - **Form a relationship** with chaplain/spiritual care departments at hospitals within your parish boundaries to ensure reception of sacramental records.
 - If a **priest** performs emergency baptism at a hospital, **confirmation should also be administered.**
 - If emergency baptism is administered by layperson, an affidavit from parents or witnesses should be supplied.
 - If solemn rites are later supplied, this should be notated in the baptismal register.

Name of Person	Place/Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father's name & mother's maiden name (sponsors)	Priest	Date & Place of Confirmation	Notations
Sanders, Claire Marie	Nov. 18/May 25, 2005	25-May-05 Melvin Sanders & Susan Cheatham	Ronald Jackson & Mary Sanders	T.J. Ester		Baptized by a nurse in Regional Hospital, Cedar, IN per parents' affidavit. Solemn rites provided on Nov. 9, 2005. See affidavit in files.

11



Confirmation Register

- A confirmation register should be maintained, listing the confirmand's name, parents' names, sponsor's name, name of officiating clergy, and place of confirmation.

PERSON CONFIRMED	PARENTS	SPONSOR	CLERGY OFFICIATING	DATE OF CONFIRMATION	PLACE OF CONFIRMATION
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- The confirmation should also be notated in the baptismal register.
- Notice of confirmation should be sent to parish of baptism, if different.

12



Marriage Records

The record must include:

- The complete names of both parties who marry;
- Date of marriage;
- Complete names of witnesses;
- Name of official church witness (bishop, priest, deacon);
- Other Information
 - date of dispensations or permissions
 - dispensation or permission number
 - the name of the Diocese granting that dispensation or permission)
 - church name and location of baptism/profession of faith for the Catholic parties in the marriage
 - the indication as to baptismal status of non-Catholic party
 - and the proper delegation of the cleric, if applicable

13



Marriage Records

- A notice of marriage must be sent to the church(es) of baptism/profession of faith of the Catholic spouse(s).
 - Full names of the couple
 - Date and place of the marriage (church name and location)
 - Date of baptism/profession of faith.
- Once the annotation is made, the church of baptism/profession of faith should return this card to the church where the marriage took place.
 - This notification is retained in the pre-nuptial file of the couple.

14



Marriage Prenuptial Files

- It is archdiocesan policy to maintain sacramental records and forms regarding marriage information, dispensations and sacramental records in the pre-nuptial files. These files should include:
 - Affidavits (if needed) regarding freedom to marry
 - Nullity decrees and death certificates of prior spouses for second or subsequent marriages
 - Return notifications from the churches of baptism/profession of faith

It is never permissible to allow these files to leave the parish unless requested directly by the chancery or tribunal.

Under no circumstances are these files to be released to other parishes, individuals, or the parties to the marriage.

15




Marriage Taking Place Outside of Church Building

- **Marriages**
 - Marriages performed outside of a church should be **recorded in the territorial parish in which the site of marriage is located.**
 - Marriages which are performed with a dispensation from Catholic form should be added to the baptismal record of the Catholic party.

Name of Person	Place/Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father's name & mother's maiden name	Sponsor(s)	Priest	Date & Place of Confirmation	Notations
Brockman, Richard Mark	Novi, IN/March 4, 1950	March 11, 1950	Robert J. Brockman & Angela Torrisi	Philip Brockman B. Agnes Luppert	James J. Lee	October 16, 1961, St. Jacques, Novi, IN	Married Jane Kennedy, June 24, 1975, in First Christian Church, Moore, IN. Records at St. Jacques, Church, Novi, IN

16



Ordination Records

- Ordination Records in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis are maintained by the Office of Vocations
- Notifications are mailed to parishes after deacon/priest ordinations take place
- Add notation in the baptismal register

17



Death Register

- Records for funerals celebrated at your parish, or at the funeral home by priest or deacon from your parish, should be recorded in a death register
 - The legal and Christian names of the person
 - The residential address of the deceased person
 - The date and place of death
 - The church and date of burial
 - Additional information, if known
- Death information need not be sent to the parish of baptism

18



Death Register

- Common questions:
 - Parishioner dies and family members do not provide Catholic funeral
 - Parishioner dies and family members do not provide Catholic funeral but someone later offers a Mass intention for the deceased
 - Parishioner dies away from parish and has Catholic funeral but your parish is not involved
 - Parishioner dies and does not have Catholic funeral but your pastor speaks at a "Celebration of Life" held in the high school gym
 - Parishioner is in the military and died and was buried overseas
- None of these scenarios should be recorded in the death register. It is for Catholic funerals of your parish only.

