

# A Brief Guide for a Parish Archive



## Why establish a parish archive?

Each parish needs to preserve the materials that identify its history. Primary records and objects provide evidence of the past of the parish and must be protected and preserved to prevent the loss of the parish history that will occur if the material is neglected.

The Diocese of Youngstown archives preserve the collective memory of the Church in northeastern Ohio. Well-maintained and accessible parish archives are needed so that whole Church is represented in that collective memory.

## How should materials be preserved?

### Location

- Sacramental registers are to be maintained in a locked, fireproof cabinet.
- The archives should be in an area least affected by extremes of light, heat, dryness, or humidity; in other words, basements and attics are the worst places for them. An ideal environment is about 65 degrees Fahrenheit, with a relative humidity of 45-55%. If the ideal cannot be met, find an area with the least fluctuation possible.

### Care for records

- Do NOT laminate any paper you want to preserve. Lamination is irreversible, deteriorates over time, and will ultimately destroy the paper.
- Do not staple, tape, or paper clip sacramental notation records to the applicable page in the register. Make the notation and place the paper in the back of the register, with a pencil note of the page it applies to.
- Do not scotch tape a ripped document. Over time the tape will discolor and even alter the document. If the document is in pieces, place the pieces together in a folder.
- Do not place a framed document on an outside wall, where it will be subject to fluctuations from the weather. Do not place framed documents where they will be exposed to sunlight.
- Materials should not be folded to fit into containers. Oversize materials should be stored flat if possible.
- Do not try to unroll rolled items unless they are new. Old rolled document may crack if forced flat.
- Remove rubber bands. They deteriorate over time and can adhere to the original materials.
- Cleaning or repair of documents requires special techniques and should be undertaken by professionals. Contact the Archives Office for assistance when considering restoration work.
- Ideally, archives materials should be placed in archival file folder and boxes. Acid-free boxes are available from manufacturers who specialize in archival products. Contact the Archives Office for assistance with ordering.

## What should be preserved?

Records can have administrative, fiscal, legal, and historical value. Please consult the diocesan Records Retention Guidelines for help in determining what must and should be kept.

In general, these are among the records that should be kept permanently:

- Sacramental Registers:
  - ALL sacramental registers (the registers themselves)
  - Marriage files
- Cemetery:
  - Records of lot ownership and payments
  - Annual reports
  - Board minutes
  - Burial cards (alphabetical by name of the interred)
  - Contracts
  - Correspondence of legal, historical, and/or fiscal significance
  - General Ledger
  - Lot maps
  - Rules of operation/policies
- Publications:
  - Bulletins
  - Newsletters
  - Anniversary books/booklets/brochures
  - Other publications by the parish
- History files:
  - Photographs (clergy, parishioners, events, buildings, celebrations)
  - Clippings related to the parish
- Property:
  - Appraisals
  - Architectural records (blueprints, drawings, designs, specifications)
  - Construction invoices/paid bills
  - Deeds, abstracts
  - Inventories of property and equipment
  - Mortgage records (if you have a mortgage burning event, burn a copy, not the original)
  - Real estate surveys, plots, plans
  - Title search paper, certificates
- Catholic School: (see also Office of Catholic Schools Administrative Policies and Procedures)
  - Articles of incorporation
  - Board minutes
  - NCEA reports
  - AHERA school management plans, periodic surveillance reports, abatement documents and manifests
  - Employee service record (including wage and salary)
  - School testing results
  - Student permanent records, accident reports, record cards
  - Teacher contracts

- Faith Formation Records:
  - Reports to the Diocese
  - Catechist rosters/records
  - Student rosters
  
- Finance:
  - Parish Finance Committee minutes
  - Annual balance sheets
  - Audit reports
  - Financial statements
  - General ledger, annual
  - Journals, general and specific funds
  - Permanently restricted gift documents
  
- Parish Council:
  - Bylaws
  - Minutes
  
- Administrative:
  - Annual reports to the Chancery
  - Articles of incorporation, bylaws
  - Bequests and estate papers
  - Census records
  - Child Protection/Safe Environment documentation
  - Correspondence, legal
  - Correspondence, official (regarding policies, directives, etc)
  - Donor lists
  - Endowment decrees
  - Environmental test records/reports
  - Insurance policies (active and canceled)
  - Parish organizations records (minutes, correspondence, etc)
  - Parishioner roster
  - Personnel:
    - Employee applications, hired
    - Benefits records (disability, pension vesting, retirement, service records)
    - Health and safety (Hazardous exposure records, toxic substance exposure records, employee medical records, workers' compensation records)
    - Pension records
  - Policy statements
  - Taxes: Sales tax exemption certificates
  - Wills, estates, codicils