

## Baptism

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One of the [Seven Sacraments](#) of the [Christian Church](#); frequently called the "first sacrament", the "door of the sacraments", and the "door of the Church". The subject will be treated under the following headings:

- [Authoritative statement of doctrine](#)
- [Etymology](#)
- [Definition](#)
- [Types](#)
- [Institution of the sacrament](#)
- [Matter and form of the sacrament](#)
- [Conditional baptism](#)
- [Rebaptism](#)
- [Necessity of baptism](#)
- [Substitutes for the sacrament](#)
- [Unbaptized infants](#)
- [Effects of baptism](#)
- [Minister of the sacrament](#)
- [Recipient of baptism](#)
- [Adjuncts of baptism](#)
- [Ceremonies of baptism](#)
- [Metaphorical baptism](#)

### Authoritative statement of doctrine

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At the outset we think it advisable to give two documents which express clearly the mind of the [Church](#) on the subject of baptism. They are valuable, also, as containing a summary of the main points to be considered in the treatment of this important matter. Baptism is defined positively in the one and negatively in the other.

***The positive document: "The Decree for the Armenians"***

"The Decree for the Armenians", in the Bull "Exultate Deo" of Pope Eugene IV, is often referred to as a decree of the Council of Florence. While it is not necessary to hold this decree to be a dogmatic definition of the matter and form and minister of the sacraments, it is undoubtedly a practical instruction, emanating from the Holy See, and as such, has full authenticity in a canonical sense. That is, it is authoritative. The decree speaks thus of Baptism:

*" Holy Baptism holds the first place among the sacraments, because it is the door of the spiritual life; for by it we are made members of Christ and incorporated with the Church. And since through the first man death entered into all, unless we be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, we can not enter into the kingdom of Heaven, as Truth Himself has told us. The matter of this sacrament is true and natural water; and it is indifferent whether it be cold or hot. The form is: I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. We do not, however, deny that the words: Let this servant of Christ be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; or: This person is baptized by my hands in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, constitute true baptism; because since the principal cause from which baptism has its efficacy is the Holy Trinity, and the instrumental cause is the minister who confers the sacrament exteriorly, then if the act exercised by the minister be expressed, together with the invocation of the Holy Trinity, the sacrament is perfected. The minister of this sacrament is the priest, to whom it belongs to baptize, by reason of his office. In case of necessity, however, not only a priest or deacon, but even a layman or woman, nay, even a pagan or heretic can baptize, provided he observes the form used by the Church, and intends to perform what the Church performs. The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin. As a consequence, no satisfaction for past sins is enjoined upon those who are baptized; and if they die before they commit any sin, they attain immediately to the kingdom of heaven and the vision of God.*

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## **The negative document: "De Baptismo"**

The negative document we call the canons on baptism decreed by the Council of Trent (Sess. VII, De Baptismo), in which the following doctrines are anathematized (declared heretical):

- The baptism of John (the Precursor) had the same efficacy as the baptism of Christ,
- True and natural water is not necessary for baptism, and therefore the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost" are metaphorical.
- The true doctrine of the sacrament of baptism is not taught by the Roman Church,

- Baptism given by **heretics** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the **Holy Ghost** with the **intention** of performing what the **Church** performs, is not **true** baptism,
- Baptism is free, that is, not **necessary** for **salvation**.
- A baptized **person**, even if he wishes it, can not lose **grace**, no matter how much he **sins**, unless he refuses to **believe**.
- Those who are baptized are **obliged** only to have **faith**, but not to observe the whole **law** of **Christ**.
- Baptized **persons** are not **obliged** to observe all the **precepts** of the **Church**, written and **traditional**, unless of their own accord they wish to submit to them.
- All **vows** made after baptism are void by reason of the promises made in baptism itself; because by these **vows** injury is done to the **faith** which has been professed in baptism and to the **sacrament** itself.
- All **sins** committed after baptism are either forgiven or rendered venial by the sole remembrance and **faith** of the baptism that has been received.
- Baptism although truly and properly administered, must be repeated in the case of a **person** who has denied the **faith** of **Christ** before **infidels** and has been brought again to **repentance**.
- No one is to be baptized except at the age at which **Christ** was baptized or at the moment of death.
- Infants, not being able to make an act of **faith**, are not to be reckoned among the **faithful** after their baptism, and therefore when they come to the **age of discretion** they are to be rebaptized; or it is better to omit their baptism entirely than to baptize them as **believing** on the sole **faith** of the **Church**, when they themselves can not make a proper act of **faith**.
- Those baptized as infants are to be asked when they have grown up, whether they wish to ratify what their sponsors had promised for them at their baptism, and if they reply that they do not wish to do so, they are to be left to their own will in the matter and not to be forced by penalties to lead a **Christian** life, except to be deprived of the reception of the Eucharist and of the other **sacraments**, until they reform.

The doctrines here condemned by the **Council of Trent**, are those of various leaders among the early **reformers**. The contradictory of all these statements is to be held as the **dogmatic** teaching of the **Church**.

