

CHAPTER 3

BAPTISM OF INFANTS

A. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 The baptism of infants should be administered without delay and with appropriate catechesis for the parents and godparents.³¹⁷
- 3.1.2 Baptism, by actual reception or at least by desire, is necessary for salvation, and is the gateway to the reception of the other sacraments. By baptism, original sin and one's personal sins are forgiven; one is born again and becomes an adopted child of God. It confers an indelible character that conforms one to Christ, to share in his priestly, prophetic, and royal offices. By baptism one is incorporated in the Church, with rights and obligations, and is bonded more closely with other Christians.³¹⁸
- 3.1.3 From the earliest days of the Church, the infant children of believers have been presented for baptism and recognized as called by God to share life in the Lord's family. Saint Gregory Nazianzen said, "Do you have an infant child? Allow sin no opportunity; rather, let the infant be sanctified from childhood. From his most tender age let him be consecrated by the Spirit.... Give your child the Trinity, that great and noble protector."³¹⁹
- 3.1.4 While infants bring no human achievements or works whatever to their encounter with God, they are nonetheless given a share in divine life. "The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant baptism."³²⁰
- 3.1.5 It is the role of parents to provide the environment where a young disciple of Christ can grow. This will be most critical in the earliest years of life. This is where the Church needs parents to fulfill their role as evangelizers and Christian models—and where the Church needs to support parents in this

³¹⁷ AS 150, cf. CDF, Instruction *Pastoralis actio* (1980), CIC can. 867 §1; RBC 8.3. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.4.3, 3.13.1, 3.13.9 and its note.

³¹⁸ CIC can. 849; USCCA pp. 192-195. A funerary inscription near S. Sabina in Rome from about the year 300 reads, "Pray for your parents, Matronata Matrona. She lived one year, fifty-two days."

³¹⁹ CCC 1250, cf. Saint Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration on Holy Baptism* 17. Saint Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition* 21:16: "Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them."

³²⁰ CCC 1250.

great work. This formation in the family will naturally lead to readiness for Eucharistic participation when the child is a little older, and for confirmation.

- 3.1.6 Infant baptism has become a single act encapsulating the usual preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way, and so it requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth.³²¹

B. OFFICES AND MINISTRIES

Parish Community

- 3.2.1 Since the initiation of new members of God's people is the responsibility of all the baptized, and given the right that children have to the love and help of the Christian community, parishes should offer welcome and both spiritual and practical support to families anticipating a birth and those with young children.³²²

Parish Ministers

- 3.3.1 Priests, with the assistance of deacons and specially prepared catechists, are to offer special care in regard to the baptism of children. In particular, they are to:
- a. help families, through personal visitation, prayer, and catechesis to prepare for baptism and to undertake the task of Christian formation that flows from it;³²³ and
 - b. arrange celebrations of the sacrament that are dignified, fully developed, and attentive to the needs of the families involved.³²⁴

³²¹ CCC 1231. See also CCC 1248 (cf. AG 14; RCIA 19, 98): "The catechumenate, or formation of catechumens, aims at bringing their conversion and faith to maturity, in response to the divine initiative and in union with an ecclesial community. The catechumenate is to be a 'formation in the whole Christian life ... during which the disciples will be joined to Christ their teacher. The catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and charity of the People of God by successive sacred rites.'"

³²² See RCIA 9; RBC 4.

³²³ MI, grants, 6: "A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who teach or study Christian doctrine."

³²⁴ RBC 7.

Parents

- 3.4.1 It is the office of parents “to offer their offspring to the Church in order that by their most fruitful Mother of the children of God they may be regenerated through the laver of baptism unto supernatural justice and finally be made living members of Christ, partakers of immortal life, and heirs of that eternal glory to which all aspire from our inmost heart.”³²⁵
- 3.4.2 Since by God’s plan and purpose parents have a unique and sacred relationship with their children, they have the Christian obligation:
- a. to prepare to take part in the celebration of baptism with understanding, renewing their own profession of the Christian faith;
 - b. to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example; and
 - c. to sanctify their children through the Christian spirit of their marriage and family life.³²⁶
- 3.4.3 Parents are obliged to take care that infants are baptized in the first few weeks after birth.³²⁷
- 3.4.4 As soon as possible after the birth or even before it, the parents are to go to their pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared for it themselves.³²⁸

Godparents

- 3.5.1 Insofar as it is possible, an infant to be baptized is to be given a godparent.³²⁹
- 3.5.2 There is to be only one godfather, or one godmother, or one of each.³³⁰

³²⁵ Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Casti connubii* (1931) 14. See also IALP 1: “Out of the baptismal font, the Lord Christ generates children, who bear the image of the Resurrected, to the Church. These, united to Christ in the Holy Spirit, are rendered fit to celebrate with Christ the sacred liturgy, spiritual worship.”

