

# Guidelines for Sacramental Registers

## I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

***Access to the Registers:*** The sacramental registers of the Catholic Church are both public and private documents:

***They are public*** in that they are intended to allow a third person to know what sacramental actions transpired on a certain date and exact factual information about the persons and actions involved. Therefore they should be very accurate and able to be relied on for factual matters.

***They are private*** in that they contain personal information about persons. Therefore, the information contained in the registers should be shared only with the person, family members or Church officials, all of whom should have a valid reason for requesting them. A lot of problems can be avoided if when certificates are needed you request them directly from the Church or send them to the Church that has need of them.

***The accuracy of permanent records:*** The sacramental records should be considered like formal testimony that should truthfully and accurately record the facts of what transpired. The same is true of certificates that attest to the sacramental records.

All the entries in the Sacramental Registers should be factual. When there is doubt about the facts one should rely on public documents or affidavits of persons who are reliable.

***For example:*** When paternity is unknown or in doubt one should rely on what is on the birth certificate.

Once a record has been recorded there should be no changes unless it can be proven from documentary evidence or legitimate testimony of persons that there has been a mistake or omission of fact.

There can be no changes made in the sacramental records of the Church that would be an inaccurate or untruthful statement of the facts as they transpired on the date in question.

***For example:*** parents want to change the Godparents after the fact.

### ***A System for Recording:***

The pastor should have written policies regarding how sacramental records are to be kept and from time-to-time confirm that the policies are followed.

The recording of sacraments is the responsibility of the Pastor of the place where they were administered. Those who care for the records should make sure that priests and other ministers administering sacraments are aware of the requirements of recording.

The Sacramental Registers are in fact the testimony of the minister and should correspond with his memory of the events and facts.

The recording of the sacraments should happen as soon as possible after administration has taken place.

The persons involved in the sacrament's administration should be asked to carefully review information for errors, inaccuracies or omissions before they are recorded in the register.

Great care should be shown to ensure that the records of the Church correspond to the facts recorded of the civil government and that when Church records may have civil effects there should be due diligence shown towards accuracy and truthfulness.

*For example:* Marriage records should correspond to what is on the license.

When there is a doubt of consent of a parent of a child baptized or one parent is opposed to Baptism every effort should be made to resolve this before the sacrament is administered and an affidavit giving consent should be obtained from one who has legal custody of the child.

In general the following should be understood by the titles in Sacramental Registers:

**Name (nomen) at Baptism** - the full Surname, Christian name, and middle names, in the case of married women their maiden name; in the case of adopted children their legally changed names. After Baptism - the name is reflected in the Baptismal register with notations as to any change in the status of the name.

**Note well:** in case of European and Asian people, care should be given to understanding their customs as to anglicizing their surnames and care should be given to ensure a name that will be used that will allow the person to find their sacramental records in the future.

It is the responsibility of the priest or minister to ensure that a name given to a child is not foreign to Christian Culture. This is true of Confirmation names as well.

**Date** (dies) month, day, and year

**Note well:** dates retrieved from documents produced in non-English speaking countries are often listed as day, month, and year.

When no record of date of birth or other event is available, use the convention "circa" to indicate approximate date taken from the testimony of persons or place "unknown" in the column.

In cases when sacraments are performed and the rite is supplied afterwards the date of the actual administration is given and the date of the rite may be noted in the notations column.

**Place of Birth** (locus natiuitatis) - Civil description of the place town or city, state and nation if not in the USA.

**Sponsors** (Patrini) – Sponsors for Baptism must fulfill the requirements of Canon law.

Can. 872 - Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for Baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with Baptism and to fulfill the obligations inherent in it.

Can. 873 - There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

Can. 874 - §1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a must:

1° be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;

2° have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;

3° be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;

4° not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;

5° not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

§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.

**Note well:** If a Christian witness participates at a Baptism, that person's name should be recorded in the last column of the register: *remarks*.

**Residence** (Domicilium) - the residence of the person who is receiving the Sacrament. Sacraments should be performed in one's own parish; if this is not the case some permission or other requirement may be necessary.

**For Example:** Statement of the person's pastor that parents are properly prepared and giving permission for the Baptism to take place outside the parish would be helpful.

**Unusual Circumstances Surrounding Baptism**

**Note Well:** Canon 849 Baptism, The gateway to the sacraments and necessary for salvation by actual reception *or at least by desire*, is validly conferred only by a washing of true water with the proper form of the words. Through Baptism men and women are freed from sin, are reborn as children of God, and configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church.

Our teaching is that once parents desire to have their child baptized that child is claimed for Jesus Christ and is a member of the household of the Church. Finding ways to express this truth and assuring parents with it is the key component of the Church's pastoral care in many situations that come up around baptism that are very sensitive.