## Etymology

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The word *Baptism* is derived from the Greek word, *bapto*, or *baptizo*, to wash or to immerse. It signifies, therefore, that washing is of the essential **idea** of the **sacrament**. **Scripture** uses the term *baptize* both literally and figuratively. It is employed in a metaphorical sense in **Acts 1:5**, where the abundance of the **grace** of the **Holy Ghost** is signified, and also in **Luke 12:50**, where the term is referred to the sufferings of **Christ** in

His [Passion](#). Otherwise in the [New Testament](#), the root word from which baptism is derived is used to designate the laving with [water](#), and it is employed, when speaking of [Jewish](#) illustrations, and of the baptism of [John](#), as well as of the [Christian Sacrament](#) of Baptism (cf. [Hebrews 6:2](#); [Mark 7:4](#)). In [ecclesiastical](#) usage, however, when the terms *Baptize*, *Baptism* are employed without a qualifying word, they are intended to signify the [sacramental](#) washing by which the [soul](#) is cleansed from [sin](#) at the same [time](#) that [water](#) is poured upon the body. Many other terms have been used as descriptive synonyms for baptism both in the [Bible](#) and [Christian](#) antiquity, as the washing of [regeneration](#), illumination, the [seal](#) of [God](#), the [water](#) of [eternal life](#), the [sacrament](#) of the [Trinity](#), and so on. In English, the term *christen* is familiarly used for *baptize*. As, however, the former word signifies only the effect of baptism, that is, to make one a [Christian](#), but not the manner and the act, [moralists](#) hold that "I christen" could probably not be substituted validly for "I baptize" in conferring the [sacrament](#).

## Definition

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The [Roman Catechism](#) (Ad parochos, De bapt., 2, 2, 5) defines baptism thus: *Baptism is the [sacrament](#) of [regeneration](#) by [water](#) in the word (*per aquam in verbo*). [St. Thomas Aquinas](#) ([III:66:1](#)) gives this definition: "Baptism is the external ablution of the body, performed with the prescribed [form](#) of words."*

Later [theologians](#) generally distinguish formally between the physical and the [metaphysical](#) defining of this [sacrament](#). By the former they understand the formula expressing the action of ablution and the utterance of the invocation of the [Trinity](#); by the latter, the definition: "[Sacrament](#) of [regeneration](#)" or that institution of [Christ](#) by which we are reborn to [spiritual](#) life.

The term "regeneration" distinguishes baptism from every other [sacrament](#), for although penance revivifies [men spiritually](#), yet this is rather a resuscitation, a bringing back from the dead, than a rebirth. [Penance](#) does not make us [Christians](#); on the contrary, it presupposes that we have already been born of [water](#) and the [Holy Ghost](#) to the life of [grace](#), while baptism on the other hand was instituted to confer upon [men](#) the very beginnings of the spiritual life, to transfer them from the state of enemies of [God](#) to the state of [adoption](#), as sons of [God](#).

The definition of the [Roman Catechism](#) combines the physical and [metaphysical](#) definitions of baptism. "The [sacrament](#) of [regeneration](#)" is the [metaphysical essence](#) of the [sacrament](#), while the physical [essence](#) is expressed by the second part of the definition, i.e. the washing with [water](#) ([matter](#)), accompanied by the invocation of the [Holy Trinity](#) ([form](#)). Baptism is, therefore, the [sacrament](#) by which we are born again of [water](#) and the [Holy](#)

**Ghost**, that is, by which we receive in a new and spiritual life, the dignity of **adoption** as sons of **God** and heirs of **God's kingdom**.

## Types

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Having considered the **Christian** meaning of the term "baptism", we now turn our attention to the various **rites** which were its forerunners before the New Dispensation.

Types of this **sacrament** are to be found among the **Jews** and **Gentiles**. Its place in the **sacramental** system of the **Old Law** was taken by **circumcision**, which is called by some of the **Fathers** "the washing of blood" to distinguish it from "the washing of **water**". By the **rite** of **circumcision**, the recipient was incorporated into the people of **God** and made a partaker in the **Messianic promises**; a name was bestowed upon him and he was reckoned among the children of **Abraham**, the father of all believers.

Other forerunners of baptism were the numerous purifications prescribed in the **Mosaic dispensation** for legal uncleannesses. The symbolism of an outward washing to cleanse an invisible blemish was made very familiar to the **Jews** by their sacred **ceremonies**. But in addition to these more direct types, both the **New Testament** writers and the **Fathers of the Church** find many **mysterious foreshadowings** of baptism. Thus **St. Paul** (**1 Corinthians 10**) adduces the passage of **Israel** through the **Red Sea**, and **St. Peter** (**1 Peter 3**) the **Deluge**, as types of the purification to be found in **Christian** baptism. Other foreshadowings of the **sacrament** are found by the **Fathers** in the bathing of Naaman in the **Jordan**, in the brooding of the **Spirit of God** over the waters, in the rivers of **Paradise**, in the blood of the **Paschal Lamb**, during **Old Testament** times, and in the pool of **Bethsaida**, and in the healing of the dumb and blind in the **New Testament**.

