



INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

It is of utmost importance for the parish to ensure that all assets are protected and safeguarded so that those resources are available to fulfill the ministries of the parish. Sunday/Holy Day cash collections present a unique challenge in the area of internal control and proper safeguarding – there is no way to fully verify what was collected, it is handled by many individuals, there can be times where it may not be properly safeguarded, etc. The mitigation of this situation is best handled by putting as much control into the process as possible. That is the purpose of this policy.

There may be times that the people involved in this process feel as though their honesty is being questioned when policies such as this are introduced and/or changed. It should be clearly communicated to all involved in the counting process that this policy is being implemented to safeguard the integrity of the very individuals who have been faithfully serving in collecting, counting and depositing the offerings of the people of God. A case can be made that a parish is derelict in its responsibility to these individuals if it does not have controls in place for the proper management of offerings.

There are at least three purposes for parish policies and procedures governing the collection, counting and depositing of Sunday/Holy Day collections. Sensibly designed procedures:

- protect the integrity of all custodians of cash from unwarranted suspicion;
- assure donors of careful security, confidentiality, and stewardship of the collected funds; and
- established to observe God’s instructions regarding accountability for church collections.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul expresses that we should be “concerned for what is honorable not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of others.” (II Corinthians 8: 21) Further, II Chronicles 24:11 describe how the royal scribe **and** an overseer for the chief priest would handle the collections together. Additionally, they would do this ‘daily’; i.e. not let the collections stock pile. In the fourth chapter of Acts (verses 32-35), money was always put “at the feet of the Apostles” – note the plurality of the word Apostles; i.e. no one Apostle had sole possession of the purse. So, we are directed by Holy Scripture to be sure that we are properly handling church funds.

GENERAL STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

Several key concerns that are to be addressed for proper cash collection counting policies and procedures are:

- Uncounted offerings and other cash receipts should *never* be in the sole possession of one individual. They are to be counted by a “Counting Team” of two or three individuals that:
 - are designated as members of the counting team;
 - are rotated on a regular basis;
 - are always in the room when the counting takes place;
 - are not related to each other by blood or marriage;
 - prepare a “Collection Count Sheet” (see form below) that certifies the amount of each offering count and the faithful observation of all offering count procedures;
- When not in the possession of one of the “Counting Teams,” collections are to be kept in a secure and safe location; preferably a locked vault with limited access; and

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- An individual responsible for the disbursement of parish funds is not to be a custodian of uncounted collections; and
- No disbursements are to be made from undeposited collections.

DISPOSABLE COLLECTION BAGS

All parishes are required to use disposable/tamper-proof collection bags in conjunction with their Sunday/Holy Day collections. These bags are more secure than ‘locked bank bags’ for the following reasons:

- *Plastic bags* – are unable to be opened without leaving evidence of being opened.
- *Sequentially/uniquely numbered* – bags can be logged, tracked and controlled for each individual mass.
- *Folded bottom edges* – each bag has folded bottom edges which discourage tampering; only puncturing allows entry, which is easily detected.
- *SECUR-PAK patented tape* – resists heat, dry ice, solvents and other temperature controlling agents which can be used to open bags without leaving evidence of tampering.

PURCHASING

Ordering information for these bags can be found on the internet from a company called Conover Packaging. They distribute the “Secur-Pak” product line. You can order a supply of bags on line by visiting <https://www.conoverpackaging.com/>. Click “Church Bag Ordering” at the top of the webpage. Then simply select the size/style of bag that best suits your parish needs. Current pricing per bag ranges from 0.22¢ for smaller bags up to 0.74¢ for larger bags.

They can also be purchased from Amazon by searching for “**MMF Industries FREEZFraud Deposit Bags**”. This will bring up several styles of bags. In order to be in compliance with this policy, the bags must be pre-numbered (for tracking purposes) and the opening of the bag must leave evidence; i.e. the plastic bag or seal must be destroyed to open it.

Immediately upon receipt of a supply of disposable collection bags, they must be logged onto the “Disposable Collection Bag Control Log” (see sample at the end of this policy) and stored in a secure location to prevent unauthorized use, or switching, of collection bags.



COLLECTION COUNTING PROCEDURES

The following procedures are to be observed for all collections of the parish.

