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**Digitizing Copies of Sacramental Records**

**FAQ Sheet**

**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.**
  + **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.**

**Which parishes and institutions will participate in the digitization project?**

* **All Archdiocesan parishes and institutions** that maintain or have maintained sacramental registers will participate in the project, including those that have been closed.

**Which sacramental registers will be digitized?**

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

**How will I know which sacramental registers to send?**

* **All sacramental registers through current day** are to be sent to the Archives for the digitization project.

**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., that needs to be done. **DO NOT have any registers (regardless of their age) rebound before they are sent to the Archives** as they are easier to digitize without new bindings.

**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 by the Chancery when to bring their registers to the Archives **two weeks prior to their drop-off date.**

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

* Parishes and institutions will be responsible for transporting registers to and from the Archives.

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

* **Open registers** – registers in which the last entry is fewer than 100 years old – will be returned to parishes and institutions.
* **Closed registers** – registers where the last entry is at least 100 years old – will be housed at the Archives after they have been digitized.

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

* Archbishop Lori has determined that all registers 100 years and older are valuable historic documents and should be housed in a climate-controlled environment to 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?**

* 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.
* Parishes will be provided with copies of their digitized registers once the project has been completed.
* Individuals can be directed to the Archives to request assistance in obtaining the information they are seeking: <http://www.stmarys.edu/archives/>

**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.

**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, marriage), and date span**. Please write this information in **pencil** on the **inside cover page** of each register.

***Inventory***

* **Complete an Incoming 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 Incoming Inventory form is available on the webpage.
* **Return of Registers -** When the sacramental registers are returned to parishes and institutions, an **updated Outgoing Inventory Form** 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 recommend that the registers be packed snugly 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,** we recommend that you tie the register with string to secure it. **Please do not have the register rebound before sending it into the Archives as it is easier to digitize without a new binding**.
* **Inventory Sheet** - Place a copy of the inventory sheet in the first packed box. **Only one copy of a complete inventory needs to be sent with each set of parish records.** Once fully packed, please make sure that the top of each box is secure.
* **Exterior Markings** - On the exterior of each box, please clearly print:

**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 should registers be delivered to the Archives?**

* The Chancery will contact each parish or institution approximately two weeks beforehand to schedule a delivery date.
* Registers can be dropped off during the Archives’ regular hours:

**M-F 9:00 am-12:00 pm and 1:00-4:00 pm**.

* In advance of your drop-off date, please contact **Alison Foley at 410-864-4074 or** [**archives@stmarys.edu**](mailto:archives@stmarys.edu) and inform her of your arrival time.

**What if someone requests a Sacramental Certificate or information from a record while a register is at the Archives?**

* The Archives will assist with requests for sacramental certificates and information while a parish’s registers are in its care. Contact **Alison Foley** about your requests.

**How do we handle Sacraments that are celebrated while the registers are at the Archives for digitization?**

* While the registers are at the Archives for digitization, please keep all notices for the Sacraments celebrated at your parish. Once the registers are returned, you may enter the information on these notices into the appropriate registers.