How natural and expressive the symbolism of exterior washing to indicate interior purification was recognized to be, is plain from the practice also of the **heathen** systems of religion. The use of lustral water is found among the **Babylonians**, **Assyrians**, **Egyptians**, Greeks, Romans, **Hindus**, and others. A closer resemblance to **Christian** baptism is found in a **form** of **Jewish** baptism, to be bestowed on **proselytes**, given in the **Babylonian Talmud** (**Döllinger**, *First Age of the Church*).

But above all must be considered the baptism of **St. John the Precursor**. **John** baptized with water (**Mark 1**) and it was a baptism of penance for the remission of **sins** (**Luke 3**). While, then, the symbolism of the **sacrament** instituted by **Christ** was not new, the efficacy which He joined to the **rite** is that which differentiates it from all its types. John's baptism did not produce **grace**, as he himself testifies (**Matthew 3**) when he declares that he is not the **Messias** whose baptism is to confer the **Holy Ghost**. Moreover, it was not John's baptism that remitted **sin**, but the penance that accompanied it; and hence **St. Augustine** calls it (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists, Book V*) "a remission of **sins** in **hope**". As to the nature

of the Precursor's baptism, St. Thomas (III.38.1) declares: The baptism of John was not a sacrament of itself, but a certain sacramental as it were, preparing the way (*disponens*) for the baptism of Christ." Durandus calls it a sacrament, indeed, but of the Old Law, and St. Bonaventure places it as a medium between the Old and New Dispensations. It is of Catholic faith that the Precursor's baptism was essentially different in its effects from the baptism of Christ, It is also to be noted that those who had previously received John's baptism had to receive later the Christian baptism (Acts 19).

## Institution of the sacrament

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That Christ instituted the Sacrament of Baptism is unquestionable. Rationalists, like Harnack (*Dogmengeschichte*, I, 68), dispute it, only by arbitrarily ruling out the texts which prove it. Christ not only commands His Disciples (Matthew 28:19) to baptize and gives them the form to be used, but He also declares explicitly the absolute necessity of baptism (John 3): "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can not enter into the Kingdom of God." Moreover, from the general doctrine of the Church on the sacraments, we know that the efficacy attached to them is derivable only from the institution of the Redeemer.

When, however, we come to the question as to when precisely Christ instituted baptism, we find that ecclesiastical writers are not agreed. The Scriptures themselves are silent upon the subject. Various occasions have been pointed out as the probable time of institution, as when Christ was Himself baptized in the Jordan, when He declared the necessity of the rebirth to Nicodemus, when He sent His Apostles and Disciples to preach and baptize.

The first opinion was quite a favorite with many of the Fathers and Schoolmen, and they are fond of referring to the sanctification of the baptismal water by contact with the flesh of the God-man. Others, as St. Jerome and St. Maximus, appear to assume that Christ baptized John on this occasion and thus instituted the sacrament. There is nothing, however, in the Gospels to indicate that Christ baptized the Precursor at the time of His own baptism. As to the opinion that it was in the colloquy with Nicodemus that the sacrament was instituted, it is not surprising that it has found few adherents. Christ's words indeed declare the necessity of such an institution, but no more. It seems also very unlikely that Christ would have instituted the sacrament in a secret conference with one who was not to be a herald of its institution.

The more probable opinion seems to be that baptism, as a sacrament, had its origin when Christ commissioned His Apostles to baptize, as narrated in John 3 and 4. There is nothing directly in the text as to the institution, but as the Disciples acted evidently under the instruction of Christ, He must have taught them at the very outset the matter and form of the sacrament which they were to dispense. It is true that St. John Chrysostom (Homily 28

on the Gospel of John), Theophylactus (in cap. iii, Joan.), and Tertullian (*On Baptism, Chapter 2*) declare that the baptism given by the Disciples of Christ as narrated in these chapters of St. John was a baptism of water only and not of the Holy Ghost; but their reason is that the Holy Ghost was not given until after the Resurrection. As theologians have pointed out, this is a confusion between the visible and the invisible manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The authority of St. Leo (Epistle 16) is also invoked for the same opinion, inasmuch as he seems to hold that Christ instituted the sacrament when, after His rising from the dead, He gave the command (Matthew 28): "Go and teach . . . baptizing"; but St. Leo's words can easily be explained otherwise, and in another part of the same epistle he refers to the sanction of regeneration given by Christ when the water of baptism flowed from His side on the Cross; consequently, before the Resurrection. All authorities agree that Matthew 28, contains the solemn promulgation of this sacrament, and St. Leo does not seem to intend more than this. We need not delay on the arguments of those who declare baptism to have been necessarily established after Christ's death, because the efficacy of the sacraments is derived from His Passion. This would prove also that the Holy Eucharist was not instituted before His death, which is untenable. As to the frequent statement of the Fathers that the sacraments flowed from the side of Christ upon the Cross, it is enough to say that beyond the symbolism found therein, their words can be explained as referring to the death of Christ, as the meritorious cause or perfection of the sacraments, but not necessarily as their time of institution.

