

## CATHOLIC PRACTICE

A Catholic, who moves to a new parish - whether within the country or from outside the country - should as soon as possible contact the parish priest, in order to get acquainted with the parish and feel at home there. Many different talents are needed in a parish, and there are many tasks, that need to be done. Your help is also needed. Please contact your parish priest if you are not already registered in the diocese's registry. You will also be asked for permission to register your CPR number, if not already on file, for use in keeping track of address changes, etc.

Here is a list of relevant information about Catholic practice in Denmark. The list is in alphabetical order.

**Anointing of the Sick.** Any serious illness - even if it is not life threatening, chronic health problems and advancing age are all things that entitle a Catholic to receive the sacrament "anointing of the sick". In this sacrament Christ shows the suffering person his care and gives healing, strength, and courage. Contact the parish priest as early as possible in case of illness, or as soon as health begins to weaken seriously. Anyone in the parish, who knows of another person who could be in need of anointing of the sick, especially if the person is alone, should contact the parish priest. The sacrament can be received at intervals, in the case of long lasting or chronic illness

**Baptism of children** usually takes place in the parish church. A child ought to be baptized within the first weeks after birth. The parish priest is obligated to make sure that the parents are capable and willing to bring the child up in the Catholic faith. In mixed marriages, this is the Catholic parent's responsibility. The child must have at least one godparent/sponsor who is Catholic, confirmed, has received first communion, lives an authentic Christian life, and is at least 16 years old. Besides the Catholic sponsor(s) there **can be** one or more non-Catholic sponsor (witness), who is Christian and at least 16 years old.

The child's place of birth registry, date of birth and address are required when requesting a baptism, if the child is born in Denmark. For children born outside of Denmark, the child's birth and name certificate, parent's birth and baptism certificates **or** birth and name certificates, plus certificate of marriage (if parents are married) are required.

Parents should inform their own parish priest, if the baptism is to take place outside their parish. In case of serious illness, the child can be baptized at home by a priest or deacon. If the child's life is in danger, confirmation should also be performed. Anyone can perform a baptism in case of an emergency. In this case the parish priest should be contacted as soon as possible. See also *births* and *name giving*.

**Baptism of adults** - see under *conversion*.

**Births** must be reported within 14 days. If the mother lives outside of "Sønderjylland", the parents must report the birth to the "folkekirkesogn", where the birth took place, if there is no midwife at the birth. The midwife will report the birth, if there is one present. If the mother lives in "Sønderjylland", the parents must report the birth to the "kommune".

If the mother lives outside of Denmark, but gives birth here, the parents must report the birth to the "folkekirkesogn", where the birth took place; or to the "kommune" if the birth took place in "Sønderjylland".

An application form can be acquired from a midwife, or downloaded from *personregistrering.dk*. Parent's certificates of birth and baptism (or name giving) and marriage (if parents are married) need to be included with the application.

**Catholic religious instruction and schooling.** There are many Catholic schools and some Catholic daycare centers in Denmark. The Catholic schools try to provide a Christian atmosphere and religious instruction.

Catholic schools and daycare centers receive some public funding, but tuition/extra fees are also required. These vary from place to place. In some cases, the school can reduce the tuition fee, if needed.

Catholic children, who do not go to Catholic schools, should attend Catholic religious instruction provided by the parish. Some parishes start their religious instruction at preschool age. See also *confirmation and First Holy Communion*.

**Certificates** for name giving, baptism, marriage, funeral, or name change can be acquired by the person involved, by contacting the church, where the religious ceremony took place. If someone other than the named person, or person with parental custody or guardianship of named person, wants to acquire a certificate, a power of attorney will be required.