³²⁶ CIC cann. 835 §4, 774 §2, 951 §2; see RBC 5, for an extensive treatment.

³²⁷ CIC can. 867 §1; RBC 8.3. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.1.1, 3.13.1, 3.13.9 and its note.

³²⁸ CIC can. 867 §1.

³²⁹ CIC can. 872. The lack of a suitable godparent is not an impediment to baptism.

³³⁰ CIC can. 873.

- 3.5.3 The godparent, together with the parents, presents the infant for baptism. A godparent also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.³³¹
- 3.5.4 A godparent has the responsibility:
- a. to present the infant for baptism along with the parents;³³²
 - b. to represent the community of faith in which the baptism is celebrated;³³³
 - c. to renew his or her own profession of the Christian faith;³³⁴
 - d. to assist the parents in their Christian responsibilities;³³⁵ and
 - e. to help the newly baptized, by word and example, to lead a Christian life and fulfill the obligations of baptism.³³⁶
- 3.5.5 Through pastoral dialogue and catechesis, a godparent is to be prepared both as a companion in faith for the one to be baptized and as a support for the parents in their Christian responsibilities. He or she should be invited to participate in the opportunities for spiritual and catechetical formation offered to parents of the child to be baptized.³³⁷
- 3.5.6 To be permitted to take on the function of godparent a person must
- a. be designated by the parents of the infant to be baptized, or the person who takes their place, or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister of the sacrament, and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;³³⁸

³³¹ CIC can. 872.

³³² CIC can. 872.

³³³ ED 98: "It is the Catholic understanding that godparents, in a liturgical and canonical sense, should themselves be members of the Church or ecclesial community in which the baptism is being celebrated. They do not merely undertake a responsibility for the Christian education of the person being baptized (or confirmed) as a relation or friend; they are also there as representatives of a community of faith, standing as guarantees of the candidate's faith and desire for ecclesial communion."

³³⁴ RBC 56-59.

³³⁵ RBC 40.

³³⁶ CIC cann. 774 §2, 872; RCIA, General Introduction, 8.

³³⁷ CIC can. 851 §2; RCIA, General Introduction, 8, 13; cf. RBC 40. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.8.1-11.

³³⁸ CIC can. 874 §1 1°.

- b. have completed the sixteenth year of age, or the pastor or minister of the sacrament has granted an exception for a just cause;³³⁹
 - c. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;³⁴⁰
 - d. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;³⁴¹
 - e. not be the father or mother of the infant to be baptized.³⁴²
- 3.5.7 A member of an Eastern rite of the Catholic Church may serve as a godparent for baptism in the Latin rite.³⁴³
- 3.5.8 Because of the close communion between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches, for a just cause it is permissible for an Orthodox faithful to act as godparent together with a Catholic godparent at the baptism of a Catholic, so long as there is provision for the Catholic education of the person being baptized, and it is clear that the Catholic godparent is suitable. Note that this person is, and is to be listed as, a true godparent, and not a “Christian witness.”³⁴⁴
- 3.5.9 A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic godparent and then only as a witness of the baptism, i.e., as a “Christian witness.”³⁴⁵ Such a person does not assume the responsibilities of a godparent.
- 3.5.10 Although an unbaptized person is not capable of being a godparent or a “Christian witness,” such a person should be welcomed to the celebration and invited to participate to an extent that is appropriate.³⁴⁶

³³⁹ CIC can. 874 §1 2°.

³⁴⁰ CIC can. 874 §1 3°. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.15.4.

³⁴¹ CIC can. 874 §1 4°.

³⁴² CIC can. 874 §1 5°.

³⁴³ CIC can. 874 §1 3°; cf. CCEO can. 685 §1 2°.

³⁴⁴ ED 98 b; cf. CCEO can. 685 §3. In the same way, a Catholic is not forbidden to stand as godparent in an Orthodox church, if he or she is so invited. In this case, the duty of providing for the Christian education binds in the first place the godparent who belongs to the Church in which the child is baptized. ED 98 b; cf. Ecumenical Directory (1967) 48.

³⁴⁵ CIC can. 874 §2; ED 98 a. In the same way, a Catholic may stand as a Christian witness (not as a godparent) for a person being baptized in another ecclesial community. Ibid.

³⁴⁶ For a parallel situation regarding non-Christians, see the Guidelines for the Reception of Holy Communion approved by the NCCB in 1996: “We also welcome to this celebration those who do not

- 3.5.11 A Catholic who is in an irregular marriage, or a Catholic who has joined another Church or ecclesial community, cannot serve as a godparent, inasmuch as such a person does not lead “a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on,” and in fact may have incurred an ecclesiastical censure. Such a person may not be given the designation of “Christian witness” described above.³⁴⁷
- 3.5.12 The pastor of the designated godparent is normally responsible for determining that he or she understands the godparent’s role and is qualified to assume it, and is to provide a letter of eligibility when the baptism is to be celebrated in another parish.