All things considered, we can safely state, therefore, that Christ most probably instituted baptism before His Passion. For in the first place, as is evident from John 3 and 4, Christ certainly conferred baptism, at least by the hands of His Disciples, before His Passion. That this was an essentially different rite from John the Precursor's baptism seems plain, because the baptism of Christ is always preferred to that of John, and the latter himself states the reason: "I baptize with water . . . [Christ] baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1). In the baptism given by the Disciples as narrated in these chapters we seem to have all the requisites of a sacrament of the New Law:

- the external rite,
- the institution of Christ, for they baptized by His command and mission, and
- the conferring of grace, for they bestowed the Holy Ghost (John 1).

In the second place, the Apostles received other sacraments from Christ, before His Passion, as the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, and Holy orders (Council of Trent, Sess. XXVI, c. i). Now as baptism has always been held as the door of the Church and the necessary condition for the reception of any other sacrament, it follows that the Apostles must have received Christian baptism before the Last Supper. This argument is used by St. Augustine (Epistle 44) and certainly seems valid. To suppose that the first pastors of the Church received the other sacraments by dispensation, before they had received baptism, is an opinion with no foundation in Scripture or Tradition and devoid of verisimilitude. The Scriptures nowhere state that Christ Himself conferred baptism, but an ancient tradition

(Nicephorus, Hist. eccl, II, iii; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Book III) declares that He baptized the Apostle Peter only, and that the latter baptized Andrew, James, and John, and they the other Apostles.

## Matter and form of the sacrament

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### **Matter**

In all sacraments we treat of the matter and the form. It is also usual to distinguish the remote matter and the proximate matter. In the case of baptism, the remote matter is natural and true water. We shall consider this aspect of the question first.

#### *(a) Remote matter*

It is of faith (*de fide*) that true and natural water is the remote matter of baptism. In addition to the authorities already cited, we may also mention the Fourth Council of the Lateran (c. i).

Some of the early Fathers, as Tertullian (*On Baptism* 1) and St. Augustine (Adv. Hær., xlvi and lix) enumerate heretics who rejected water entirely as a constituent of baptism. Such were the Gaians, Manichians, Seleucians, and Hermians. In the Middle Ages, the Waldensians are said to have held the same tenet (Ewald, *Contra Walden.*, vi). Some of the sixteenth century reformers, while accepting water as the ordinary matter of this sacrament, declared that when water could not be had, any liquid could be used in its place. So Luther (Tischr., xvii) and Beza (Ep., ii, ad Till.). It was in consequence of this teaching that certain of the Tridentine canons were framed. Calvin held that the water used in baptism was simply symbolic of the Blood of Christ (Instit., IV, xv).

As a rule, however, those sects which believe in baptism at the present time, recognize water as the necessary matter of the sacrament.

Scripture is so positive in its statements as to the use of true and natural water for baptism that it is difficult to see why it should ever be called in question. Not only have we the explicit words of Christ (John 3:5) "Unless a man be born again of water", etc., but also in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul there are passages that preclude any metaphorical interpretation. Thus (Acts 10:47) St. Peter says "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" In the eighth chapter of the Acts is narrated the episode of Philip and the eunuch of Ethiopia, and in verse 36 we read: "They came to a certain water; and the eunuch said: See, here is water: what doth hinder me from being baptized?"



Equally positive is the testimony of [Christian tradition](#). [Tertullian](#) (*On Baptism 1*) begins his treatise: "The [happy sacrament](#) of our [water](#)". [Justin Martyr](#) (*First Apology, Chapter 1*) describes the [ceremony](#) of baptism and declares: Then they are led by us to where there is [water](#) . . . and then they are laved in the [water](#)". [St. Augustine](#) positively declares that there is no baptism without [water](#) ([Tractate 15 on the Gospel of John](#)).

The remote [matter](#) of baptism, then, is water, and this taken in its usual meaning. [Theologians](#) tell us consequently that what men would ordinarily declare water is valid baptismal material, whether it be water of the sea, or fountain, or well, or marsh; whether it be clear or turbid; fresh or salty; hot or cold; colored or uncolored. Water derived from melted ice, snow, or hail is also valid. If, however, ice, snow, or hail be not melted, they do not come under the designation [water](#). Dew, sulfur or mineral water, and that which is derived from steam are also valid [matter](#) for this [sacrament](#). As to a mixture of water and some other material, it is held as proper [matter](#), provided the water certainly predominates and the mixture would still be called water. Invalid [matter](#) is every liquid that is not usually designated [true](#) water. Such are oil, saliva, wine, tears, milk, sweat, beer, soup, the juice of fruits, and any mixture containing water which [men](#) would no longer call water. When it is [doubtful](#) whether a liquid could really be called water, it is not permissible to use it for baptism except in case of absolute [necessity](#) when no certainly valid [matter](#) can be obtained.

On the other hand, it is never allowable to baptize with an invalid liquid. There is a response of [Pope Gregory IX](#) to the [Archbishop](#) of [Trondhjem](#) in [Norway](#) where beer (or mead) had been employed for baptism. The [pontiff](#) says: "Since according to the [Gospel](#) teaching, a [man](#) must be born again of water and the [Holy Ghost](#), those are not to be considered validly baptized who have been baptized with beer" (*cervisia*). It is [true](#) that a statement declaring [wine](#) to be valid [matter](#) of baptism is attributed to [Pope Stephen II](#), but the document is void of all authority (Labbe, Conc., VI).

