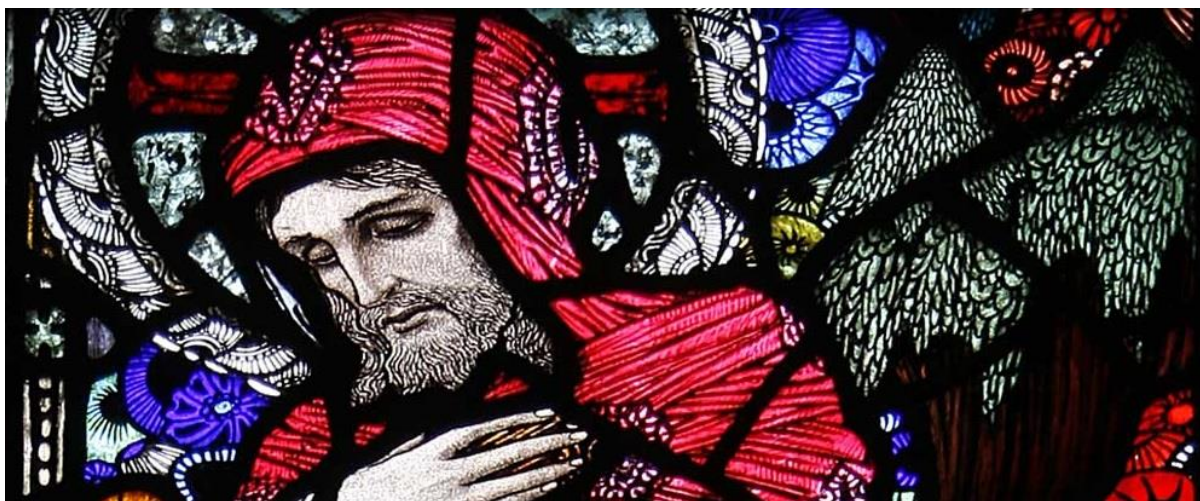


## Church records: Roman Catholic & Church of Ireland



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### **Irish Church Records: Roman Catholic & Church of Ireland.**

Researchers will often find the earliest evidence for their family in the surviving church records.

The Catholic Church was a private institution, with pastoral duties for its community.

The Church of Ireland was the Established church of the State. As well as religious duties, it was an arm of government in towns and cities, and in the countryside.

Both churches were quite similar in terms of **clergy, structure** (parishes and dioceses), and **liturgy**.

Although they represented two distinct faith communities, they made very similar records.

### **Records**

**Baptism and Marriage.** Both churches recognised seven sacraments. The COI made a distinction between the great sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, and the five others not in the Gospel.

As family historians most of the RC and COI records that we have access to are of baptisms and marriages.

The COI also maintained burial registers. As the Established Church, it was responsible for burying all the dead in the community. Some COI parishes recorded everyone buried in the parish (St. James's COI, Dublin). Most documented only their own faith community.

After 1830, many Catholic parishes began to keep their own registers of burials/ deaths in the parish.

### **Form and language of the records**

The earliest church registers were free-form ledgers – the individual clergyman chose what facts to record in the register.

In the early 1800s the COI, and after 1850 the RC began to use printed registers. The introduction of printed registers encouraged clergy to set down more details, presented in a standardized form.

Irish Family History Centre [www.irishfamilyhistorycentre.com/](http://www.irishfamilyhistorycentre.com/) Ph: 00353 19059216 / Office 6710338  
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All COI registers are recorded in English. About 10% of Catholic Church records are in an abbreviated form of Latin. The Latin is full of errors, but it covers such a narrow range it's possible to pick a way through the registers with a dictionary or one of the online guides.

## Vestry Records

The COI was the Established Church - an arm of the State in the localities.

It provided local policing until 1816; gave out poor relief until after 1839; and for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, provided utilities (street-cleaning, lighting, mending roads, collecting tax).

Although there's a poor survival of COI parish registers, there's a good survival of vestry records.

Records are mostly held in the RCBL, and PRONI in Belfast.

## Bibliography

### Church records online:

Catholic Parish registers are indexed on Findmypast and Ancestry – identical collections.

[www.rootsireland.com](http://www.rootsireland.com) Full and partial transcripts of Catholic Parish Registers up to 1900.

[www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie) Currently the largest online collection of CoI registers, for Carlow, Dublin City and Kerry.

### Finding-aids for parish records:

RCB Library parish registers <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library/>

RCB Library CoI vestry records collection

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/AboutUs/library/vestrybooks.pdf>

P.R.O.N.I.'s Guide to Church Records, covers parishes of all faith communities in N.I.

[https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Guide\\_to\\_church\\_records.pdf](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Guide_to_church_records.pdf)

### Latin:

Findmypast has an online guide to the latin used in Catholic parish registers.  
<https://www.findmypast.com/blog/help/common-1>

Eileen A. Gooder, Latin for Local History is an excellent published guide.

### Maps to find Catholic or CoI parishes:

Brian Mitchell's New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, published by the Genealogical Publishing Company, 2002

Maps & Genealogy by Dr. Patrick Waldron, (talk given to the Hunt Museum, Limerick, using county Clare as his case-study) <http://www.pwaldron.info/Hunt/>

**Articles: -**

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Catholic Parish registers, March/ April 2015, vol. 23

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**Books:**

Corish, P. J. and Sheehy, D. *Records of the Irish Catholic Church*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001.

Refaussé, Raymond. *Church of Ireland Records*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006.