1. Before mass, non-reusable plastic collection bags are to be issued for each mass. The business office should write the date/time of each mass on each bag. They should also record which bag (by number) was assigned to which mass. An indelible marker (such as a “Sharpie”) should be used to write on the bags. Bags should also be issued/recorded for any ‘special’ or ‘second’ collections.
2. Ushers take the collection from the offering baskets immediately after the collection is taken (before it is taken to the altar). All contents are to be placed into the plastic bag identified for that mass. The bag is to be sealed and signed by at least two of the ushers on the lines marked “FROM”.
3. For aesthetic reasons, the parish may wish to place the plastic bag in another more ‘discreet’ container to be taken up to the altar. But, the bag must be sealed immediately upon the contents being placed in it.
4. After mass, the plastic bags are to be placed in a safe/secure location. Preferably under lock and key with a limited number of people having access to the key.
5. On counting day bags are brought from the safe/secure location to a secure room. **From this point, until the completion of all procedures, at least two people are always present.** To prevent confusion, distraction and loss of concentration, only persons involved in the counting process should be present in the secure room.
6. The bags are to be examined for evidence of tampering. Finding no evidence of tampering, all counters are then to sign the bag on the lines marked “TO”.
 - a. Should any evidence of tampering be found, the count should be stopped immediately (without opening the bag) and the evidence reported to the pastor and business manager. The counting should continue only after documenting the situation entirely. This may include taking pictures of the bag, making notes of what was seen, who saw it, what was found, etc.
7. Counting Team begins filling out the “Collection Count Sheet” – enters the Parish name, the collection date(s), the date counted, and the disposable bag number(s) that were used. The “Collection Count Sheet” is included in this policy immediately following these procedures. It can also be found on the Diocesan website at: www.covdio.org, “Offices”, “Finance”, and then “Policies and Procedures”. The online form also includes a version that has formulas built in to total/subtotal the amounts.
8. Bags are then opened and the counting begins.
 - a. Separate out miscellaneous envelopes and other non-cash items which may be included in the collection basket. Handle these on an individual and appropriate basis. That should leave only loose cash and parishioner envelopes.
 - b. If checks are in the collection without an envelope, set these “Loose Checks” aside to obtain the envelope number later in the process.
 - c. Loose cash:
 - i. Separate bills into stacks by denomination.
 - ii. Count the cash/coins twice. Verify the two totals match.
 - iii. Wrap the currency in appropriately sized bundles.
 - iv. Log the count on the “Collection Count Sheet”

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- v. Set the cash aside.
 - d. Open the envelopes and separate those containing cash from those containing checks.
 - e. Envelopes with cash:
 - i. Write the amount of the cash on the face of the envelope.
 - ii. Cash in the envelope should stay with the envelope.
 - iii. A second person compares the cash in the envelope with the amount written on the envelope.
 - iv. Separate the cash from the envelopes.
 - v. Count the cash in the same manner as the loose cash procedures above.
 - vi. Total the amounts written on the envelopes.
 - vii. Ensure that the total of the cash and the total of the envelopes are the same.
 - viii. Log the count on the "Collection Count Sheet"
 - ix. Set the cash and envelopes aside.
 - f. Envelopes with checks:
 - i. Write the amount of the check on the face of the envelope.
 - ii. Separate the envelopes and the checks into two piles – making sure to keep them in the **same order** in their respective piles. This will help in finding any reconciling issues at the end of the counting.
 - iii. Total the amount of the checks – saving the adding machine tape.
 - iv. Total the amount written on the envelopes – saving the adding machine tape.
 - v. Ensure that the total of the checks and the total of the envelopes are the same.
 - vi. If they do not agree, compare the two adding machine tapes.
 - vii. Endorse the checks with a restrictive endorsement stamp; i.e. "for deposit only"
 - viii. Log the count on the "Collection Count Sheet"
 - ix. Set the checks and envelopes aside.
 - g. Loose Checks identified in B above:
 - i. Make a separate list and total the 'loose checks.'
 - ii. Attempt to ascertain the appropriate envelope number of the family, if possible.
 - iii. Endorse the checks with a restrictive endorsement stamp; i.e. "for deposit only"
 - iv. Log the count on the "Collection Count Sheet"
 - h. Total all cash/checks from above – loose cash, loose checks, all envelopes.
 - i. Prepare deposit slip and compare to total.
 - j. Total the "Collection Count Sheet"
 - k. Compare the deposit slip total to the "Collection Count Sheet"
 - l. The counting is finished when the "Collection Count Sheet" equals the total on the deposit slip. Any and all discrepancies are to be investigated and reconciled.
 - m. All counters are to initial the deposit slip and sign the "Collections Control Sheet"
 9. The deposit slip, cash and checks are to be placed in a safe/secure location until such time that the deposit is taken to the bank.
 10. The "Collection Count Sheet" and the now-opened disposable collection bags are to be given to the parish business manager or bookkeeper.
 11. The empty envelopes are used to enter the amount given into the Parish Data System (or other system used to keep track of envelope contribution for each family). The amount entered into PDS (or other system) is to be reconciled to the total of the envelopes.