Those who have held that "water" in the [Gospel](#) text is to be taken metaphorically, appeal to the words of the [Precursor](#) ([Matthew 3](#)), "He shall baptize you in the [Holy Ghost](#) and fire". As "fire" must certainly be only a figure of speech here, so must "water" in the other texts. To this objection, it may be replied that the [Christian Church](#), or at least the [Apostles](#) themselves, must have understood what was prescribed to be taken literally and what figuratively. The [New Testament](#) and [church history](#) prove that they never looked on fire as a material for baptism, while they certainly did require water. Outside of the insignificant [sects](#) of [Seleucians](#) and [Hermians](#), not even [heretics](#) took the word "fire" in this text in its literal meaning. We may remark, however, that some of the [Fathers](#), as [St. John Damascene](#) (*Of the Orthodox Faith IV.9*), concede this statement of the [Baptist](#) to have a literal fulfillment in the [Pentecostal](#) fiery tongues. They do not refer it, however, literally to baptism. That water alone is the [necessary matter](#) of this [sacrament](#) depends of course on the will of Him Who instituted it, although [theologians](#) discover many reasons why it should

have been chosen in preference to other liquids. The most obvious of these is that water cleanses and purifies more perfectly than the others, and hence the symbolism is more natural.

*(b) Proximate matter*

The proximate **matter** of baptism is the ablution performed with water. The very word "baptize", as we have seen, means a washing.

Three forms of ablution have prevailed among **Christians**, and the **Church** holds them all to be valid because they fulfill the requisite signification of the baptismal laving. These forms are immersion, infusion, and aspersion.

The most ancient form usually employed was unquestionably immersion. This is not only evident from the writings of the **Fathers** and the early rituals of both the **Latin** and **Oriental Churches**, but it can also be gathered from the **Epistles** of **St. Paul**, who speaks of baptism as a bath (**Ephesians 5:26**; **Romans 6:4**; **Titus 3:5**). In the **Latin Church**, immersion seems to have prevailed until the twelfth century. After that **time** it is found in some places even as late as the sixteenth century. Infusion and aspersion, however, were growing common in the thirteenth century and gradually prevailed in the **Western Church**. The **Oriental Churches** have retained immersion, though not always in the sense of plunging the candidate's entire body below the water. **Billuart** (*De Bapt.*, I, iii) says that commonly the **catechumen** is placed in the **font**, and then water is poured upon the head. He cites the authority of **Goar** for this statement.

Although, as we have said, immersion was the form of baptism that generally prevailed in the early ages, it must not thereby be inferred that the other forms of infusion and aspersion were not also employed and held to be valid. In the case of the sick or dying, immersion was impossible and the **sacrament** was then conferred by one of the other forms. This was so well recognized that infusion or aspersion received the name of the baptism of the sick (*baptismus clinicorum*). **St. Cyprian** (**Epistle 75**) declares this form to be valid. From the canons of various early councils we **know** that candidates for **Holy orders** who had been baptized by this method seem to have been regarded as **irregular**, but this was on account of the culpable **negligence** supposed to be manifested in delaying baptism until sick or dying. That such **persons**, however, were not to be rebaptized is an evidence that the **Church** held their baptism to be valid. It is also pointed out that the circumstances under which **St. Paul** (**Acts 16**) baptized his jailer and all his household seem to preclude the use of immersion. Moreover, the **acts of the early martyrs** frequently refer to baptizing in **prisons** where infusion or aspersion was certainly employed.

By the present authorized ritual of the **Latin Church**, baptism must be performed by a laving of the head of the candidate. **Moralists**, however, state that in case of **necessity**, the baptism would probably be valid if the water were applied to any other principal part of the

body, as the breast or shoulder. In this case, however, conditional baptism would have to be administered if the [person](#) survived ([St. Alphonsus](#), no. 107). In like manner they consider as probably valid the baptism of an infant in its mother's womb, provided the water, by means of an instrument, would actually flow upon the child. Such baptism is, however, later to be repeated conditionally, if the child survives its birth ([Lehmkuhl](#), n. 61).

It is to be noted that it is not sufficient for the water to merely touch the candidate; it must also flow, otherwise there would seem to be no real ablution. At best, such a baptism would be considered [doubtful](#). If the water touches only the hair, the [sacrament](#) has probably been validly conferred, though in practice the safer course must be followed. If only the clothes of the [person](#) have received the aspersion, the baptism is undoubtedly void.

The water to be employed in solemn baptism should also be [consecrated](#) for the purpose, but of this we shall treat in another section of this article. It is [necessary](#) in baptizing to make use of a threefold ablution in conferring this [sacrament](#), by reason of the prescription of the [Roman ritual](#). This necessarily refers, however, to the liceity, not to the validity of the [ceremony](#), as [St. Thomas](#) ([III.66.8](#)) and other [theologians](#) expressly state.

