



Digitizing Copies of Sacramental Records

Project Overview

- The Archdiocese of Baltimore has initiated a project to digitize its sacramental registers in a public/private partnership with the leading family history website FindMyPast at <https://www.findmypast.com/>
- The goals of the project are two-fold:
 - To create preservation copies of the sacramental registers maintained by the Archdiocese's parishes and institutions in accordance with canon law; and
 - To participate in the Catholic Heritage Archive (<https://www.findmypast.com/catholicrecords>) created and maintained by FindMyPast.
- This project will make available to family historians the digitized records of collaborating dioceses in the United States, Britain, and Ireland that are one hundred years and older.

When will the digitization project begin and end?

- The digitization project is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2018. The Chancellor's Office and the Archdiocesan Archives will be preparing a schedule to facilitate proper review and copying of all registers.
- This project may could take *as much as a year or more* to complete due to the large number of uncopied sacramental records in the Archdiocese.

Which parishes and institutions will participate in the digitization project?

- All Archdiocesan parishes and institutions that maintain sacramental registers will participate in the project. This includes all records from current and merged parishes. Records will be called for on a regional basis. The schedule of regions will be available on this website.

Which sacramental registers will be digitized?

- All sacramental registers through the *current day* will be digitized.

How will I know which sacramental registers to send?

- All sacramental registers (both old and current) are to be sent to the Archives site for the digitization project. DO NOT have any registers

(regardless of their age) rebound before they are sent to the Archives (they are easier to digitize without new bindings).

What if some of my registers are in poor condition?

- **Older registers may need some special attention. The Archives staff will evaluate each register and recommend any rebinding, etc. to preserve the item. DO NOT HAVE ANY OLD REGISTERS REBOUND AT THIS TIME.**

Where will the sacramental registers be digitized and who will be digitizing them?

- **Sacramental registers will be digitized on-site at the Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore located at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore by The Crowley Company of Frederick, Maryland.**

How will parishes and institutions know when to send their sacramental registers to the Archives?

- Parishes and institutions will be notified according to the schedule that has been drawn up for the digitization project. A regional list is available on [this webpage](#).

How will sacramental registers be transported to and from parishes and institutions?

- The Chancery Office will contact every parish and institution to make arrangements for transporting the sacramental registers to and from the Archives. It is hoped that deacons and other volunteers will assist in the delivery and return of registers.

How long will it take for the sacramental registers to be digitized?

- Active sacramental registers will be digitized first and returned within several weeks.

Will every sacramental register sent in for the digitization project be returned?

- **Only active sacramental registers will be returned to parishes and institutions.**
- **Sacramental registers that are closed** (registers where the last entry is 100 years and older) will be housed at the Archives after they have been digitized.

Why is the Archives keeping the older closed registers instead of returning them to the parish?

- Archbishop Lori has determined that the registers, as valuable historic documents, should be housed in a climate-controlled environment that will ensure their proper preservation for generations to come.

What if someone in our parish needs access to a closed register after it has gone to the Archives?

- Individuals should be directed to the Archives who can assist them in obtaining the information they are seeking:
<http://www.stmarys.edu/archives/>
- Closed registers will be made available on the Findmypast website after they have been digitized, where they can be accessed for free or with the purchase of a subscription.

What if our parish wants to bring back a particular register for a parish celebration in the future?

- Parishes should contact the Archives well in advance to “checkout” the particular register(s) needed and make arrangements to return them as soon as the parish celebration is over to be sure the item is properly preserved.

How do parishes and institutions prepare their sacramental registers for the digitization project?

Please follow this checklist:

Identify

- **Mark Each Register - Every sacramental register needs to be clearly identified** with the following information: parish name, city/town, type of register (ex., baptism, general), and date span. **Please write this information in pencil on the inside cover page of each register.**

Inventory

- **Complete an Inventory Form** - Prepare an inventory of the registers in your holdings *before* they are sent to the Archives. **Keep one copy for your records and send one copy to the Archives.** An inventory form is available on the webpage.
- **Return of Registers** - When the sacramental registers are returned to parishes and institutions, an updated inventory will be enclosed.

Packing

- **Box Type** - The registers do not need to be packed in special or archival boxes. Clean and sturdy cardboard boxes will be fine (not too large or they will be difficult to pick up and carry).
- **Packing Instructions** - We do recommend that the registers be packed snugly, so as to prevent shifting while being moved.
 - **If there are any gaps between the registers and the sides of the box,** you can fill the space with clean, crumpled paper.
 - **If a cover on a register is damaged or is in danger of falling off** (*Please do not have it rebound regardless of age – it is easier to copy without a new binding*), we recommend that you tie the register with string to secure it.
- **Inventory Sheet** - Place a copy of the inventory sheet in the first packed box (only 1 copy of a complete inventory needs to be sent with each set of parish records). When fully packed, please make sure that the top of each box is secure.

- **Exterior Markings** - On the exterior of each box, please PRINT clearly on one of the short ends of the box this information:

Parish/Institution Name

City/Town/County

Box __ of __

For Example:

St. John of God Parish

Anywhere, Anne Arundel County

Box 1 of 10

Additional Questions

When to deliver the books?

- On **Monday, September 17th or Tuesday, September 18th from 9AM to 4PM would be preferred.** If you need to do it this week, please go ahead and do it now. It is more important to have the records there than to stick to the time.
- **Please call or email Alison Foley at the Archives at 410-864-4074 or email her at afoley@stmarys.edu ahead of time, informing her of your arrival time.**

What to do if people ask for a Sacrament Certificate and the books are still at the Archives?

- The open registers will be digitized in the shortest time possible, but **if someone asks for a certificate please contact to Alison Foley at 410-864-4074 or email her at afoley@stmarys.edu and she will provide you with this information so you can create the certificate at your location and send it out.**

Where to register Sacraments that are celebrated while the books are being digitized?

- **If Sacraments are celebrated while the books are being digitized please hold on to the documents you would as a basis for your new entries, then enter them all at once when you get the registers back.** You are essentially keeping a “draft” of an entry while the books are away.