

## **Clergy Files**

### **A. Overview**

1. This policy regulates the main location and safeguarding of the files on members of the clergy (priests<sup>1</sup> and deacons) and governs access to them. There are three categories of these files:
  - a. General
  - b. Confidential
  - c. Secure
2. This policy does not regulate the historical archives of the Archdiocese, which are subject to a separate policy.
3. All documents will be kept with the greatest of care and properly secured (c. 486 §§1-2, c. 487 §1). Documents must be preserved and catalogued according to professional archival standards.
4. The Chair of the Review Board, established pursuant to the current Archdiocesan Policy on Sexual Misconduct by Clergy, will have access to any file related to his or her mandate, regardless of its location.
5. Access to all clergy files, wherever located, including the secure clergy files, is granted to any independent investigator retained by the Archdiocese to investigate allegations made against clergy.
6. Except for documents in the secure clergy files, which are not to be removed, documents may be taken from the filing room only for a short time after the authorized person acknowledges receipt in writing pursuant to standard filing protocols.
7. The individuals referenced in n. 4 and n. 5 above are to be provided with adequate private working space so as to review files thoroughly without removing them.
8. The destruction of documents shall only be carried out pursuant to civil and canonical legislation and Archdiocesan policies.
9. When a seminarian is ordained a deacon, his file is taken from the Vocations and Seminarians Office and placed in the clergy files following the organizational scheme laid out by this policy. Until the deacon's ordination to the priesthood, the Director of Vocations and Seminarians will have access to the transitional deacon's file.

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<sup>1</sup> Any priest of the Archdiocese with active ministry, either religious or diocesan, is considered in this policy.

## **B. General Clergy Files**

The following materials shall be filed in the general file of a priest or deacon:

- letters of appointment
- grants of faculties, marriage licenses, etc.
- letters of permission (vacations, etc.)
- routine correspondence
- banking letters
- letters of commendation

## **C. Confidential Clergy Files**

1. The confidential file of a priest or deacon shall be stored in a special cabinet that will be kept locked except when in use. Filing and retrieval shall be limited strictly to the Archbishop, Vicar General, Chancellor/Vice-Chancellor and the Archbishop's Delegate for Serious Misconduct by Clergy. Keys or combinations to this cabinet shall be possessed only by the individuals previously named. The Director of the Permanent Diaconate Office will have access to the confidential files of permanent deacons, which will be kept separately from the priests' confidential files.
2. The following materials shall be filed in the confidential clergy file:
  - Documents prior to ordination that of their nature are of a private nature: psychological assessments, admission interviews, faculty and self-evaluations, and parish placement evaluations
  - Correspondence and documents relating to disciplinary matters
  - Correspondence and documents relating to civil law matters
  - Correspondence and documents concerning all evaluations or assessments of ministry
  - Medical and psychological reports
  - The priest's will (in an envelope sealed by him) and funeral instructions
  - Representation agreements, powers of attorney, etc. (in an envelope sealed by him)
  - Any correspondence or document which the priest or deacon himself directs to be placed there
  - Any document or correspondence which the Archbishop directs to be placed there
3. The use and storage of both the general clergy files and the confidential clergy files are governed not only by this policy but also by the Code of Canon Law, which requires that:
  - all involved in the filing and handling of these records promise to fulfill their office



faithfully and observe secrecy (c. 471)

- documents be kept with the greatest of care (c. 486 §1)
  - documents be kept under lock and key (c. 486 §2)
  - access to the file room be carefully restricted (c. 487 §1)
  - documents not be removed from the file room except for a short time and with permission (c. 488); and
  - the rights to a good reputation and to privacy be fully respected (c. 220)
4. The restricted access to the documents kept in the confidential clergy file does not mean that they will not be disclosed in certain situations to individuals other than those named in C.10. While c. 220 provides fundamental rights to a good reputation and to privacy, these are not absolute. For example, pertinent information in the priest's confidential file may be provided to the Consultors in the process of considering an assignment.
5. The priest or deacon shall have access to his confidential file. However, he cannot remove or copy anything from the file. When reviewing his file the cleric shall be accompanied by the filing clerk. For permission to access his file, the priest or deacon must contact the Chancellor/Vice-Chancellor.

#### D. Secure Clergy Files

1. These files are to be maintained in strict accordance with canon law (cc. 489, 490, 1082, 1133, 1339, 1719), which requires that certain documents relating to disciplinary and penal processes be filed only in the secure clergy files. Secure clergy files are not to be confused with confidential clergy files.
2. Access to the secure clergy files is controlled only by the Archbishop and anyone to whom he delegates permission.
3. When the See is vacant (i.e., the Archdiocese is temporarily without an Archbishop), the secure clergy files are not to be opened except in a case of true necessity, and then personally by the Archdiocesan Administrator (c. 490 §2).

Approved: **Memorial of Saint Irenaeus**  
**June 28, 2021**

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✠ **J. Michael Miller, CSB**  
**Archbishop of Vancouver**

The following policy is hereby **SUPERSEDED**:  
***Priests' Files***, issued July 16, 2002