The threefold immersion is unquestionably very ancient in the [Church](#) and apparently of [Apostolic](#) origin. It is mentioned by [Tertullian](#) ([De Corona 3](#)), [St. Basil](#) ([On the Holy Spirit 27](#)), [St. Jerome](#) ([Against the Luciferians 8](#)), and many other early writers. Its object is, of course, to [honor](#) the three Persons of the [Holy Trinity](#) in whose name it is conferred. That this threefold ablution was not considered [necessary](#) to the validity of the [sacrament](#), however, is plain. In the seventh century the Fourth Council of Toledo (633) approved the use of a single ablution in baptism, as a protest against the [false](#) trinitarian theories of the [Arians](#), who seem to have given to the threefold immersion a significance which made it imply three [natures](#) in the [Holy Trinity](#). To insist on the unity and [consubstantiality](#) of the [three Divine Persons](#), the [Spanish Catholics](#) adopted the single ablution and this method had the approval of [Pope Gregory the Great](#) ([Letters I.43](#)). The [Eunomian heretics](#) used only one immersion and their baptism was held invalid by the [First Council of Constantinople](#) (can. vii); but this was not on account of the single ablution, but apparently because they baptized in the death of [Christ](#). The authority of this canon is, moreover, [doubtful](#) at best.

## **Form**

The requisite and sole valid [form](#) of baptism is: "I baptize thee (or This [person](#) is baptized) in the name of the Father and of the [Son](#) and of the [Holy Ghost](#)." This was the [form](#) given by [Christ](#) to His Disciples in the [twenty-eighth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel](#), as far, at least, as there is question of the invocation of the separate Persons of the [Trinity](#) and the expression of the nature of the action performed. For the Latin usage: "I baptize thee", etc., we have the authority of the [Council of Trent](#) (Sess. VII, can. iv) and of the [Council of](#)

Florence in the Decree of Union. In addition we have the constant practice of the whole Western Church. The Latins also recognize as valid the form used by the Greeks: "This servant of Christ is baptized", etc. The Florentine decree acknowledges the validity of this form and it is moreover recognized by the Bull of Leo X, "Accepimus nuper", and of Clement VII, "Provisionis nostrae." Substantially, the Latin and Greek forms are the same, and the Latin Church has never rebaptized Orientals on their return to unity.

At one time some Western theologians disputed the Greek form, because they doubted the validity of the imperative or deprecatory formula: "Let this person be baptized" (*baptizetur*). As a matter of fact, however, the Greeks use the indicative, or enuntiative, formula: "This person is baptized" (*baptizetai, baptizetur*). This is unquestionable from their Euchologies, and from the testimony of Arcudius (apud Cat., tit. ii, cap. i), of Goar (Rit. Græc. Illust.), of Martène (De Ant. Eccl. Rit., I) and of the theological compendium of the schismatical Russians (St. Petersburg, 1799). It is true that in the decree for the Armenians, Pope Eugene IV uses *baptizetur*, according to the ordinary version of this decree, but Labbe, in his edition of the Council of Florence seems to consider it a corrupt reading, for in the margin he prints *baptizatur*. It has been suggested by Goar that the resemblance between *baptizetai* and *baptizetur* is responsible for the mistake. The correct translation is, of course, *baptizatur*.

In administering this sacrament it is absolutely necessary to use the word "baptize" or its equivalent (Alex. VIII, Prop. damn., xxvii), otherwise the ceremony is invalid. This had already been decreed by Alexander III (Cap. Si quis, I, x, De Bapt.), and it is confirmed by the Florentine decree. It has been the constant practice of both the Latin and Greek Churches to make use of words expressing the act performed. St. Thomas (III:66:5) says that since an ablution may be employed for many purposes, it is necessary that in baptism the meaning of the ablution be determined by the words of the form. However, the words: "In the name of the Father", etc., would not be sufficient by themselves to determine the sacramental nature of the ablution. St. Paul (Colossians 3) exhorts us to do all things in the name of God, and consequently an ablution could be performed in the name of the Trinity to obtain restoration of health. Therefore it is that in the form of this sacrament, the act of baptism must be expressed, and the matter and form be united to leave no doubt of the meaning of the ceremony.

In addition to the necessary word "baptize", or its equivalent, it is also obligatory to mention the separate Persons of the Holy Trinity. This is the command of Christ to His Disciples, and as the sacrament has its efficacy from Him Who instituted it, we can not omit anything that He has prescribed. Nothing is more certain than that this has been the general understanding and practice of the Church. Tertullian tells us (*On Baptism 13*): "The law of baptism (*tingendi*) has been imposed and the form prescribed: Go, teach the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." St. Justin Martyr (*First Apology 1*) testifies to the practice in his time. St. Ambrose (*On the*

*Mysteries 4*) declares: "Unless a **person** has been baptized in the name of the Father and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Ghost**, he can not obtain the remission of his **sins**," **St. Cyprian** (*Epistle 72*), rejecting the validity of baptism given in the name of **Christ** only, **affirms** that the naming of all the Persons of the **Trinity** was commanded by the **Lord** (*in plena et adunata Trinitate*). The same is declared by many other primitive writers, as **St. Jerome** (IV, in Matt.), **Origen** (*De Principiis I.2*), **St. Athanasius** (*Against the Arians, Oration 4*), **St. Augustine** (*On Baptism 6.25*). It is not, of course, absolutely **necessary** that the common names Father, **Son**, and **Holy Ghost** be used, provided the Persons be expressed by words that are equivalent or synonymous. But a distinct naming of the Divine Persons is required and the **form**: "I baptize thee in the name of the **Holy Trinity**", would be of more than **doubtful** validity.

