

Parish registers

1. PERSONS AUTHORIZED TO MANAGE THE REGISTERS

Management of the parish registers is the responsibility of the priest; and more generally, the priests and deacons in service in the parish. They have the duty to put in the required annotations and sign the issued certificates or extracts. However, they can delegate another person to accomplish these tasks, e.g. a secretary or a mandated pastoral agent. But each delegation must be approved by the Chancellor. We must also make sure that the registers are not indiscriminately circulated from person to person.

2. TASKS RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF PARISH REGISTERS

A. Write down in the parish registers: acts of baptism, marriage, confirmation, funeral or burials (inhumations).

In the latter case, these acts will be signed by the priest celebrant, or the director of the cemetery, if deemed appropriate.

B. Make all the required annotations in the margins of an act:

- Annotations of confirmation
- Annotations of marriage
- Annotations of ordination or religious profession
- Annotations of a declaration of nullity of marriage, or of nullity of ordination
- Annotations of apostasy of the faith, or of return to the Catholic faith
- Annotations of adoption

C. Issue extracts or certificates of marriage, baptism, confirmation, funeral, or burial, and sign these documents; produce and sign the annual summary sheets.

We are always authorized to legally and canonically issue, at the request of interested parties, religious extracts or certificates of

baptism, marriage, confirmation, funeral or burial. The documents thus issued have no legal value other than on a religious basis. The person authorized to manage the registers signs himself, and in his own name, the extracts or certificates he issues. He must never add with his signature a note like « for Father So-and-so, priest ». He must also never stamp a document. As well, never use correction fluid on a document; when you make a mistake in filling out a document, you just cross out (make erasures) and indicate the number of words crossed out or corrected. The issuance of an extract or certificate can be done by hand, or on a typewriter or computer, but never by photocopying pages of the register. There is an exception, however:

Restricted authorization to photocopy registers – Management of the civil authority has made an agreement with the Quebec Assembly of Chancellors in the case of a request to correct a civil or religious act. The management of the civil authority requests that the demander produce a photocopy of the religious act, in order to strictly identify the error or the correction to make. You are then authorized to make a photocopy of the registry act, and then send it to the management of the civil authority. This must be done at no cost to the demander.

D. Make all corrections requested or authorized by the Chancery of the Archdiocese of Gatineau in the registers.

E. Search through the registers yourself, in order to find all relevant information requested.

Please note that you must never give access to the registers to an unauthorized person.

3. CORRECTION OF A MISTAKE IN THE REGISTERS

No parish authority can, on his own initiative, make a *post factum* correction in a signed document. Only the Chancery can issue a notice authorizing a correction in a registry document, after a lengthy administrative process. In addition, to correct acts written before January 1st, 1994, including the duplicate kept by the civil authority,

the Chancery cannot proceed until after the production of a document emanating from the civil authority, and attesting that the correction has also been made in the civil register. This process is free of charge. When a demand is made for you to correct an act in the register, please communicate first with the Chancery, in order to learn the proper procedure.

4. SUMMARY SHEETS OF THE REGISTERS

The parishes are required to send their filled-out summary sheets each year to the Chancery. The due date is always February 28th.

The Chancery must keep in the archives, and for an indefinite period of time, all documents related to your registry acts: there are no other copies anywhere else, since we don't keep copies of registers anymore. In case of loss of your register, the summary sheets kept at the Chancery would be the only way for you to reconstitute your register starting in 1994.

The Chancery using these summary sheets (and the rescript requests for marriages) for conservation and archiving purposes, it is therefore important that the supporting material (paper and ink) be durable and uniform. For the production of these sheets, printers now use acid-free (alkaline) paper that is quality controlled, and printing is done using the offset process, (cold ink, contrary to photocopying that uses heated toner powder), which offers a good guarantee against fading. And we must insist that you use these printed sheets to produce your registry summaries or to make a rescript request.

5. RANDOM NOTES

A. Voluntary information written in funeral or burial registers

B. In the funeral or burial act, a line is reserved for the inscription of the kinship of the deceased: The deceased was the spouse of/ widow(er) of/son, daughter of... etc. You should usually write down all that is required to well identify the deceased and, later, be able to trace back kinship: the name of the spouse, as well as the names of the parents of the deceased. However, in the case

of e.g. a civil divorce, even if the Church still considers the religious marriage valid, and the couple as still married, it might be more appropriate to write down only the names of the parents, and not of the spouse, of the deceased, in order to spare the feelings of the family... You decide. There is no legal obligation forcing anyone to write down every link on this registry line: it exists only to facilitate the eventual identification of the deceased.

C. Inscription of the name of the child on the baptism register

It is imperative that the complete name of your child be written in the baptism register EXACTLY the same way as it is written in the civil registration. To do so, you can use as reference the Confirmation of Registration sheet, or the birth certificate sent to the parents by the director of the civil authority, and which also includes the civil registration number that you write down at the bottom of the Act of Baptism. It is thus very important to remind expecting parents who want to have their child baptized to be very precise on giving the complete name of their child for the civil registration; since you cannot, for any reason whatsoever, in the act of baptism, modify any part of the name of someone already civilly registered.

Indeed, the management of the civil authority reminds us, in its March 1999 bulletin 'L'État civil express', (vol. 5, no 1), that:

– The parents themselves are responsible for the civil registration of their child within 30 days of its birth; this declaration of birth is usually done at the hospital, who then sends it to the direction of the civil authority (p. 4). The parents must make sure that the name of their child is written correctly, since that will be the name under which he will be registered. (p. 8).

– By request even of the religious authorities, the complete name of the child must be identical to the one written on the declaration of birth. Also, all accents must be written down, as well as any hyphens (p. 6).

In short, the writing of the child's name on the religious register must be identical to the one on the civil register.

On filling out the religious register, you must first indicate, on the first line of the act, the family name of the child, and then his given name or names. When there is more than one given name, you first write down the true name and then the others, following the order written on the Confirmation of Registration sheet, or the birth certificate sent to parents by the director of the civil authority. It is also in that order that the complete name of the person must appear on an issued extract or birth certificate.

Also, when you get the occasion, it might be good to remind expecting parents that a family name written among the common names can NEVER be substituted with the one written as the registered family name of the child (L'État civil express, March 1999, p. 8).

D. Inscription of the father's name on the baptism registry

In the case of the baptism of a child from a single mother, or an unmarried couple, even civilly, Canon Law states, in Canon 877, § 2, that the father's name must be written only if his paternity has been proven by an official document, or by his own declaration made in front of a priest and two witnesses (the mother would not be an admissible witness). An admissible official document could be a birth certificate, issued by the civil authority, on which is written the name of the father. The public reading of the register, during the baptism ceremony, and the father's signature constitutes a form of declaration made before witnesses. In the absence of an official document, or any form of declaration by the father recognizing his paternity before witnesses, you cannot write the name of the father on the baptism registry, even if the mother demands it, especially if the father is not present at the baptism and does not sign the register. Such an inscription, made without the father's consent, may be challenged in court, resulting in you having to pay tribunal costs, as well as damages and interests. Thus, in those kinds of cases, you must always act with extreme prudence.