



July 1, 2019

Dear Father, Pastoral Coordinator, Pastoral Assistant for Administration and School Principal,

I am writing to you regarding a very serious matter that has recently come to my attention. It has to do with our record retention policies. Failure to follow these policies could lead to extremely serious and even dire consequences.

Organizations, including the Church, are expected to have policies that direct which records are kept, for how long, and which records are to be disposed of, and when. Our policies are built by experts in the field with research into the legal and business reasons for what we do with our records. In litigation, the opposing side has a legal right to access to certain records. If they should have been retained in keeping with our policies, but were not, the courts may determine that spoliation has occurred. This can lead to very large fines for the organization (which would have to be paid by the individual parish, school or agency) as well as potential individual liability for those who failed to follow the policies. In extreme cases, individual criminal charges may be brought.

Record retention is not an area that can be left to the discretion of individual parishes, schools and agencies. All organizations that are part of the Corporation of the Catholic Archbishop of Seattle must follow our policies. We hold trainings throughout the archdiocese, and the policies are available online at <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Archives/Policies.aspx>. In addition, the Archives staff are happy to respond to any questions.

Please be sure that the employees responsible for records retention are aware of the policies and that other employees do not discard records without checking with that individual. Because of the importance of this issue, failure to follow the policies may lead to an employee's ineligibility for continued employment.

Please instruct your staff that these policies are to be followed rigorously, and inform them about the potential risk of not doing so. Thank you.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Peter Sartain".

J. Peter Sartain  
Archbishop of Seattle