The singular **form** "In the name", not "names", is also to be employed, as it expresses the unity of the Divine **nature**. When, through **ignorance**, an **accidental**, not **substantial**, change has been made in the **form** (as *In nomine patriâ* for *Patris*), the baptism is to be held valid.

The **mind** of the **Church** as to the **necessity** of serving the trinitarian formula in this **sacrament** has been clearly shown by her treatment of baptism conferred by **heretics**. Any **ceremony** that did not observe this **form** has been declared invalid. The **Montanists** baptized in the name of the Father and the **Son** and **Montanus** and **Priscilla** (**St. Basil, Epistle 188**). As a consequence, the Council of **Laodicea** ordered their rebaptism. The **Arians** at the time of the **Council of Nicæa** do not seem to have tampered with the baptismal formula, for that Council does not order their rebaptism. When, then, **St. Athanasius** (*Against the Arians, Oration 2*) and **St. Jerome** (*Against the Luciferians*) declare the **Arians** to have baptized in the name of the Creator and creatures, they must either refer to their **doctrine** or to a later changing of the **sacramental form**. It is well known that the latter was the case with the **Spanish Arians** and that consequently **converts** from the **sect** were rebaptized. The Anomæans, a branch of the **Arians**, baptized with the formula: "In the name of the uncreated **God** and in the name of the **created Son**, and in the name of the Sanctifying Spirit, procreated by the **created Son**" (Epiphanius, *Hær.*, lxxvii).

Other **Arian sects**, such as the **Eunomians** and Aetians, baptized "in the death of **Christ**". **Converts** from **Sabellianism** were ordered by the **First Council of Constantinople** (can. vii) to be rebaptized because the doctrine of Sabellius that there was but one **person** in the **Trinity** had infected their baptismal **form**. The two **sects** sprung from **Paul of Samosata**, who denied **Christ's** Divinity, likewise conferred invalid baptism. They were the Paulianists and **Photinians**. **Pope Innocent I** (Ad. *Episc. Maced.*, vi) declares that these sectaries did not distinguish the Persons of the **Trinity** when baptizing. The **Council of Nicæa** (canon 19) ordered the rebaptism of Paulianists, and the **Council of Arles** (can. xvi and xvii) **decreed** the same for both Paulianists and **Photinians**.

There has been a **theological** controversy over the question as to whether baptism in the name of **Christ** only was ever held valid. Certain texts in the **New Testament** have given rise

to this difficulty. Thus **St. Paul** (**Acts 19**) commands some **disciples** at Ephesus to be baptized in **Christ's** name: "They were baptized in the **name of the Lord Jesus**." In **Acts 10**, we read that **St. Peter** ordered others to be baptized "in the name of the **Lord Jesus Christ**". Those who were **converted** by Philip. (**Acts 8**) "were baptized in the name of **Jesus Christ**", and above all we have the explicit command of the **Prince of the Apostles**: "Be baptized every one of you in the name of **Jesus Christ**, for the remission of your **sins** (**Acts 2**).

Owing to these texts some **theologians** have held that the **Apostles** baptized in the name of **Christ** only. **St. Thomas**, **St. Bonaventure**, and **Albertus Magnus** are invoked as authorities for this opinion, **they declaring that the Apostles so acted by special dispensation**. Other writers, as **Peter Lombard** and **Hugh of St. Victor**, **hold also that such baptism would be valid, but say nothing of a dispensation for the Apostles**. The most probable opinion, however, seems to be that the terms "in the name of **Jesus**", "in the name of **Christ**", either refer to baptism in the **faith** taught by **Christ**, or are employed to distinguish **Christian** baptism from that of **John the Precursor**. **It seems altogether unlikely that immediately after Christ had solemnly promulgated the trinitarian formula of baptism, the Apostles themselves would have substituted another**. In fact, the words of **St. Paul** (**Acts 19**) imply quite plainly that they did not. For, when some **Christians** at Ephesus declared that they had never heard of the **Holy Ghost**, the **Apostle** asks: "In whom then were you baptized?" This text certainly seems to declare that **St. Paul** took it for granted that the Ephesians must have heard the name of the **Holy Ghost** when the **sacramental** formula of baptism was pronounced over them.

The authority of **Pope Stephen I** has been alleged for the validity of baptism given in the name of **Christ** only. **St. Cyprian** says (**Epistle 72**) that this **pontiff** declared all baptism valid provided it was given in the name of **Jesus Christ**. It must be noted that the same explanation applies to **Stephen's** words as to the **Scriptural** texts above given. Moreover, **Firmilian**, in his **letter** to **St. Cyprian**, implies that **Pope Stephen** required an explicit mention of the **Trinity** in baptism, for he quotes the **pontiff** as declaring that the **sacramental grace** is conferred because a **person** has been baptized "with the invocation of the names of the **Trinity**, Father and Son and **Holy Ghost**".