19



What about deaths that can't be recorded in the death register?

- Update your parish contact records regarding the deceased person
- Offer a Mass intention for parishioners who do not receive Catholic funerals
- Consider a "non official" way to remember these parishioners
 - Example: SSPPC provides a memorial book & banner each November for parishioners to record any deceased family and friends for prayers during month (not death register)




20



Cemetery Records

- Should be kept separate from death records
- Should include:
 - Burial Date (may be the same as the Funeral Date). Note whether Interred, Entombed, or Cremated.
 - The Name of the Cemetery
 - Grave Location, including Section, Block, Lot and Grave
 - Grave Purchase Date and Cost
 - Deed Issue Date
 - Deed Owner


21



When Records Cannot Be Located

- Persons missing their sacramental records may provide a sworn affidavit from a witness attesting to their sacraments.
 - Affidavit form at: <https://www.archindy.org/archives/Sacramental-Records.html>
- Encourage your pastor to speak with the person to help determine whether a sworn affidavit is appropriate
 - E.g. vague sense of “probably being baptized” vs. having some evidence (photos, baptism candle, names of godparents, detailed stories, etc.)

22



When Records Cannot Be Located


- If a sworn affidavit is to be used, this should be noted in baptismal record

Name of Person	Place/Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father's name & mother's maiden name	Sponsor(s)	Priest	Date & Place of Confirmation	Notations
Brockman, Richard Mark	Novi, IN/March 4, 1950	March 11, 1950	Robert J. Brockman & Angela Torrici	Philip Brockman & Agnes Lippert	James J. Lee	October 16, 1961, St. Jacques, Novi, IN	Baptized on March 11, 1950 at St. Jacques, Novi, IN. Baptism attested to by mother. See affidavit in file.

- For baptism, if a sworn affidavit cannot be provided, conditional baptism should be administered and notated in record

Name of Person	Place/Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Father's name & mother's maiden name	Sponsor(s)	Priest	Date & Place of Confirmation	Notations
Brockman, Richard Mark	Novi, IN/March 4, 1950	May 10, 1973	Robert J. Brockman & Angela Torrici	Philip Brockman & Agnes Lippert	James J. Lee		Original Baptismal Record not Found - Baptized Conditionally

23



Closed-Merged-Linked Parishes

- When a parish closes, normally a successor parish is designated to receive the closed parish's sacramental records.
 - A small number of closed parish records are at the archdiocesan archives. See the archives website for the location of sacramental records of all closed parishes: <http://www.archindy.org/archives/index.html>
- Archives will contact successor parish after suppressed parish closes to confirm location of sacramental records. Response will be noted in archives files for both parishes.

24



Closed-Merged-Linked Parishes

- When two parishes merge, sacramental records should be moved to the physical location of the merged parish.
- Linked parishes
 - Parishes sharing a pastor should maintain *separate sacramental record books* for each parish
 - Record books may be kept together at one of the linked parishes for convenience
 - Please leave some notification at the other parishes indicating where the record books are currently being housed.

25



Closed-Merged-Linked Parishes

- If a parish has been closed and its former church building is still being used as a worship site by the successor parish, **the name of the successor parish should be used in the creation of new sacramental records**, regardless of whether the sacrament takes place at a worship site that formerly housed the closed parish.

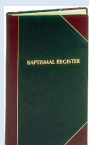
26




Purchasing Record Books

- Record books should have acid-free and preferably alkaline-buffered paper
- FJ Remey books are recommended – they also carry new books required by OCIA


<https://remeychurchgoods.com>




27

 **Preservation**


- Rebinding is not recommended, as data can become obscured in the re-binding process
- If you have loose pages, place them in acid-free folders with a date and description written on the folder. Store with original record books.
- Stuck-together pages may be interleaved with polyester film.




28

 **Preservation**

- If your books are falling apart:
 - Digitize for use at your parish
 - Send originals to archdiocesan archives
 - Contact archives for information if you are considering re-binding record books. I recommend [Walker Restoration Bookbinding](#) in Indy.



29

 **Microfilm**

Microfilming of older sacramental records was done archdiocese-wide in the late 1980s.

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This microfilm is kept at the archdiocesan archives, but PDFs, JPGs, or printed copies can be sent when needed.

↓

Check with archivist to see what years and types of records we have for your parish.