**Church taxes.** The Catholic Church in Denmark does not receive direct economic aid from the government. It depends on the support of its members. This is true for both the diocese and local parish. It is a serious moral obligation for every adult Catholic to make a steady contribution to the church. The diocese has a centralized church tax program, where adult Catholics agree to pay a certain percentage of their yearly income (in 2014 it is at least 1%) or a proportionate set amount. 63% of the tax goes to the local parish, 22% goes to coverage of expenses involving priests, and 15% goes to mutual activities in the diocese. Those who are members of the church tax program can deduct the amount on their Danish income tax report, according to existing rules. For more information about the church tax program, contact your parish priest or **Katolsk Bispekontor, Gl. Kongevej 15, 1610 København V, att: Lilian Munch Jacobsen; tel: 33556080. E-mail: lj@katolsk.dk**. See also *Economy*.

A Catholic in Denmark is not obliged to pay church taxes to the Danish "Folkekirke". If you are not interested in doing so, you should check your annual tax statement ("årsopgørelse" from

"skattevæsenet"); this applies especially to young people, those moving to Denmark from another country, and converts. If necessary, the parish priest can sign a declaration to the tax authorities, stating that you are a member of the Catholic Church, and should be exempted from paying tax to the Danish "Folkekirke". It is possible to get a refund of up to 10 years of taxes paid to the Danish "Folkekirke", if you were not a member of that church during those years. If you did not pay taxes to the Catholic Church during that time, it would be reasonable, that the refunded taxes be paid to the Catholic Church instead.

**Communion - general rules and practice:**

**Fasting** - The rules for fasting before receiving communion are as follows:

1. Abstain from eating and drinking (except water and medicine) one hour before receiving communion.
2. The sick and elderly, and those caring for them, may receive communion without fasting.

**Communion more than once a day** - It is allowed to receive communion twice on the same day, if the second time is during a Mass.

**Easter communion** - All who have received first Holy Communion are obligated to receive communion at least once a year. Normally this should happen at Easter time, where the church celebrates the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. This is the mystery of our salvation, the mystery that is celebrated in the holy Mass and in receiving Holy Communion.

**First Holy Communion** - see under *Confirmation*.

**Confession/reconciliation.** The Church encourages all Catholics to go regularly to the sacrament of confession/reconciliation, in order to receive God's healing mercy. Anyone who has committed a serious sin is obligated to go to confession within one year, in order to be reconciled with God; and is not allowed to receive communion before doing so.

The sacrament of confession/reconciliation takes place in the church or another appropriate place.

**Confirmation and First Holy Communion.** It is required that all children and youths, wishing to receive these sacraments, attend religious instruction classes first. Contact your parish priest. Children must be registered to religious instruction as soon as they begin school.

It is a prerequisite for religious instruction, that parents have already given their child an elementary knowledge of God, and that the child is already familiar with Mass and prayer, in addition to the parent's active support of the parish religious instruction. See also *Catholic religious instruction and schooling*.

**Conversion to the Catholic Church and adult baptism.** Anyone wishing to become Catholic can contact the parish priest and ask to receive instruction in the faith. Furthermore, anyone who is interested in hearing more about the Catholic faith is welcome to contact the priest.

**Deaths and funeral services.** Deaths must be reported to the "Folkekirke" office in the parish, where the deceased lived. This report and other practical details are best taken care of by an undertaker. The deceased's Catholic priest should also be contacted as soon as possible, in order to arrange a funeral service. Cremation is allowed. If an organist and choir are requested, there will be a fee charged. Payment is arranged through the undertaker, who also normally calculates a fee to cover church expenses.

**Economy - parish and diocese.** The economic goal is that each parish is self-supporting, and able to pay a percentage of its income (amount decided by the bishop) to the diocese's common expenses, and to a help fund to assist parishes and institutions in economic need.

One of the most important and largest expenses is the support of the priests and other employees in the diocese. The goal can only be reached if all Catholics, who have an income, pay to the church tax program at least 1% of their taxable income. A steady income, paid by all Catholics, is a prerequisite for the Church being able to carry out its duties, and for the upkeep and maintenance of its churches and parish buildings. Therefore every Catholic is morally obligated to contribute according to own ability. *See also church taxes.*

**Gifts, collections, donations.** Collections are taken during Masses on Sundays and Holy Days. These are offerings to the local parish. On special occasions, collections can be given to an announced cause outside the parish.