Ministers of the Sacrament

- 3.6.1 The ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop, priest, or deacon.³⁴⁸
- 3.6.2 When an ordinary minister is absent or impeded, a catechist or another person designated for this function by the local ordinary, or in a case of necessity any person with the right intention, confers baptism licitly.³⁴⁹ In the latter case:
- a. The “right intention” is understood to mean simply the intention to do what the Church does in this sacrament.

share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.” See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 6.42.1.b.

³⁴⁷ CIC can. 874 §1 3^o; cf. can. 751: “Heresy is the obstinate denial or obstinate doubt after the reception of baptism of some truth which is to be believed by divine and Catholic faith; apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; schism is the refusal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him.” See also CIC can. 1364 §1: “[A]n apostate from the faith, a heretic, or a schismatic incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication....”

³⁴⁸ CIC can. 861.

³⁴⁹ CIC can. 861 §2. The Eastern tradition in this regard is not the same. “Differing from the Latin tradition reiterated in can. 861 §1 of the Code of Canon Law, the ordinary administration of baptism in all Eastern traditions, as referred to in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches can. 677 §1, is reserved to those who are clothed in priestly grace, that is, to bishops and presbyters, excluding deacons, on whom hands have been imposed ‘not unto the priesthood, but unto the ministry.’ In case of necessity rather, according to [CCEO] can. 677 §2, baptism can also be licitly administered by the deacon, another cleric, members of institutes of consecrated life, and also ‘any other Christian faithful,’ but not just ‘any person with the right intention’ as is indicated for the Latin Church in can. 861 §2 of the Code of Canon Law. Such differentiation underlines that baptism saves the individual [by] introducing him or her into an ecclesiastical community. Therefore, only a member of the community can baptize.” IALP 46, quoting *Constitutiones Ecclesiae Ægyptiacae* III 2, cited in LG 29.

- b. If at all possible, a godparent should be present, or at least a witness by whom the conferral of baptism can be proved.³⁵⁰
- 3.6.3 In case of necessity, any person can baptize provided that he have the intention of doing that which the Church does and provided that he pours water on the candidate's head while saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."³⁵¹
- 3.6.4 Bishops, pastors, priests, deacons, and catechists are to be concerned that the Christian faithful are taught the correct way to baptize. Since they belong to the priestly people, all laypersons, especially parents and, by reason of their work, catechists, midwives, family or social workers or nurses of the sick, as well as physicians and surgeons, should be thoroughly aware, according to their capacities, of the proper method of baptizing in an emergency.³⁵²
- 3.6.5 Except in case of necessity, the permission of the pastor of the place is to be received before anyone confers baptism.³⁵³

C. CANDIDATES

- 3.7.1 The norms for infant baptism apply to any children who have not attained the use of reason.³⁵⁴
- 3.7.2 A child who has attained the use of reason is no longer an infant, and is to prepare for and celebrate the sacraments of initiation according to the pattern for adults.³⁵⁵
- 3.7.3 A person of any age who does not have the use of reason is regarded as an infant with respect to baptism.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ CIC can. 875.

³⁵¹ CCC 1284; RCIA, General Introduction, 23, 373; CIC can. 853, cf. CIC cann. 849-850; RBC 60, 97; ED 93. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 2.38.2 and its note, 2.44.7, 2.45.3, 3.11.3 and its note, 11.24.5 and its note.

³⁵² CIC can. 861 §2; RCIA, General Introduction, 17.

³⁵³ CIC can. 862. The administration of baptism is specially entrusted to pastors, cf. can. 530 1°.

³⁵⁴ With the completion of the seventh year, a minor is presumed to have the use of reason. See CIC cann. 97 §1, 99, 852 §2. In RBC 1, "the term 'children' or 'infants' refers to those who have not yet reached the age of discernment and therefore cannot profess personal faith." See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 2.1.6.b, 2.44.2, 4.8.2-3, 5.3.1, 5.6.2, 5.7.1-2, 7.5.8, 7.7.15, 8.3.1-3, 9.17.3.a.

³⁵⁵ CIC can. 852 §1. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, ch. 2, Christian Initiation of Adults and of Children of Catechetical Age.

³⁵⁶ CIC can. 852 §2. "A person who is not responsible for oneself (*non sui compos*) is also regarded as an infant with respect to baptism."