30



Digitization

- Digital records **CANNOT** replace sacramental record books
- Creating digital backups via scanning or by entering sacramental data into spreadsheets can:
 - Improve access when records are needed
 - Prevent data from being lost in cases of fire or flood
- Sacramental records should not be removed from the church property, so digitization should occur on site.
 - According to USCCB guidelines, sacramental records should not be provided to the Ancestry.com and other websites which may make the records public, or to groups affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

31



Software

- There are software options available if you need a more robust method of indexing your sacramental records – again, these cannot replace handwritten records.
 - [ParishSOFT](#)
 - [ACS Technologies](#)
 - [Parish Data System \(PDS\) Sacramental Register](#)
 - [Sacramental Scribe](#)


32



Providing Copies of Sacramental Records

- Records of marriages should be sent to church of baptism
- When sending copies of records for parishioners marrying elsewhere or for ordination, **COMPLETE ALL NOTATIONS ON BACK OF CERTIFICATE**
 - If there are no notations, write “no notations”

33

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Providing Copies of Sacramental Records

- Records can be provided to the individuals to whom they belong, or to parents/guardians
 - Requests from outside agencies (Social Security, Immigration, etc.) should be accompanied by a signed release from individual
 - Contact chancellor if you receive a subpoena for sacramental records
- Record books should NOT be made available for browsing by genealogical researchers
- Copies of records originating prior to 1930 may be provided to researchers
 - If your parish receives many requests, consider adding a genealogy policy to your website.
- Genealogical requests for older records may also be directed to the archdiocesan archives


34

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Information to be Included on Certificate


-  In general, sacramental certificates should include the information as listed in the sacramental register.
-  Information that is confidential or extraneous to the person's canonical status may be left off the certificate
-  If there are no notations in the record, make an indication of "no notations" on certificate

35


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What can you do?

- When you have RCIA candidates, first communion and confirmation preparation classes, and couples preparing for marriage, gather their sacramental records at the BEGINNING of the preparation process.
- Make occasional reminders to your parishioners that if your parish is their parish of baptism, but they receive sacraments elsewhere, they need to make sure the baptismal parish receives copies.
- Encourage your parishioners to keep their own copies of sacramental records in a safe place, such as a fire-proof box.



36



What Can You Do?

- Create an index in Excel, Access, or other software so that you can locate sacramental records when needed.
- Be sure to fully notate baptismal records. These records are the “root” of each person’s sacramental history. Complete your notations as soon as possible after sacraments are received.
- When you have questions, contact the archdiocesan offices. We are here to help!

37



Important Contacts

- Very Rev. Joseph L. Newton, JCL, Vicar-Judicial
 - Can answer questions about annulments or other points of canon law
 - 317-236-1460 or 800-382-9836 Ext. 1460
 - Email: tribunal@archindy.org
- Very Rev. James M. Brockmeier, Director of Worship
 - Can answer questions about administration of sacraments
 - 317-236-1480 or 800-382-9836 Ext. 1480
 - Email: jbrockmeier@archindy.org


38



Important Contacts


- Christopher Walsh, Chancellor
 - Provides oversight of archives
 - 317-236-1481 or 800-382-9836 Ext. 1481
 - Email: cwalsh@archindy.org
- Julie Motyka, Archivist
 - Can answer day-to-day questions regarding sacramental recordkeeping
 - 317-236-1538 or 800-382-9836 Ext. 1538
 - Email: jmotyka@archindy.org
 - <https://www.archindy.org/archives/Sacramental-Records.html>
 - Sacramental Records Handbook
 - List of location of sacramental records of closed parishes

39




Thank You!

- Thanks for all that you do to maintain the sacramental history of your parish. These records are very meaningful to the people concerned and will continue to be consulted 100+ years from now!




40




Questions?


41



Advanced Topics in Sacramental Recordkeeping


42

 **Advanced Topics Overview**



- Obtaining sacramental records from other countries
- Watching for red flags in records submitted to your parish from other parishes
- Error correction

43

 **Obtaining Records from Other Countries**

- Ask the person who needs records sent to assist you in contacting the parish of origin
- When parish cannot be reached, try contacting diocese for assistance
- If you do not speak the language of the parish or diocese you need to reach and have no one to translate for you, try to compose an email or fax using translate.google.com

44

 www.catholic-hierarchy.org/


- Listing of all dioceses and bishops in the world
- Good source for diocesan contact information if you have no success reaching parish
- If the parish or diocese has no website, you can find a mailing address here, as well as email or fax if it is available

45

46

47

48

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Apostolic Nunciature

**Archbishop Christoph Pierre,
Nuncio to the United States**



- Apostolic nuncio is the pope's ambassador to each country
- May be able to assist you in contacting parishes in other countries
- <http://www.nuntiususa.org/>
- Contact form on website