Church ceremonies are free, but it is recommended that a gift be given to the church; as a minimum 200 Dkr. for a baptism and 1000 Dkr. for a wedding. There will be a charge for funeral services between 1000 and 1500 Dkr.

In connection with baptism, wedding, funeral, and other church services, the church may charge for actual expenses (organist, choir, transportation, etc.).

It is normal practice to make an offering of 100 Dkr. to the priest, (Mass stipend) ,if requesting a Mass be celebrated\_for a special intention.

It is important, that gifts, collections and donations are not considered a replacement for the church tax, which it is a duty to pay.

**Marriage/wedding.** The bridal couple must, as soon as possible (at least 6 months before the wedding), contact the parish priest, in order to make arrangements and receive instruction about marriage. We live in a time, where there is much confusion about marital relationships. It is therefore a necessary preparation to learn more about a good Christian marriage. The diocese has compiled instructional material about marriage that can be bought via "Pastoral-Centret".

Marriage instruction in the diocese is obligatory and takes 6 months. On <http://vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk> you can read about the course and register. If only one partner is Catholic, you must talk to the parish priest or the priest who will be performing the ceremony.

*For marriage in Denmark* the couple must deliver the following documents to the priest: certificates of birth and baptism/naming, proof of confirmation, and "prøvelsesattest" (issued by the "kommune's" marriage office).

*For marriages outside of Denmark* the couple must deliver the following documents to the priest: certificates of birth and baptism/naming, proof of confirmation, proof of marital status/residence ("civilstand-" eller "bopælattester") issued by "folkeregisteret/borgerservice" in the "kommune" of residence OR Ægteskabsattest/Certificate of Marital Status/Ehefähigkeitszeugnis issued by the marriage office (bryllupskontor) i the "kommune" of residence; in which it is stated that the partners are unmarried or, if the case be, widowed. The priest who is preparing the couple, will send these documents along with the completed marriage form (ægteskabsskema) to the Catholic Bishop's office, att.: Vicar General, with information about the place of marriage and diocese.

If a civil marriage has already occurred, the marital status/residence report ("civilstand-" eller "bopælattester") must contain information about the marital status before the civil marriage took place, to document that the partners had not been previously married.

For mixed marriages, the bishop can for grave reasons dispense for the obligation of form, so that the wedding can take place in a non-Catholic church, with the ceremony being performed by the minister from that church. However, a Catholic priest must be contacted, and the couple must receive Catholic preparation/instruction, as with a wedding in the Catholic church. The request for dispensation is to be sent to the Bishop's office att.: Vicar General. A certificate for proof of Catholic validity can on request be issued by the Bishop's office.

Catholics who are married outside the Catholic Church, without such a dispensation, are not validly married in the eyes of the Church, and are therefore not allowed to receive any other sacraments in the Church.

**Mass for the deceased.** Since the early years of the Church, there has been a tradition of praying for the deceased, especially during a Mass. Anyone can ask a priest to celebrate a Mass for the deceased. It is customary to offer a monetary gift in this connection. The amount is up to the giver, typically 100 Dkr.

**Members registry, central.** The Catholic Church in Denmark has a central registry of all its members, with information about name, address, birth date, cpr number (optional), etc. According to the Danish law, you are entitled to ascertain what information the registry contains about yourself. You may contact either the parish priest or the Bishop's office to do so.

In order to make it possible to collect church taxes through the official system (as used for instance by the Danish "folkekirke"), and to enable the registry to keep updated (for instance address changes), all Catholics are asked to give permission to the diocese to register their CPR number and the CPR number of dependent children. This is done by filling out a permission

form that can be acquired from the office at your parish church or be downloaded from the diocese's website. The information in the registry is strictly confidential.

