

Sacramental Records Scanning Project FAQs

Revised November 2021

Why are the sacramental registers being scanned?

The digitization of sacramental records through 1980 is the first step in a long-anticipated sacramental register preservation plan. The Archdiocese of Atlanta has been very lucky thus far to avoid a massive natural disaster or other emergency resulting in badly damaged or destroyed records. This project will provide backups of registers in the unfortunate event that disaster strikes.

Is my parish required to participate?

Yes, all parishes who have registers applicable to the date range for this project are required to participate. Preservation of sacramental registers is vitally important to the proper function of the Church and is required by canon law (Canon 491 §1).

What does the scanning process look like?

Once the registers are at the Chancery, archives staff will prep the registers for scanning, a professional digitization vendor will scan the registers, then the registers will stay with the Office of Archives and Records until the images have gone through quality control in case a page needs to be scanned again.

How long will my parish's registers be at the Chancery?

At this time, we are uncertain exactly how long it will take the vendor to scan your registers and process the images, so we will likely have custody of the registers for a few weeks at minimum.

Why are registers only being scanned through 1980?

Several factors resulted in this decision, including scanning cost and an effort to keep disruption to your parish's operations minimal by taking as few current registers as possible. We recognize that some registers that include 1980 go beyond that date, in some cases up to the present day. Those registers will be included in this project and will also need to be transferred to the Chancery temporarily. We will do our best to prioritize registers that are still actively used in the scanning queue, so they may be returned as soon as possible.

What if my parish needs to issue a certificate while the books are at the Chancery?

If you need access to information contained within one of the registers the Office of Archives and Records has in their custody to produce a certificate, please email archives@archatl.com with the requested details and the Archives staff will provide you a scan of the entry in question for your parish to issue a certificate. *Please do not refer people to the Office of Archives and Records for certificates as we will not be issuing them.*

What if my parish needs to make a new entry or notation while the books are at the Chancery?

Please keep track of all new entries and notations to be added while the registers are at the Chancery. Once the sacramental registers are returned to your parish, you can update them as needed.

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Can the registers be scanned at my parish?

No. Given the number of parishes, their geographical location, and the scanning equipment needed, a single location is the most efficient and cost-effective way to implement this project.

Will my parish get copies of the scanned registers?

Yes, we can eventually provide reference copies of the scanned registers to parishes when our entire project is complete. Please know that these scanned copies in no way replace the physical registers and parishes should not issue certificates from them. The scans are strictly for reference and emergency backup purposes.

What is the next step for my parish?

The Office of Archives and Records plans to schedule pickups with parishes on a deanery-by-deanery basis. Our office will contact your parish to schedule a pickup appointment with your parish. During that appointment, an Archives staff member will inventory the registers before taking custody of them and will provide you a copy of the inventory for your reference. When the process is complete, our office will schedule a return appointment with your parish and will verify the book count with you upon return of the registers.