- 3.7.4 For an infant to be baptized licitly:
- a. the parents or at least one of them or the person who legitimately takes their place must consent;³⁵⁷
 - b. there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be delayed according to the prescripts of particular law after the parents have been advised about the reason.³⁵⁸
- 3.7.5 An infant of Catholic parents or even of non-Catholic parents is baptized licitly in danger of death even against the will of the parents.³⁵⁹
- 3.7.6 An abandoned infant or a foundling is to be baptized unless after diligent investigation the baptism of the infant is established.³⁶⁰
- 3.7.7 Foster parents do not have the authority to present a foster infant for baptism.
- 3.7.8 An infant born to, adopted by, or under the civil guardianship of, persons who are in a civilly recognized form of marriage or civil union for “same sex couples,” is to be baptized, the other provisions of this chapter regarding the preparation of the parent and godparent(s) having been observed.³⁶¹
- 3.7.9 In the case of an infant who is in the process of being adopted, the baptism may be celebrated with the consent of the natural parents; otherwise, the baptism is to be postponed until after the adoption has been finalized,³⁶² except in danger of death.
- 3.7.10 The rite in which baptism is celebrated does not determine a person’s Church *sui iuris*. By virtue of baptism, a child who has not completed fourteen years of age³⁶³ is enrolled in:
- a. the Church of the Catholic father, whether the mother is Catholic or not;³⁶⁴

³⁵⁷ CIC can. 868 §1 1^o.

³⁵⁸ CIC can. 868 §1 2^o. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.8.10-11.

³⁵⁹ CIC can. 868 §2.

³⁶⁰ CIC can. 870.

³⁶¹ See ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.15.4.

³⁶² See ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.15.5.

³⁶³ A candidate who has completed the fourteenth year of age may freely choose to be baptized either in the Latin Church or in another Church *sui iuris*. See CIC can. 111 §2.

³⁶⁴ CCEO can. 29 §1; CIC can. 1125 1^o.

- b. the Church of the mother if only the mother is Catholic;³⁶⁵
- c. the Church of the mother if both Catholic parents by agreement freely request it (if there is no agreement, the child belongs to the Church of the father);³⁶⁶
- d. the Church of the mother, if she is not married;³⁶⁷
- e. the Church of the legal guardians if the parents are not known;³⁶⁸
- f. the Church of the child's educators in the faith if the parents are not baptized.³⁶⁹

These principles also apply in the case of an adoptive father and mother.³⁷⁰

3.7.11 An infant who was baptized and chrismated in an Orthodox church, and then is adopted by parents who belong to the Roman Catholic Church, is ascribed to the Roman Church by the act of adoption itself; no decree of a change of rite or other juridic act is necessary.³⁷¹

3.7.12 When an infant is in danger of death, the following is to be noted:

- a. The infant is to be baptized without delay, even if an ordinary minister is not available.³⁷²
- b. An infant of Catholic parents or even of non-Catholic parents who is in danger of death is baptized licitly even against the will of the parents.³⁷³
- c. If a priest baptizes the infant, he omits the post-baptismal anointing and instead confirms the infant. If the baptism is conferred by someone else, a priest is to confirm the infant when this is possible.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁵ CIC can. 1125 1°.

³⁶⁶ CIC can. 111 §1; CCEO can. 29 §1.

³⁶⁷ CCEO can. 29 §2 1° (no equivalent in Latin code).

³⁶⁸ CCEO can. 29 §2 2°, cf. §1 (no equivalent in Latin code).

³⁶⁹ CCEO can. 29 §2 3° (no equivalent in Latin code).

³⁷⁰ Cf. CIC can. 110.

³⁷¹ See the letter of the Congregation for Oriental Churches in RRAA 2003, 23. The particulars of the infant's baptism and chrismation should be recorded in the baptismal register of the adoptive parents' parish.

³⁷² CIC cann. 867 §3, 861.

³⁷³ CIC can. 868 §2.

³⁷⁴ CIC can. 889 §2; RC 11.

- d. Upon his or her recovery, the “Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church” is used to welcome the infant who is already a baptized member of the Catholic Church.³⁷⁵

3.7.12 If an aborted fetus is alive, he or she is to be baptized, if this is possible.³⁷⁶

D. FORMATION AND READINESS OF PARENTS AND GODPARENTS

General

3.8.1 Since infants cannot make personal professions of the Christian faith or pledge themselves to living a Christian life, it is necessary that:

- a. the parents (or at least one of them) consent to the baptism;
- b. there be the founded hope that the infant will be raised in the Catholic faith; and
- c. the parent(s) and godparent(s) make their own profession of faith along with the Church at time of the celebration of the sacrament.³⁷⁷

3.8.2 The period for helping parents to prepare for the baptism of their infant must be understood to include the time of pre-marital ministry and the pastoral care of newly-married couples. Parishes should welcome such couples and provide opportunities for their Christian development.