**Names:**

Name giving can be done EITHER by contacting the Catholic parish of residence (if it is a State-approved parish) OR through baptism. In "Sønderjylland" name giving must always be reported to "folkeregistret" before the baptism. A child must be given a name within 6 months after birth. See also births and baptism of children.

**Name changes:** The changing of a name is done through the parish where the person is name given/baptized or through the "kommune" of residence. If your birth is registered in "Sønderjylland", you will need to contact the "kommune" where your birth is registered. For more information about requirements, procedure, and payment see [personregistrering.dk:navnændring](http://personregistrering.dk:navnændring). Application forms can be downloaded there.

Name change for persons of non-Danish heritage. If you have permanent residence in Denmark, the changing of a name can be arranged by contacting the priest in the parish where you reside. An application form can be downloaded at [personregistrering.dk](http://personregistrering.dk).

Name change on wedding day. The custom of automatically taking the last name of your spouse on your wedding day, was done away with under new laws concerning name giving/changes effective April 1, 2006. It is still possible to take your spouse's last name, with the change effective on your wedding day, but you must apply for the name change using an application form, that can be downloaded from [personregistrering.dk](http://personregistrering.dk), and which should be given to the priest in the parish where you were baptized/name given. A non-Catholic spouse must contact the Danish "folkekirke", in the parish of residence. If born in "Sønderjylland", you need to contact the "kommune", where your birth is registered. The application for name changing can also be delivered in the "kommune" where the marriage "prøvelsesattest" will be issued.

**Penance, days and times.** All Fridays and all of Lent - from Ash Wednesday through Good Friday are days of penance. Penance is an important part of a true Christian life, because Jesus encouraged us to constant repentance.

Penance has to do with examining one's way of life and adjusting it to fit the commandment of loving God and neighbor. There are many ways to do penance - for instance abstaining from eating meat (called abstinence) or other forms of food or drink (coffee, beer, alcohol), tobacco or other forms of stimulants, entertainment (TV or internet) and other luxuries; and/or by fasting (reducing the amount of food eaten, or not eating at all). These acts of penance should be accompanied by acts of charity and piety; plus a striving to do everyday duties especially well.

Everyone, who is over 14 years of age, is obligated to practice some sort of penance on all Fridays and during the days of Lent, if they do not coincide with a solemnity. On Ash

Wednesday and Good Friday, everyone over 14 is obliged to abstain from meat. Everyone who is between the ages of 18 and 59 is also required to fast on these two days.

Fasting means that you only eat one simple but full meal once a day, and keep the other meals to an absolute minimum, or skip them all together.

**Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.** Sunday has been celebrated as "The Lord's Day" since the time of the apostles, in commemoration of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. Therefore it has always been obligatory to celebrate Sunday by participating in Mass and refraining from activities that deter worship of God and rest for body and soul. At Mass, the risen Christ gathers his brothers and sisters, speaks to them, gives himself to them, leads them to the Father through the Holy Spirit, and includes them in his sacrificing Salvation. Mass is the center of life for God's people and individuals.

Mass is the local gathering of the family of God's people. There must therefore be a serious reason for not participating in Mass. A Mass celebrated Saturday evening counts as a Sunday Mass. Holy Days of Obligation observed in Denmark are Christmas Day and Ascension Day (Christ's ascent into heaven).

*Rough translation of Danish terms:*

*CPR: Central person registry number (all residents in Denmark have a CPR number) given by "folkeregistret".*

*Folkekirke(sogn): The Danish Lutheran Church is called "folkekirken". The parish is called "sogn".*

*Folkeregistret: Official office where all Danish residents are registered.*

*Kommune: County*

*Pastoral-Centret: The Catholic Church's center for religious material in Denmark.*

*Sønderjylland: Southern Jutland*