49

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Red Flags

- Records should have complete information
 - Name of person
 - Name of church
 - Location of Church
 - Name of godparents, sponsors, or witnesses
 - Date of Sacrament
 - Notations, or “no notations” indications

50

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Red Flags

- If anything is missing, contact the parish issuing the record immediately, BEFORE proceeding with the sacrament to be received at your parish
 - A mistake may look minor but actually point to something more important

51



"Catholic" entities not in union with Rome

- There are churches that present themselves as Catholic groups but are entirely independent (often meet in Protestant church or private home)
- You should be generally familiar with the names of all parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis: <http://www.archindy.org/parishes/alphalist.html>
- If you receive a sacramental record from a U.S. parish that you have never heard of, it is good to make a quick check to be sure it is listed on the diocesan website

52



Examples of Catholic Groups in Indiana not in Union with Rome

- These groups will often come and go
- A few examples in archdiocese:
 - Brownsburg Inclusive Catholic Community, Brownsburg
 - Sacred Cross Oratory, Floyds Knobs
 - St. John XXIII Catholic Community, Indianapolis
 - St. Luke Synodal Catholic Church, Indianapolis
 - St. Mary of Magdala Catholic Community, Indianapolis
- If it doesn't sound right, go with your gut and check


53



FSSP v. SSPX

- Both the FSSP and the SSPX are congregations of priests who offer the Preconciliar (Latin) Mass, but have different relationships with Rome
- FSSP (Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter) is **totally in union with Rome** and their sacraments are always valid and licit
 - In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the FSSP administers the Oratory of SS. Philomena & Cecilia in Franklin County


54

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FSSP v. SSPX

- SSPX (Society of St. Pius X) has a complicated relationship with Rome, and the validity and liceity of sacraments varies
- Diocese of Richmond has a great document outlining these distinctions: https://richmonddiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Frequently-asked-Questions-12_7_16.pdf
- Contact the Archdiocesan Tribunal regarding a sacramental record from the SSPX if you are not sure about it
 - St. Joseph Church in Greenwood is an SSPX chapel in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis


55

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Changes & Error Correction



Most sacramental record information cannot be changed later




Records normally must reflect the reality that existed at the time of the sacrament



Following changes are not allowed:

Selection of new godparents
 Addition of names of non-adoptive stepparents
 Nicknames


56

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Minor Changes

- Correcting date of sacrament or spelling of name
- Incorrect information should be crossed out with a single straight line, and correct information written above or below (no correction fluid or tape)
- Minor changes can be made at request of the subject of the record or their parent/guardian
- These changes can also be made at your discretion if the error is obvious to you when pointed out.
- When in doubt, contact archivist or chancellor.

57




Minor Changes

Minor Change e.g. Name Correction

3	Brockman Richard Mark	Novi, IN Mar. 4, 1950	Mar. 11 1950	Robert J. Brockman Angela Torrini	Philip Brockman James Lippert Agnes	James J. Lee 11/17/2020
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- In this example, the godmother’s name was changed because it is incorrect.
- The incorrect name is crossed out, but still visible.
- A date for this change is included in the record. This can clarify inconsistencies that may arise from certificates issued prior to the change.


58



Somewhere Between Minor and Major

- Name of person receiving sacrament is substantially incorrect (Robert instead of Richard)
- Name of parent substantially incorrect, e.g. father believed to be one person but a paternity test later concludes that it was someone else
- Supporting documentation (such as birth certificate) required for these changes, to be kept in sacramental record files
- Add explanation in Notations field

59



Major Changes

- Adoption after baptism
- In this case, the original record must be terminated and a new record created

Major Change - Termination of Original Entry – Adoption

3	Torrini Richard Mark	Novi, IN Mar. 4, 1950	Mar. 11 1950	Angela Torrini	Donald Paffin Marilyn Torrini	James J. Lee	Adopted and name changed 11/14/1951
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Major Change - Replacement of Original Entry – Adoption

50	Blaylock Richard Mark	Novi, IN Mar. 4, 1950	Mar. 11 1950	Thomas Blaylock Mary Harvey	James J. Lee	
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60



Notations Always Help

- Other than adoption after baptism, sacramental records should always reflect reality at the time of the sacrament
- Legal name changes made later in life should not be reflected by making change to a sacramental record
- For convenience or clarity, this information could be added to a notation with proper documentation.

61



Questions?

62