3.8.3 Just as parents should be encouraged to contact the pastor early in the pregnancy to make more proximate preparations for baptism, parish communities should extend special care to expectant couples and their families.³⁷⁸

3.8.4 All parents preparing for an infant’s baptism are to take part in spiritual preparation that is:

³⁷⁵ RBC 31.3, 165-166. The “Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church” is not used for the reception of baptized non-Catholic children into the Catholic Church, but for those who have been baptized in danger of death. Baptized non-Catholic children, if they are below the age of reason, are received at the request of their parents and without any rite. Baptized non-Catholic children who have reached the age of reason are received into the Catholic Church in the same way as adults.

³⁷⁶ CIC can. 871.

³⁷⁷ CIC can. 868 §1; RB 5, 18.

³⁷⁸ CIC can. 867 §1.

- a. centered on interior readiness for and joyful anticipation of the sacramental celebration; and
 - b. supported by the opportunity for prayer.
- 3.8.5 Godparents are to be similarly prepared in mind and heart, and may be invited to share in the opportunities for spiritual readiness afforded to parents.
- 3.8.6 Catechesis is to be provided for and expected of parents and godparents who are for the first time presenting an infant for baptism.
- 3.8.7 Such catechesis is to be:
- a. centered on the meaning of baptism as expressed in the liturgical rite; and
 - b. directed toward the whole life of the parents or godparents so that it:
 - i. enlightens faith;
 - ii. directs the heart toward God;
 - iii. fosters participation in the liturgy;
 - iv. inspires apostolic activity; and
 - v. nurtures a life in accord with the spirit of Christ.³⁷⁹
- 3.8.8 The doctrinal elements of such catechesis must always reflect the teaching of the Church in its worship and its creeds, clearly presenting the Catholic faith regarding baptism, its effects and obligations.³⁸⁰
- 3.8.9 In preparing for their ministry with parents, catechists are to rely especially upon the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, *The Teaching of Christ*, and other archdiocesan-approved catechetical guides.
- 3.8.10 Special pastoral care should be exercised with families who have experienced difficulty or crisis, and parents who are inactive or whose faith is weak.

³⁷⁹ RCIA 78.

³⁸⁰ CIC can. 851 §2.

- 3.8.11 When parents are not yet prepared to profess their faith or undertake the duty of bringing up their infant as a Catholic, the following is to be observed:
- a. Pastoral leaders (that is, parish priests, deacons, and lay leaders prepared for and delegated for this ministry) are to welcome and seek dialogue with the parents about their faith and the unique responsibility to share it with the infant God has entrusted to them.
 - b. Where it appears that parents are requesting baptism simply out of social convention, such pastoral leaders should provide the opportunity for basic evangelization in order to stir up a response of true Christian faith.
 - c. Any pledge that gives genuine hope for the Catholic upbringing of the infant (even if it is made by some member of the family or the godparent) is to be considered sufficient to proceed with the baptism. However, pastoral leaders are to continue to offer the parents opportunities for ongoing Christian formation.
 - d. If conditions are insufficient to provide this honest hope, the pastor is to delay the celebration of baptism, informing the parents of the reasons. *This delay must never be presented as an outright refusal to baptize an infant*, but as an opportunity for further pastoral care in order to help the family to grow in faith or become more aware of their responsibilities.³⁸¹

Baptismal Names

- 3.9.1 Parents, godparents, and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to Christian sensibility is not given.³⁸²
- 3.9.2 The practice whereby parents choose for their infant the name of a Christian saint or a name associated with the Christian mysteries is encouraged.
- 3.9.3 Parents should be encouraged to reflect on the importance of personal names and the meaning of any name they select for their infant. To assist them, the Christian understanding of given names can be explained.³⁸³

³⁸¹ CIC can. 868 §1 2º; RBC 8; CDF, Instruction on Infant Baptism (1980).

³⁸² CIC can. 855.

³⁸³ See the comment in RCIA 73.

Mystagogy

- 3.10.1 In the years immediately following baptism, families are to provide the environment for nurturing the faith of the newly-baptized and leading them to the completion of Christian initiation. During this time, they should be assisted by the prayer, support, and catechetical help of the Catholic community.

E. NOTES ON RITES, TIMES, AND PLACES

Matter and Form

- 3.11.1 The *matter* of the sacrament of baptism is water; the remote matter is the true and natural water itself, while the proximate matter is the action of washing with the water. The *form* of the sacrament is the baptismal formula spoken by the minister.³⁸⁴
- 3.11.2 Baptism is validly conferred only by a washing of true water with the proper form of words. Baptism may be administered by immersion or by pouring (infusion).³⁸⁵
- 3.11.3 The only words for conferring baptism are: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Council of Trent, Session VII, *Canones de sacramento baptismi* (1551) can. 2: DS 1615; *Catechism of the Council of Trent (Roman Catechism)* II, 1.

