

**Course Title: Disposing of Church and Religious Institute Property: Archival Perspectives**

**Course Number: MSP1903**

**Company Name(s): Archdiocese of Washington/Redemptorist Archives of the Baltimore Province**

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Questions related to specific materials, methods, and services will be addressed at the conclusion of this presentation.

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# COURSE DESCRIPTION

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Religious and diocesan archives professionals have been quietly developing a set of best practices to assess, acquire, catalog, and store the Catholica that remains in the wake of a closed or merged parish, or other Religious Institute property. This includes everything from paper documents and photographs, to architectural or artistic elements of physical structures. Often they do so with an eye to future use (repurposing) or collection development within the archive, where researchers will have access to heritage materials that illustrate the presence of Catholics within a given community. This presentation will describe the effort to construct these best practices by church historians, archivists, stained glass restorationists, Canon lawyers and others. It will also present a more globalized context for these practices in the aftermath of the November 2018 conference in Rome on the disposition of church patrimony from closed parishes and other Religious Institute properties. Finally, it will give suggestions for facility managers who may be puzzling over identification and salvage of materials for archiving

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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At the end of this course, participants will be able to:

1. At the end of the program, participants will be able to identify archival materials of historical, legal, canonical and retentive value, using examples and case studies.
2. At the end of the program, participants will be able to classify and document the material culture or assets of a parish or other religious property, using examples and case studies.
3. At the end of the program, participants will be able to determine optimal conditions for the storage and preservation of heritage and archival items, using examples and case studies.
4. At the end of the program, participants will be able to understand the theological underpinnings of church patrimony and their importance for diocesan or religious heritage, using examples and case studies.

# CANON LAW

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Can. 486 §1. All documents which regard the diocese or parishes must be protected with the greatest care.

§2. In every curia there is to be erected in a safe place a diocesan archive, or record storage area, in which instruments and written documents which pertain to the spiritual and temporal affairs of the diocese are to be safeguarded after being properly filled and diligently secured.

Can. 491 §1. A diocesan bishop is to take care that the acts and documents of the archives of cathedral, collegiate, parochial, and other churches in his territory are also diligently preserved and that inventories or catalogs are made in duplicate, one of which is to be preserved in the archive of the church and the other in the diocesan archive.

§2. A diocesan bishop is also to take care that there is an historical archive in the diocese and that documents having historical value are diligently protected and systematically ordered in it.

# The Pastoral Function of Church Archives

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*“In the mind of the Church, archives are places of memory of the Christian community and storehouses of culture for the New Evangelization. Thus they themselves are a cultural good of primary importance whose special merit lies in recording the path followed by the Church through the centuries in various contexts which constitute her very structure. As places of memory, archives must systematically gather all the data making up the articulated history of the Church community so that what has been done, the results obtained including omissions and errors may be properly evaluated.”*

*The Pastoral Function of Church Archives, circular letter from the Pontifical Commission for the Culture and Heritage of the Church , February 2, 1997*

# The Pastoral Function of Church Archives

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“One should keep in mind that archives, unlike libraries, contain mostly unique documents. They represent principle sources for historical research because they refer directly to the particular events and deeds of specific individuals. Their loss or destruction means nullifying an objective investigation of the facts and impeding the acquisition of previous experiences and thus jeopardizing the transmission of cultural and religious values.”

“The conservation of manuscripts, parchments, paper material, and computerized records can be thus guaranteed by an appropriate norm regarding access policy, an efficient inventory program, any necessary restoration, the suitability and security of storage places.”

*The Pastoral Function of Church Archives*, circular letter from the Pontifical Commission for the Culture and Heritage of the Church, February 2, 1997



**This concludes The American Institute of Architects  
Continuing Education System course.**

**At this time, the course participants  
are free to ask questions.**

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