

Chancery Archives

By FRANCIS J. WEBER*

*Chancery Archives
Archdiocese of Los Angeles*

ACCORDING to legislation enacted by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, the care of the Chancery Archives "should be entrusted to the chancellor whose sedulous labor will be of great value in conducting the business of the diocese accurately and promptly." Frequently, in the larger jurisdictions, the chancellor has neither the training nor the time for such duties, and in some cases he has delegated this obligation to an officially appointed archivist.

Organizational procedure is rather uniform in American curiae. The table on the next page lists the major divisional units and internal organization of a particular set of Chancery Archives, those of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Smaller jurisdictions can add or omit units depending on local needs.

Quantity and quality of holdings will dictate the manner in which early correspondence should be filed. In the Chancery Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, all materials before 1903 (drawers 3-30) are placed in individual folders with the seal of the archives embossed on each document. In accordance with Canon 375, an accompanying 4"×6" slip is typed to serve both as a permanent inventory entry and as a card file for researchers. The slip bears at the top the seal and printed name of the Diocesan Archives and at the left, in a column, printed words to indicate the information to be typed in—"Correspondents: Date: Place of Origin: [and] Digest: ."

When all the documents have been cataloged, an index of names, places, and incidents can be made to further facilitate quick reference. More recent correspondence (drawers 209-220) is arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetized. A record series may begin and end with a change of episcopal incumbents. As a general principle, all material not assigned to one or another of the classes mentioned above goes into this Miscellaneous Correspondence series.

Although the material in the Chancery Archives is "retired,"

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<i>Drawer Numbers</i>	<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Arrangement</i>
31-44	Defunct Diocesan Priests	alphabetical
45	Priestly Faculties	chronological
46	Priests' Retreats	chronological
	Chaplains	alphabetical by institution
47-52	Inactive Extern Priests	chronological
53-64	Religious Men—Priests	alphabetical by order
65, 66	Religious Men—Brothers	alphabetical by order
67-85	Religious Women	alphabetical by order
86-88	Diocesan Seminaries	alphabetical by name
89	American Seminaries	alphabetical by name
90, 91	European Seminaries	alphabetical by name
92, 93	Ex Seminarians	alphabetical
94	Ordinations	chronological
95	Catholic University	chronological
96, 97	Indian Matters	by subject
98-106	Auxiliary Bishops	chronological
107	Apostolic Delegation	chronological
108	Roman File	by congregation
109-112	Macdonald Legal File	alphabetical
113, 114	Junipero Serra File	chronological
115-120	Cemetery File	alphabetical by subject
121-123	Details on Worksheets	alphabetical
124	Psycho-Ceramics	chronological
125-139	Parishes Inside City	by diocesan directory
140	Mission Restoration	by subject
141-168	Parishes Outside City	by diocesan directory
169, 170	Parochial Monographs	by diocesan directory
171	Other Calif. Monographs	alphabetical
172	Misc. Hist. Monographs	alphabetical
173-176	Insurance	by subject
177-180	Education	by subject
181-184	Catholic Societies	alphabetical
185-187	Chancery Properties	alphabetical
188	Motion Picture Industry	by subject
189-207	General File	alphabetical
208	American Hierarchy	alphabetical
209-220	Misc. Correspondence	varied

there is frequent need to consult some of the documents. If there is basic uniformity between the current filing system and that used in the Archives, the procedure for finding particular items is greatly simplified. It is suggested that the drawers of the filing cabinets

in the Chancery Archives be numbered as above. A chart of the overall holdings can then be made and given to other offices of the curia. In addition the labels on the drawers of the active records can carry the typed notation: "Corresponds to Drawers in the Chancery Archives." If this system is used, however, it is vitally important that the archivist allow himself generous room for expansion of the records, for he should not have to remake his charts more often than once in a decade.

The archivist is often confronted with materials that do not fit conveniently into filing cabinets or boxes because of their peculiar size. Maps, souvenir folders, mementos, undated manuscripts, and the like can be handily stored in a multidrawer all-steel functional unit. Most common is the 30-drawer case measuring $9\frac{1}{4}' \times 3\frac{1}{8}' \times 11\frac{3}{4}'$. Again, particular circumstances will dictate the divisional units although most of the following titles can be put to good use:

Archival	Hospitals	Photos
Cathedral	Indians	Plates
Circulars	Legal Matters	Propaganda Fide
Clergy	Local Prelates	Properties
Confraternity	Maps	Relationes
Deeds	Missions	Reprints
Displays	Nearby Dioceses	Seals
Education	Newspaper	Seminaries
Financial	Official	Societies
Forms	Ordinations	Synod
Grants	Parochial	Taxation
Hierarchy	Pastorals	Undated Material

It is also helpful to have a large press cabinet made to accommodate oversize books, newspapers, and pictures. Papal bulls, neatly wrapped in tubes, fit nicely into such a press. The upper part can contain several rows of shelves to house bound copies of diocesan publications, circular letters, synodal decrees, *relationes*, statutes, and diocesan directories.

Press clippings are best stored in boxes unless there are few enough for a scrapbook. If the services of a clipping agency have been used, it is not always advantageous or economical to buy scrapbooks because the material is generally repetitive in content. The storing of blueprints, wrapped securely on rolls, will over the years save the diocese considerable expense because most parishes have no provision for retaining such bulky items. Firms doing business with a diocese can be informed that the bishop expects a duplicate

set of all building specifications for the records. Pigeonholes built along a wall of the archives serve as useful containers.

