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VI. Changing Baptismal Records

- A. One of the important duties of the pastor is to see that accurate records are kept of the Sacraments received in his parish. Records of Baptism are especially important for ecclesiastical and civil purposes, such as proving freedom to marry and establishing eligibility for Social Security benefits.

Changing the Name of the One Baptized

- B. The records of Baptism, once accurately entered in the register, may not be expunged. In certain cases, however, a corrective entry may be made in the baptismal register, e.g., when a child is adopted and the adoptive parents want their names listed as the parents of the child.
- C. Proper procedure must be followed very carefully in every instance when such a corrective entry is made. The pastor, who is the official custodian of the records, must secure:
1. a request in writing that the name change be made;
 2. A certified copy of the change of name as authorized by the civil court;
 3. an authentic copy of the original baptismal certificate;
 4. a written copy of the name changes that are desired.
- These documents, once collected, are to be kept on file in the parish archives.
- D. The pastor is then allowed to make a new entry in the baptism record with the name changes that have been requested.
1. A cross reference from the old record to the new and from the new record back to the old is to be made.
 2. The new entry is indexed in the usual manner.
 3. The new entry with the new name should be used when issuing all subsequent certificates.
- E. This same procedure can be used when an illegitimate child is subsequently adopted. The parents adopting the child have the right to petition for this change and the pastor has the obligation to see that it is done.

Changing the Name(s) of the Sponsor(s)

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- F. Because of the spiritual relationship that exists between the one baptized and the godparents (sponsors), the names of the actual sponsors may not be eliminated from the records, but they need not be included when a new certificate is issued.
- G. If the actual godparents are unable or unwilling to fulfill the duty of being sponsors and if the legal parents petition for another person or persons to be designated as the sponsors, the names of the ones who voluntarily agree to assume this responsibility can be identified in the "Remarks" column of the baptismal register as the acting sponsors.

Confidentiality of Baptismal Records

- H. The baptismal records of a parish, by their very nature, are confidential. The pastor is the custodian of these records, and he must restrict access to them to mature, reliable people. The parish secretary, who may be asked to fill out baptismal certificates, must be instructed in the proper procedure to be followed.
- I. Parish record books are not to be given to anyone to page through on the pretext that they are looking for family records or for any other reason.

Baptismal Certificates

- J. Besides giving information about the time and place of Baptism, a baptismal certificate often helps to establish the freedom of a Catholic to marry.
- K. It is the obligation of the pastor to see that baptismal certificates that are issued contain all pertinent information that is found in the baptismal register.
- L. Secretaries and others who make out baptismal certificates are to be instructed that all the information and notations that are found in the baptismal register are to be part of a proper baptismal certificate.