



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

Office for Archives and Record Center: Rules for Access to the Sacramental Records

Only sacramental records older than 70 years are open for genealogical research, except for death records. Information in death records can be released without restriction.

Records between 70 and 100 years old are open for research only if the researcher provides documentary proof that the person(s) named in the record has died. A copy of an obituary or death certificate is considered adequate proof. Proof of death is not needed for records over 100 years old, nor for death records whatever the age. Orphanage records are subject to the same rules and restrictions as sacramental records. Any record, sacramental or orphanage, relating to an adoption is subject to the privacy rules of Pennsylvania state law 23 Pa.C.S. 2905.

The actual search can only be done by Archives staff due to privacy considerations. All research requests must be in writing and must include a \$15.00 deposit. Research requests forms are available from the Archives and can be obtained by calling between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. eastern time Monday through Friday.

All requests must include information about the individual being researched, approximate dates to search, the area where the individual lived, the information requested and a check or money order for \$15.00. The request should also specify the maximum number of hours we should search. Otherwise, we will assume that we are only authorized to search for one hour and will break off research after that time.

The Archives cannot provide copies of original marriage or baptism certificates because we do not have the originals. When a baptism or marriage occurred, the priest prepared a certificate and entered the information about the birth or marriage into a book. The certificate was then given to the married couple or the parents of the baptized child. The parish retained the book, which we use to do our research. When we respond to a research request, we provide all of the information contained in the register.

Almost all of the entries are in Latin. Our response includes the information as is written in the register. Spelling is given as it was recorded in the register.

At its peak, the Diocese of Pittsburgh had 321 parishes. Researchers must know the parish their ancestor attended or the geographical area in which they lived for us to find any information. In the case of the City of Pittsburgh, a researcher at least should know the section of the city (i.e. Lawrenceville, etc.) where their ancestor lived. Outside the city, the researcher should know the name of the community or town.