According to the Code, all qualified scholars have the right to be admitted to the Chancery Archives and should not be barred if they comply with the ordinary's regulations. As a record for the archivist and a precaution against alienation, however, each applicant should be asked to fill in a questionnaire somewhat like the "Permission Request" illustrated here.

Minute regulations regarding the use of the Chancery Archives spell out what is expected of visiting researchers and eliminate requests for special favors. A copy of the rules, approved by the chancellor, can be handed to anyone seeking access to the archives; and exceptions to normal procedure can easily be referred to higher authority, thus freeing the archivist from responsibility for damage or alienation. The set of regulations given below was drawn up in accordance with Canon 377 and approved for use in the Chancery Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

1. Permission to use the CHANCERY ARCHIVES must be obtained from the Chancellor or his duly deputized Archivist. All persons admitted to the ARCHIVES will be accompanied either by the Chancellor or the Archivist. At no time will a person be allowed to remain alone in the ARCHIVES.

2. The CHANCERY ARCHIVES are not intended to serve the general public, and only those having a legitimate interest in their content will be afforded admission. Among those whose requests will be favorably considered are members of the ecclesiastical tribunal and duly recognized historians.

3. Permission to use the CHANCERY ARCHIVES is not to be construed as authorization to quote *verbatim* from materials contained therein.

4. Every researcher or visitor will fill out a registration card noting thereon the purpose of his work and the materials he wishes to consult.

5. No book, document or manuscript shall be removed from the ARCHIVES except for the purpose of repair or to be photo copied, and then only by the Archivist.

6. Should certified copies of any document be required, the Archivist will arrange to have the pertinent material photographed. It is understood that the cost of this process is to be borne by the interested party. Microfilmed or photo copied documents, when used, must acknowledge the Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (AALA) as their source.

7. No marking of any kind shall ever be placed on any book or document in the CHANCERY ARCHIVES.

8. No smoking is allowed while examining or working with documents.

9. Any violation of the above regulations will be construed as malicious.

Questions sometimes arise about what actually is to be found in the Chancery Archives beyond the obvious documents of diocesan business. Frequently the answer rests with the archivist alone,

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ARCHDIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES
CHANCERY ARCHIVES
PERMISSION REQUEST

Name_____

Home Address_____

Position_____

Nature of Work_____

Title of Contemplated Work_____

Materials Sought in the Chancery Archives_____

* * * * *

I, the undersigned, declare that I understand:

1. That the use of the CHANCERY ARCHIVES is a privilege accorded to me by, and can be revoked at the will of, the Most Reverend Archbishop of Los Angeles;
2. That only cases and materials concerning the subject of my search are to be examined;
3. That all copying of documents is to be done on the premises with pencil or typewriter. The use of ink is not permitted;
4. That smoking is not permitted while handling the documents;
5. That His Eminence, the Most Reverend Archbishop, has decreed that the penalty for unlawfully removing or maliciously damaging any document in the CHANCERY ARCHIVES is to be suspension, where that penalty has foundation.
6. That any removal of a document from the premises without the express consent of the Archbishop is to be described as unlawful and that failure to use reasonable care is to be considered as malicious.

(Signed)_____

(Date)_____

and he quickly learns that the archives attract unwanted materials from all quarters. All records of the Chancery Archives itself should be carefully filed away in chronological order. At the end of each calendar year, these materials can be numbered and indexed by subject or correspondent and then bound together in a tome entitled "Archival Activities—1963." Among the items kept therein are the monthly reports to the chancellor, listing of purchases, visitors' forms, inquiries, and documents relating to any other business transacted by the archivist.

Records that are security-classified can be stored in a vault or metal cabinet with a combination lock. The chancellor and the archivist can formulate a policy on what records should be placed in this file, and it is understood that researchers are never allowed to use these documents without a special mandate of the bishop.

A final word might be said about two areas of curial business that do not usually fall to the archivist's care, the matrimonial archives and records pertaining to the financial dealings of the diocese. Experience has shown that these two areas are better served by maintaining the pertinent materials in records-storage centers separate from the Chancery Archives.

It has been said that the historical alertness and productivity of a people are true indexes of their culture. If they know their traditions, if they take a family pride in the achievements of their forebears, if they delight in the tales of romance and sorrow in the lives of the men and women who made their history, such folk have their roots deep in the native soil, and they bear a definite stamp and character in their way of living. But without well-organized archives there can be no documents, and without documents there can be no history.

Neither Copying Slavishly Nor Ignoring

. . . Europe preserves a great body of archival lore gained from the practice and experience of the past. Slavishly copying it would be, for American archivists, an error second only to ignoring it altogether. Appraising it in the light of American conditions, letting the logic behind its practices suggest solutions of American archival problems, may make it most useful. . . .

—ANNOUNCEMENT [by the Editorial Board] in *American Archivist*, 1: v (Jan. 1938). On the first board, besides Theodore Calvin Pease, managing editor, were Christopher Bush Coleman, Luther Harris Evans, Edna Louise Jacobsen, and Herbert Ingram Priestley.

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