³⁸⁵ CIC cann. 849, 854. Baptism by sprinkling (affusion) is no longer used in the Roman Catholic Church. See 1917 CIC can. 758: "Although baptism can be validly conferred by infusion, or by immersion, or by aspersion, the first or the second manner, or a mixture of both, whichever is in greater use, shall be retained, according to the approved ritual books of the various Churches."

³⁸⁶ RCIA, General Introduction, 23; RBC 60, 97; ED 93. *Didache* 7: 1: "After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water, and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 5: 8: "The Lord himself told his disciples that they should baptize all peoples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ... for indeed, legitimate baptism is had only in the name of the Trinity." The CDF has determined that the formulas "I baptize you in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier," and "I baptize you in the name of the Creator, and of the Liberator, and of the Sustainer," are not valid, and that anyone who has been baptized with these formulas must be baptized absolutely (i.e., not conditionally). CDF, Response, 1 February 2008. See also ADW, *Liturgical Norms and Policies*, 2010, 2.38.2 and its note, 2.44.7, 2.45.3, 3.6.3, 11.24.5 and its note.

- 3.11.4 The blessed Trinity is invoked over those who are to be baptized, so that all who are signed in this name are consecrated to the Trinity and enter into communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.³⁸⁷
- 3.11.5 In the administration of baptism, the words must always accompany the sacramental action. It is not permitted for one person to pour the water or to immerse the child while another says the sacramental formula.
- 3.11.6 Baptism may not be conferred jointly by two ministers belonging to different Churches or ecclesial communities.³⁸⁸

Ritual Notes

- 3.12.1 The water used in baptism should be true water, pure, clean, and visible in significant quantity in order to communicate an authentic sacramental symbolism.³⁸⁹
- 3.12.2 During the Easter season, the water blessed at the Easter Vigil is to be used, if it remains fit; otherwise, water is to be blessed for each occasion.³⁹⁰
- 3.12.3 When immersion is used, the minister takes the child and immerses him or her three times in the baptismal water, while saying the appropriate words.³⁹¹ The whole body is to be set down into the water, but it is not necessary that it be completely submerged or that the head be completely wet. One of the parents (holding a towel) ordinarily receives the child after the third immersion.³⁹²
- 3.12.4 When pouring (infusion) is used, one of the parents normally holds the child while the minister pours water three times upon the child (at least upon the head) while saying the appropriate words.³⁹³

³⁸⁷ RCIA, General Introduction, 5.

³⁸⁸ ED 97, citing Ecumenical Directory (1967). However, "For pastoral reasons, in particular circumstances the local ordinary may sometimes permit, however, that a minister of another Church or ecclesial community take part in the celebration by reading a lesson, offering a prayer, etc. Reciprocity is possible only if a baptism celebrated in another community does not conflict with Catholic principles or discipline."

³⁸⁹ RCIA, General Introduction, 18.

³⁹⁰ RCIA, General Introduction, 21-22.

³⁹¹ RBC 60.

³⁹² Immersion does not require *complete submersion*; it is sufficient that the water flow over some part of the head.

³⁹³ RBC 60, 97.

- 3.12.5 The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism is done upon the crown of the head, and not the forehead.³⁹⁴
- 3.12.6 The *ephphetha* rite is optional in the United States. If the minister judges this prayer to be pastorally helpful in particular cases, the touching of the ears and mouth should be done with reverence.³⁹⁵

Times for Baptism

- 3.13.1 The faithful are to present their infant children for baptism soon after birth, giving due consideration to the health of the child and the mother and the need for parents and godparents to be appropriately prepared.³⁹⁶
- 3.13.2 As celebrations of the Paschal Mystery, the baptism of infants should take place on Sundays. It is fitting that the sacrament be celebrated even during Sunday Mass. However, this should not be done too often so as not to obscure the Eucharistic purpose of the Sunday gathering or disturb the cycle of readings and themes of the liturgical year.³⁹⁷
- 3.13.3 Some Sundays throughout the year will better lend themselves to such celebrations than others (e.g., the Baptism of the Lord, the parish patronal or titular feast, the Easter season, etc.). The parish may establish these as days for baptizing infants at Mass, choosing other Sundays for use of the rite outside Mass.
- 3.13.4 Infants may be baptized during the Easter Vigil, taking into consideration the needs of families with young children and the prominence that should be given on that occasion to the full initiation of adults and older children whose baptism follows upon their public profession of faith.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁴ RBC 18, 62, 98. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 3: 17: "This baptism, therefore, is given into the death of Jesus: the water is instead of the burial, and the oil instead of the Holy Spirit; the seal instead of the cross; the ointment is the confirmation of the confession; the mention of the Father as of the author and sender; the joint mention of the Holy Spirit as of the witness; the descent into the water the dying together with Christ; the ascent out of the water the rising again with Him. The Father is the God over all; Christ is the only-begotten God, the beloved Son, the Lord of glory; the Holy Spirit is the comforter, who is sent by Christ, and taught by Him, and proclaims Him."

