

HIS EXCELLENCY NOËL SIMARD

**BISHOP OF VALLEYFIELD
BY GOD'S MERCY AND THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SEE**

**TO ALL WHO WILL READ THESE PROVISIONS
THE LORD'S BLESSINGS**

DECREE

**FOR THE CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROTECTION
OF PARISH REGISTERS**

WHEREAS parish registers contain official acts that attest to Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages, Funerals and Burials held in the parishes and, as such, constitute religious documents of a private nature;

WHEREAS these registers, like all parish possessions, are the exclusive property of parish fabriques and management of such registers is subject to both Canonical and Civil Laws;

WHEREAS the fabriques are bound by Articles 35 to 40 of the *Québec Civil Code*, and any infraction of those provisions could give rise to legal proceedings;

WHEREAS the fabriques are religious organizations;

WHEREAS parish registers contain personal information (notably certain annotations) that the persons in charge of the parishes have a duty to protect, and not to communicate to third parties without the consent of the persons concerned or as duly authorized by the applicable law, and that the information gathered is to be used only for the purpose intended (refer to *Civil Code of Québec*, Articles 35 and 37 and the *Code of Canon Law*, canon 220);

WHEREAS, in addition to the legal obligation to protect the confidential nature of parish registers, we also have a canonical responsibility to provide rules for their preservation, in particular the more ancient documents, because of their inestimable historical value to the Catholic Church and the fact that they constitute a rich heritage that testifies to the life of the Church (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 535);

THEREFORE WE, BISHOP OF VALLEYFIELD, HEREBY DECREE THE FOLLOWING:

1. Have access to parish registers for the needs of their functions :
 - 1.1 Any priest or deacon **canonically** appointed in the parish;
 - 1.2 The **official** secretary of the parish and, under his/her supervision, the volunteers helping with the upkeep of the registers;
 - 1.3 Any other person designated in writing to that purpose by the competent Church authority.

No other person is authorized to directly consult the parish registers, even for purposes of historical or genealogical research.

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2. Certificates or extracts from parish registers may be provided only upon payment of the required fees, as follows :
 - 2.1 **From the register of Baptisms** : to the baptized person; to the father and mother of a baptized minor or to the holder of parental authority; to the guardian or trustee of a baptized person; to the descendants of a baptized person who has been deceased for a period of at least thirty years;
 - 2.2 **From the register of marriages** : to the spouses;
 - 2.3 **From the register of Burials** : to the liquidator of the succession;
 - 2.4 **From the other registers or in particular cases**: obtain prior permission from the Chancery Office.
3. Since the identity of a person cannot be ascertained other than in person or by written proxy, **no information** regarding the content of parish registers **may be given by telephone or other similar means** without prior authorization by the Chancery Office.
4. **No reproduction** of the parish registers by photocopy, digitization or other procedure may be made. Only the Québec Registrar of Civil Status may obtain a reproduction of an Act insofar as it makes its request in writing.
5. It is the responsibility of the priest in charge of the parish to ensure observance of this decree in order that the parish registers may be preserved in a secure place and that only authorized persons may have access to them.

This decree repeals and renders invalid any previous ordinance on this matter.

Given at Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, under our signature, the seal of the diocese and the countersignature of the chancellor, this fifth day of the month of november of the year two thousand fifteen.



By mandate of the Bishop
AE 113/2015

+ Noël Simard

✠ Most Reverend Noël Simard
Bishop of Valleyfield

Jean Trudeau

Reverend Jean Trudeau
Episcopal Vicar and Chancellor