For example:

*Can the Church baptize an embryo that has been miscarried? Can the remains of an aborted fetus be baptized? Can a baby who has died before Baptism be baptized?*

Generally the Church does administer the sacraments upon those who have died. What is needed in these situations is pastoral care including ritual expressions that help assure and comfort the parents but are respectful of the reality and their need for privacy. Often ritual actions that claim the child for Christ and for the Church and commend them body and soul unto eternal life meets the need. In more difficult circumstances there are rituals in the Book of Blessings and the Order of Christian Funerals that can be adapted to the circumstances and are preferable than attempting baptism.

If in these situations Baptism is attempted, there is no need to record the event except in the death register. However if in pastoral judgment it is to be recorded and certificates are to be produced, every effort should be made to avoid the appearance that the sacraments were simulated.

## NOTES FOR THE BAPTISMAL REGISTER IN PARTICULAR

**Parents Names:** the general considerations on names are followed. In doubt of paternity place "unknown" in the place of the father's name. Doubt exists when there is no marriage and the person themselves nor any civil document testifies to the paternity. Great care must be shown in this regard in the listing of paternity which is incorrect can have civil effects.

**Priest** (Sacerdos) - name of the priest administering the Baptism. Make clear notations when a deacon or in the rare case a layperson performs the Baptism.

**Date of Confirmation:** When the person is confirmed you will be notified and you place the notation here. In the case of an adult you note the same date.

**Record of Marriage, Religious Profession or Sub-Diaconate** - when a person is married or enters religious life or the clerical state you will be notified. Enter it here.

**Note well:** when filling out a certificate from the Baptismal Register it is important to

give a clear indication of notations usually on the reverse of the certificate. If there are no notations indicate this on the certificate to avoid any ambiguity.

## NOTES FOR THE CONFIRMATION REGISTER IN PARTICULAR

**Residence:** Normally the diocesan bishop is the minister of confirmation. If another bishop is to administer the sacrament he should request permission in advance from the Bishop of St. Petersburg.

A presbyter can receive the faculty to confirm in several cases:

***From the law itself (c. 883)***

1. When he is diocesan administrator
2. When he baptizes an adult or brings a non-catholic Christian into full communion of the Catholic Church.
3. When the person is in danger of death

***By a grant of the faculty from the diocesan bishop(c. 884.1)***

1. Given to all for a particular case (Bishop Lynch has in the past granted the faculty to priests for the Easter Vigil)
2. Given to a particular priest for a particular case. (One writes to the bishop and requests the faculty or the Bishop delegates someone to do confirmation for him.)

***When a bishop or presbyter with the faculty to confirm associates a presbyter to help confirm(c. 884.2)***

**Sponsor:** The same considerations as for Baptism.

**Minister:** Whenever the minister of confirmation is not the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, a special note must be made. It is best to be clear and so I suggest the canon number be placed in a notation next to the minister who is not the Bishop of St. Petersburg.

883.1 Those equivalent in law to the Diocesan Bishop (diocesan administrator)

883.2 Those baptizing an adult or bringing one into full communion. (RCIA)

883.3 Those administering Confirmation in danger of death

884.1 When the minister has the permission of the Bishop

884.2 When a Bishop associates a presbyter to himself

## NOTES FOR THE FIRST COMMUNION REGISTER IN PARTICULAR

**Residence** - should be in the parish.

**Age** - should be beyond the age of reason (7) unless in danger of death.

## NOTES FOR THE MARRIAGE REGISTER IN PARTICULAR

**Residence** - one of the Catholic parties must be in the territory of the parish or else permission is required from the Pastor of one of the Catholic parties.

**Place and date of Marriage** - the place should be a Catholic Church unless a Dispensation from Form has been obtained prior to the wedding. In the case of convalidation, the actual date of the convalidation should be listed and a notation of the civil marriage date given.

**Witnesses** - do not have to be Catholic; can be anyone over 7 but a preference should be given to those over 14.

**Place and date of Baptism** - if one of the parties is un-baptized, a dispensation is required.

**Priest** - if more than one priest or minister is involved in the ceremony, the record should reflect the priest or minister who accepted the exchange of vows. Clear indications should be made of deacons, lay people or non-Catholic ministers.

## NOTES FOR THE SICK CALL REGISTER IN PARTICULAR

**Residence** - somewhere in the register a list of names and addresses of the hospitals and nursing homes should be kept. Also on this list could be the names, addresses and phone numbers of persons visited often.

**Ministrations** - C=fes=Confession, Com.=Holy Communion, Viat=Viaticum (the rite of giving communion to a dying person) Ant=G=Sacrament of the Sick, Last B= Last Blessing or the Prayers of Commendation of the Dying.

## NOTES IN PARTICULAR OF THE DEATH REGISTER

**Sacraments** - list the Sacraments of Initiation and Sacrament of the Sick.

**Priest** who performs the funeral Mass or other service.

**Remarks** - cremation should be indicated. If a funeral Mass was not said the type of services should be indicated.

**Place and date of burial:** The failure to inter the personal remains of those cremated in a grave or at sea poses a pastoral problem. Whenever this is the case the following conventions are suggested

When some one takes the ashes – “entrusted to N.”

When a funeral home or cemetery keeps the ashes for later burial— “entrusted to N. for burial with N.”

In all other cases— “Unknown.”