³⁹⁵ RBC 65, 101.

³⁹⁶ CIC can. 867 §1; RBC 8. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.1.1, 3.4.3, 3.13.9 and its note.

³⁹⁷ RBC 9; AS 149.

³⁹⁸ RBC 9.

- 3.13.5 As far as possible, all recently born infants should be baptized in a common celebration on the same day. Except for good reason, baptism should not be celebrated more than once on the same day in the same church.³⁹⁹
- 3.13.6 Parishes should schedule opportunities for the baptism of infants that are:
- a. neither so infrequent that children will be unduly held back from the sacrament; nor
 - b. so frequent that the rite is not carried out with appropriate planning, dignity, and participation.
- 3.13.8 In exceptional cases for serious reasons, baptisms may be celebrated on weekdays.⁴⁰⁰
- 3.13.9 Since parents have the right and obligation under the law to have their infants baptized shortly after they are born, and since there is certainly no requirement nor even a provision in the law for pastors to deny, or for parents to refrain from, the baptism of infants during the entire season of Lent, such a practice is neither to be introduced, nor maintained where it has been introduced already.⁴⁰¹ Depending on particular circumstances, however (e.g., if a birth occurs very late in the Lenten season), pastors are permitted to suggest that the baptism be delayed until Easter.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁹ RCIA, General Introduction, 27.

⁴⁰⁰ CIC can. 856; RBC 9.

⁴⁰¹ It is not, however, fitting that baptisms and confirmation be celebrated on the days of Holy Week, from Monday to Thursday. CLCPCEF 27. (Note that “fittingness” is a rather weak level of regulation.)

⁴⁰² CIC can. 867 §1; RBC 8.3. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.1.1, 3.4.3, 3.13.1. It is useful to note here the considerations underlying a response from the CDWDS in 2003: “This Dicastery is able to respond that the removing of Holy Water from the fonts during the season of Lent is not permitted, in particular, for two reasons: 1. *The liturgical legislation in force does not foresee this innovation, which in addition to being ‘praeter legem’ is contrary to a balanced understanding of the season of Lent, which though truly being a season of penance, is also a season rich in the symbolism of water and baptism, constantly evoked in liturgical texts.* 2. The encouragement of the Church that the faithful avail themselves frequently of the sacraments is to be understood to apply also to the season of Lent. *The ‘fast’ and ‘abstinence’ which the faithful embrace in this season does not extend to abstaining from the sacraments or sacramentals of the Church.* The practice of the Church has been to empty the Holy Water fonts on the days of the Sacred Triduum in preparation of the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil, and it corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated (i.e., Good Friday and Holy Saturday)” (emphasis added). This is not a new issue: see Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, *Monitum* (warning), 18 February 1958: CLD 5: 409: “In certain places the practice has grown of postponing the conferring of baptism for mistaken reasons of convenience or of a liturgical character. Such postponement draws support from certain opinions, devoid however of any solid foundation, regarding the eternal destiny of infants who die without baptism. Accordingly, this Supreme Sacred Congregation, with the approval of the Supreme Pontiff, warns the faithful that infants are to be baptized as soon as possible, according to

Places for Baptism

- 3.14.1 Outside of emergency circumstances, the proper place for baptism is a church or an oratory (places set apart by the bishop for divine worship).⁴⁰³
- 3.14.2 Normally, infants are to be baptized in the parish church of their parents.⁴⁰⁴ Pastors are to be sensitive to parents who wish to return to their home parishes for baptisms. In such cases, the permission, oral or written, of the pastor of the parish where the parents regularly practice the faith is to be obtained.
- 3.14.3 Except in an emergency or for some other grave reason, baptism is not to be conferred in a private home or a hospital.⁴⁰⁵
- 3.14.4 Every parish church is to have a baptismal font fit for the celebration of the sacrament according to the ritual.⁴⁰⁶

F. REGISTRATION OF BAPTISM

- 3.15.1 The pastor of the place where baptism is celebrated must carefully and without delay record in the baptismal register the name of the one baptized, the date and place of birth, the names of the parents and godparent(s), the name of the minister, and the date and place of baptism.⁴⁰⁷
- 3.15.2 Notations concerning other sacraments received later in life are to be entered in this book: first Holy Communion (possibly), confirmation, marriage (including convalidation), reception of holy orders, perpetual profession in a religious institute, and change of rite.⁴⁰⁸
- 3.15.3 If a child is born to an unmarried mother:

the prescription of [1917 CIC] canon 770. Pastors and preachers are exhorted to urge the fulfillment of this obligation." See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 11.5.8.

