

**The attached information comes from John Huels, *The Pastoral Companion. A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry*, Fifth Edition, Wilson & Lefleur Ltée, 2016, pp. 379-382 To be used to discern valid, invalid and invalid baptisms, especially for marriages and for RCIA.**

## **Valid, Invalid, and Doubtful Baptism**

*Eastern non-Catholics.* There can be no doubt cast upon the validity of baptism as conferred among separate Eastern Christians. It suffices, therefore, to establish the fact that baptism was administered. Since in the Eastern churches the priest always lawfully administers the sacrament of confirmation at the same time as baptism, it often happens that no mention is made of the confirmation in the canonical testimony of baptism. This does not give grounds for doubting that sacrament was conferred (DE, 99a)

*Other Christians.* Baptism is conferred with water and a formula that clearly indicates that baptism is done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is therefore very important for all the disciples of Christ that administer baptism in this manner and that various churches and ecclesial communities arrive as closely as possible at an agreement about its significance and valid celebration (DE, 93).

In some places, there are agreements between Catholic and non-Catholic churches on the mutual recognition of baptism, as recommended by the ecumenical directory, 94. However, even the absence of such a formal agreement should not automatically lead to a doubt about the validity of the non-Catholic baptism (DE, 99b). A true doubt should not be confused with ignorance. Ignorance is mere lack of knowledge. A doubt means that one has some reason for questioning the validity of the baptism in another denomination. A doubt may arise about any of the following: the matter, the form, the intention of an adult baptized or the intention of the minister.

*Concerning the matter and form.* Water baptism by immersion or pouring, with the Trinitarian formula, is valid. Therefore, if the rituals, liturgical books, or established customs of a church or ecclesial community prescribe either of these ways of baptism, the sacrament is to be considered valid, unless there are serious reasons for doubting that the minister has observed the regulations of his or her own community or church (DE, 95a). Wherever doubts arise about whether or how water was used, respect for the sacrament and deference toward these ecclesial communities require that a serious investigation of the practice of the community

concerned be made before any judgement is passes on the validity of its baptism (DE, 95c).

Baptism by sprinkling, although illicit in the Latin church, is valid provided the water makes physical contact with the candidate while the minister is saying the Trinitarian formula.

*Concerning faith and intention.* Insufficient faith on the part of the minister never, of itself, makes baptism invalid. Sufficient intention in the baptizing minister is to be presumed, unless there is serious ground for doubting that the minister intended to do what the Church does (DE, 95b).

Likewise, the intention to receive baptism in the adult who was baptized is presumed unless there is a serious reason for doubting it. An adult, for purpose of baptism, is anyone seven and older with the reason. The intention of the minister, whether explicit or implicit, is to do what the Church does when it baptizes.

The following are some non-Catholic churches and ecclesial communities that have *valid baptism*: all Eastern non-Catholics, African Methodist Episcopal, Amish, Anglican, Assembly of God, Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Reformed Church of North America, Church of the Brethren, Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Church of God, Congregational, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalian, Evangelical, Evangelical United Brethren, Liberal Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Metropolitan Community Church, Moravian, Nazarene, Old Catholic, Old Roman Catholic, Polish National, Presbyterian, Reformed, United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, United Reformed, Uniting Church of Australia, Waldensian, Zion.

Communities whose *baptism is doubtful*, and for which is required an investigation into each case, are Mennonite, Pentecostal, and Seventh Day Adventist. The ministers in these communities do not observe a uniform practise, or they may have splinter groups whose Trinitarian theology is dubious. (See D. Drake-Brockman, "Valid Baptism : A Guide to When Baptism or Conditional Baptism May be Required," *Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland Newsletter*, no. 110 [June1997] 24-36).

Some ecclesial communities *without valid baptism* are the Amana Church Society, American Ethical Union, the Apostolic Church (Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God), Apostolic Faith Mission, Bohemian Free Thinkers, Children of God ("The Family"), Christadelphians, Christian Community (Rudolf Steiner), Christians of the Universalist Brotherhood, Christian Scientists (no baptism),

Church of Daniel's Band, Church of Divine Science, Church of Illumination, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons), Church of Revelation, Church of Universal Brotherhood, Erieside Church, General Assembly of Spiritualists, Hephzibab Faith Missionary Association, House of David Church, Iglesia ni Kristo (Philippines), Independent Church of Filipino Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Masons (no baptism), Metropolitan Church Association, National David Spiritualist Association, New Jerusalem Church (Swedenborg or "New Age" Church), People's Church of Chicago, some communities of the Plymouth Brethren, Reunification Church ("Moonies"), Salvation Army, Shakers (no Baptism), Society of Friends (Quakers, no baptism), Spiritualist Church, Unitarians, United Society of Believers (Shakers), Universal Emancipation Church. (See Kowal/Woestman, 225-228.)

*Conditional baptism.* If there is a doubt whether someone was baptized or whether the baptism was conferred validly, and this doubt remains after serious investigation, then baptism should be administered conditionally. Those baptized in a non-Catholic ecclesial community are not to be baptized conditionally unless there is a serious reason for doubting the validity of the baptism and this doubt remains after an examination of matter and form used in the conferral of baptism and the intention of the adult who was baptized and of the minister of baptism. If doubt remains whether the baptism was conferred or whether it was valid, baptism should not be administered until after the one being baptized, if he or she is an adult, has received instruction on the doctrine of the sacrament of baptism. The reason for doubting the validity of the previous baptism should be explained to the person or, with infant baptism, to the parents (can.869).

Conditional Baptism is to be celebrated privately, not in public (DE, 99d). The local Ordinary is to decide in each case what rites are to be included or excluded in conferring conditional baptism (RFC, 7: RCIA, US480; Cdn 393)

The formula for conditional baptism is "If you are not baptized, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

*Confirmation.* Those baptized in ecclesial communities that do not have valid orders and apostolic succession should be confirmed when they are received into full communion with the Catholic Church. (See can. 882 and RFC, 8: RCIA, US 481, Cnd 394.)

The reception of baptized Christians into full communion with the Catholic Church is treated in chapter three, pp.81-84.