

POLICY No. 4
PRESERVATION OF TITLE DEEDS,
CONTRACTS, AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

1. Term definitions

A deed: is a document signed by a guarantor, whereby title to property is transferred from one person to another.

A contract: is a promissory agreement between two or more persons that creates, modifies, or destroys a legal relation.

2. Intent of the directive

To ensure that all legal documents pertaining to the life of a parish, a ministry or service parochial or diocesan, or even the diocese itself, are carefully preserved.

3. Policy

- a. In each parish there is to be an archive, in which the parochial books are to be kept, together with episcopal letters and other documents which it may be necessary or useful to preserve (Canon 535, §4, see also Canon 486, §1). These archives should be locked. The parish priest is to take care that documents kept in the archives are carefully safeguarded and do not fall into unauthorized hands (see Canon 535).
- b. In each curia there is to be established, in a safe place, a diocesan archives where documents and writings concerning both the spiritual and the temporal affairs of the diocese are to be properly filed and carefully kept under lock and key (Canon 486, §2).
- c. The original texts of land deeds, site plans, and similar documents are to be kept in the diocesan archives, under the jurisdiction of the chancellor and the Bishop, who alone are to have a key (see Canon 487, §1).
- d. The original of contracts duly entered into by a parish should be kept in the diocesan archives. A certified copy shall be kept in the parish or mission archives.
- e. See Policy No. 23 “Retention of accounting records and parish envelope offerings” with regard to the preservation of official documents pertaining to temporal goods.
- f. Parish registers shall be carefully preserved in fireproof safes which are kept locked. Older parish registers may, if appropriate, be sent for safekeeping to the diocesan archives (see Canon 535, §5).
- g. Since diocesan archives contain information that can be of a confidential nature, admission to them is restricted to the judgement of the Bishop, chancellor of the diocese or the moderator of the curia (see Canon 487, §1).

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- h. At the parish level, the permission of the parish priest is required for access (see Canon 535, §1). It is strongly suggested that the parish priest grant permission for access to parish archives only after consulting the Bishop or the chancellor of the diocese.
- i. An inventory of documents preserved in the parish is to be prepared by each parish and kept up to date, with a copy given to the office of the chancellor.
- j. Parish records and files are to be safeguarded on parish property and not in the homes or businesses of parishioners.
- k. Cancelled cheques are to be kept in a secure place on parish property.

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