⁴⁰³ CIC cann. 857 §1, 1223.

⁴⁰⁴ CIC can. 857 §2.

⁴⁰⁵ CIC can. 860 §§1-2.

⁴⁰⁶ CIC can. 858 §§1-2; RCIA, General Introduction, 19, 26.

⁴⁰⁷ CIC can. 877 §1.

⁴⁰⁸ Official notifications of declarations of nullity of marriage, or dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state, or dispensation of vows, should also be recorded in the baptismal register.

- a. the name of the mother is to be inserted in the baptismal register if there is public proof of her maternity (e.g., a civil birth record) or if she asks this willingly either in writing or before two witnesses;⁴⁰⁹
- b. likewise, the name of the father is to be inserted in the register if his paternity has been proved either by some public document or by his own declaration before the pastor and two witnesses; and⁴¹⁰
- c. if the above conditions are not met, the child is to be recorded as of “unknown mother” or “unknown father.”⁴¹¹ It is not permitted to make an annotation, which says “illegitimate.”

3.15.4 If a child is born to, adopted by, or under the civil guardianship of, persons who are in a civilly recognized form of marriage or civil union for “same sex couples,” the name of only one party to the arrangement is to be listed as a parent in the baptismal register and on the baptismal certificate.⁴¹² The other party to the arrangement should not take on the function of a godparent, and should not be recorded as such in the register.⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁹ CIC can. 877 §2.

⁴¹⁰ CIC can. 877 §2.

⁴¹¹ CIC can. 877 §2.

⁴¹² CDF, Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons, 3 June 2003, 7: “As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development. This is gravely immoral and in open contradiction to the principle, recognized also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the best interests of the child, as the weaker and more vulnerable party, are to be the paramount consideration in every case.” Ibid., 11: “The Church teaches that respect for homosexual persons cannot lead in any way to approval of homosexual behavior or to legal recognition of homosexual unions. The common good requires that laws recognize, promote and protect marriage as the basis of the family, the primary unit of society. Legal recognition of homosexual unions or placing them on the same level as marriage would mean not only the approval of deviant behavior, with the consequence of making it a model in present-day society, but would also obscure basic values which belong to the common inheritance of humanity. The Church cannot fail to defend these values, for the good of men and women and for the good of society itself.” CDF, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, 1 October 1986, 15: “[W]e wish to make it clear that departure from the Church’s teaching, or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care is neither caring nor pastoral. Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral. The neglect of the Church’s position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve.”

⁴¹³ See the qualifications for a godparent, ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 3.5.1-12; cf. CIC can. 874 §1 1^o-5^o.

3.15.5 If a child is adopted, the following norms are to be observed regarding baptismal records:⁴¹⁴

- a. For a child baptized *after his or her adoption is finalized*:
 - i. The following information shall be entered in the baptismal register:
 - a. the Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the adoptive parent(s);
 - b. the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s);
 - c. the date and place of birth;
 - d. the names of the godparents selected by the adoptive parent(s);
 - e. the date and place of baptism;
 - f. the name of the minister; and
 - g. the fact of adoption, but not the names of the natural parents.
 - ii. Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for adopted children will be no different from other baptismal certificates. No mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the baptismal certificate.
- b. For a child baptized *before his or her adoption is finalized*, the following notations shall be added to the existing baptismal record after the adoption has been finalized, and with due regard for the civil law of the jurisdiction:
 - i. parentheses shall be placed around the names of the natural parents;
 - ii. the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) shall then be added;

⁴¹⁴ NCCB, Complementary Norm for CIC can. 877 §3.

- iii. the child's former surname shall also be parenthesized and the new surname added; and
 - iv. a notation shall be made that the child was legally adopted.
 - c. Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for these individuals shall give only:
 - i. the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s);
 - ii. the child's new legal surname;
 - iii. the date and place of baptism; and
 - iv. the name of the minister.
 - d. The names of the godparents shall not be given, and no mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the baptismal certificate.
 - e. For future ease in reference, and to afford what may often be the only possibility of reference after the adoption has been finalized, a baptismal entry for the adopted child can be made in the baptismal register of the adoptive parents' parish, citing the date and location of the original baptismal record, and listing only the names of the adoptive parents, and the date and place of birth.
 - f. Parish personnel who have access to parish registers have an obligation not to disclose any information that would reveal, directly or indirectly, the fact that a person was adopted.