

# Are sacramental records public?

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |

While you might hope to glimpse your great-great-grandfather's baptismal certificate, the confirmation record of a distant cousin or the sacramental marriage certificate of your long-forgotten ancestors, the Catholic Church generally does not supply them.

Father John Antony, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Fort Smith and a canon lawyer, said sacramental records are confidential. They are typically only requested by the subject of the record or a guardian if they are minors.

"We don't make those registries available for genealogists. That's not the purpose for them. The purpose for them is sacramental and spiritual. It's great people investigate their family histories ... but that's not typically what we're holding sacramental registries for," he said. "You have been changed forever when you are baptized. ... Because a person's baptism is so crucial, we're very, very careful."

All sacramental records — baptism, confirmation, holy orders, marriage — or if an annulment is approved, are notated on the back of a baptismal certificate at the parish where the person was baptized. Father Antony said it is typically the pastor's responsibility to contact the pastor at the church of the person's baptism to update those records.

"The records are in a sealed vault. Every church should ideally keep their registries in a fireproof room," Father Antony said, adding that his parish has a room of metal interior walls that few people can access.

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## Genealogy hobby unites family, reveals hidden stories

written by Malea Hargett |



Constructing a family tree serves as an engaging hobby or family pursuit that unites multiple generations, offering numerous intriguing facts and narratives accessible through diverse online platforms and archival documents.

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## Tracing roots

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Catholics in Arkansas are using genealogy to connect with their ancestors, enhancing their faith, family ties, and understanding of current immigrant challenges.

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## Jesus' genealogy helps us understand spiritual past

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Understanding Jesus' genealogy highlights the universality of the Church, emphasizing that Jesus is here for all humanity.