

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin
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GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH POLICY

The following policy has been adopted by the Archdiocese of Chicago's Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center with regard to the release of sacramental and school records for genealogical research. It is designed to protect the privacy of those named in the records.

GENERAL POLICIES:

1. Genealogical research for parish records is only permitted in records prior to December 31, 1925. Records from January 1, 1926, to the present are sealed to the public, and only the named person in the record may access it. Only parish death records are completely open for research.
2. The public may conduct on-site research for any parish in the Archdiocese of Chicago, provided the research falls within the pre-1926 time frame. Records are also available for browsing online through the Family Search website.
3. Genealogical research for school records is limited to directory information. This includes, as available: name and address, telephone number, birth date, birth place, major field of study, participation in school activities, weight and height, dates of attendance, awards received, previous schools attended, parish, and photograph. Current information is not available.
4. Genealogical research for orphanage records is limited to similar directory information: name and address, telephone number, birth date, intake information, dates of attendance, visitor information, previous schools attended, terms of release, parish, and photograph.
5. The Archives staff will only conduct genealogical research for the public for closed institutions if all documentation is properly provided (see 2.d below for documentation required). All requests for records or research must come in writing through the mail. There is a \$20.00 fee for researching the records and providing a parish/school certificate if desired. Open parishes and schools must be contacted directly through the mail.

AUTHORIZED RECIPIENTS OF GENEALOGICAL RECORDS:

1. There is open access to all sacramental records prior to January 1, 1926.
2. Sacramental records after January 1, 1926 and all school and orphanage records have restricted access. These people would include:
 - a. The person named in the record (if over age 18 or an emancipated minor);
 - b. A parent or legal guardian of the person named in the record (if the person is under age 18 or incapacitated);

- c. Other parties as designated in writing by person (a or b) above;
 - d. If person (a) above is deceased, their heirs may have access to the records, after supplying the Archives with an official copy of the deceased person's death certificate and an official birth, baptismal, or marriage certificate showing that the requester is the next of kin. If the official documents are not available, notarized copies are acceptable. All documentation will be returned.
3. Other parties as designated by court order, subpoena, summons, or statute.

PROCEDURES TO OBTAIN GENEALOGICAL RECORDS:

1. Find the form to request a sacramental, school, or orphanage record available on our website, archives.archchicago.org, or request one through the mail.
2. Fill out the form as completely as possible. The Archives does not maintain a central registry or index of names of those persons who have received sacraments or attended schools in the Archdiocese, so records must be searched by parish or school.
3. If you do not know the parish or school, provide an address or neighborhood of the person you are researching. An ethnicity of the person may be also helpful in determining the possible parish.
4. If the record or information requested is prior to 1925, only a copy of your photo ID with a signature is required. If the record is beyond 1925, see 2.d. above for required documents.

FEES:

1. Genealogical copies of sacramental and school certificates (records that are not your own) are \$20.00 per copy. Copies of certificates to the individual named on the certificate are \$10.00.
2. The fees for orphanage files vary, based on the number of documents to be copied. There is a non-refundable \$10.00 processing fee.
3. Fees may be waived, by the Archivist, based on hardship.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

1. The Archives **only has** the records of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago. We **do not have** government records (such as birth certificates, marriage licenses, death certificates, etc.), records from other dioceses, or records from other religious denominations.
2. The Archives can furnish addresses of other dioceses or parishes in other dioceses in the United States if they are needed or if the diocese is unknown (provided that the town is known). We can also provide addresses for dioceses, not parishes, in foreign countries.
3. Please note that the present boundaries of the Archdiocese (Cook & Lake Counties) are considerably smaller than in past years (prior to 1948). Records for parishes outside the present boundaries of the Archdiocese would be found in the diocese in which the parish is now located (usually the Diocese of Joliet or the Diocese of Rockford). Records from missions may be found in the parish which operated the mission.

4. The Archives does not have any records relating to annulments. All records of annulments are held by the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Chicago, P.O. Box 1979, Chicago IL 60690, (312) 751-7999. **Records of the Tribunal are not available for genealogical investigation under any circumstances.**
5. Written policies are available upon request concerning other records which may be used for genealogical research (school, orphanage, etc.), as well as a more detailed genealogical handout.