A passage that is very difficult of explanation is found in the works of **St. Ambrose** (**On the Holy Spirit I.3**), where he declares that if a **person** names one of the **Trinity**, he names all of them: "If you say **Christ**, you have designated **God the Father**, by whom the Son was anointed, and Him Who was anointed Son, and the **Holy Ghost** in whom He was anointed." This passage has been generally interpreted as referring to the **faith** of the **catechumen**, but not to the baptismal **form**. More difficult is the explanation of the response of **Pope Nicholas I** to the **Bulgarians** (cap. civ; **Labbe**, VIII), in which he states that a **person** is not to be rebaptized who has already been baptized "in the name of the **Holy Trinity** or in the name of **Christ** only, as we read in the **Acts of the Apostles** (for it is one and the same thing, as **St. Ambrose** has explained)". As in the passage to which the **pope** alludes, **St.**

**Ambrose** was speaking of the **faith** of the recipient of baptism, as we have already stated, it has been held probable that this is also the meaning that **Pope Nicholas** intended his words to convey (see another explanation in Pesch, Prælect. Dogm., VI, no. 389). What seems to confirm this is the same **pontiff's** reply to the **Bulgarians** (Resp. 15) on another occasion when they consulted him on a practical case. They inquired whether certain **persons** are to be rebaptized on whom a man, pretending to be a Greek **priest**, had conferred baptism? **Pope Nicholas** replies that the baptism is to be held valid "if they were baptized, in the name of the supreme and undivided **Trinity**". Here the **pope** does not give baptism in the name of **Christ** only as an alternative. **Moralists** raise the question of the validity of a baptism in whose administration something else had been added to the prescribed **form** as "and in the name of the **Blessed Virgin Mary**". They reply that such baptism would be invalid, if the **minister** intended thereby to attribute the same efficacy to the added name as to the names of the **Three Divine Persons**. If, however, it was done through a mistaken piety only, it would not interfere with the validity (S. Alph., n. 111).

## Conditional baptism

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From the foregoing it is evident that not all baptism administered by **heretics** or **schismatics** is invalid. On the contrary, if the proper **matter** and **form** be used and the one conferring the **sacrament** really "**intends** to perform what the **Church** performs" the baptism is undoubtedly valid. This is also authoritatively stated in the **decree** for the **Armenians** and the canons of the **Council of Trent** already given. The question becomes a practical one when **converts** to the **Faith** have to be dealt with. If there were one authorized mode of baptizing among the **sects**, and if the **necessity** and **true** significance of the **sacrament** were uniformly taught and put in practice among them, there would be little difficulty as to the status of **converts** from the **sects**. But there is no such unity of teaching and practice among them, and consequently the particular case of each **convert** must be examined into when there is question of his reception into the **Church**. For not only are there **religious denominations** in which baptism is in all probability not validly administered, but there are those also which have a ritual sufficient indeed for validity, but in practice the likelihood of their members having received baptism validly is more than **doubtful**. As a consequence **converts** must be dealt with differently. If it be **certain** that a **convert** was validly baptized in **heresy**, the **sacrament** is not repeated, but the **ceremonies** which had been omitted in such baptism are to be supplied, unless the **bishop**, for sufficient reasons, judges that they can be **dispensed** with. (For the **United States**, see the **First Council of Baltimore**.) If it be uncertain whether the **convert's** baptism was valid or not, then he is to be baptized conditionally. In such cases the ritual is: "If thou art not yet baptized, then I baptize thee in the name", etc. The First Synod of Westminster, **England**, directs that adult **converts** are to be baptized not publicly but privately with **holy water** (i.e. not the **consecrated** baptismal water) and without the usual **ceremonies** (Decr. xvi). Practically, **converts** in the **United**

**States** are almost invariably baptized either absolutely or conditionally, not because the baptism administered by **heretics** is held to be invalid, but because it is generally impossible to discover whether they had ever been properly baptized. Even in cases where a **ceremony** had certainly been performed, reasonable **doubt** of validity will generally remain, on account of either the **intention** of the administrator or the mode of administration. Still each case must be examined into (S. C. Inquis., 20 Nov., 1878) lest the **sacrament** be **sacrilegiously** repeated.

As to the baptism of the various **sects**, Sabetti (no. 662) states that the **Oriental Churches** and the "**Old Catholics**" generally administer baptism accurately; the **Socinians** and **Quakers** do not baptize at all; the **Baptists** use the **rite** only for adults, and the efficacy of their baptism has been called in question owing to the separation of the **matter** and the **form**, for the latter is pronounced before the immersion takes place; the **Congregationalists**, **Unitarians** and **Universalists** deny the **necessity** of baptism, and hence the presumption is that they do not administer it accurately; the **Methodists** and **Presbyterians** baptize by aspersion or sprinkling, and it may be reasonably **doubted** whether the water has touched the body and flowed upon it; among the **Episcopalians** many consider baptism to have no **true** efficacy and to be merely an empty **ceremony**, and consequently there is a well-grounded fear that they are not sufficiently careful in its administration. To this may be added, that **Episcopalians** often baptize by aspersion, and though such a method is undoubtedly valid if properly employed, yet in practice it is quite possible that the sprinkled water may not touch the skin. Sabetti also notes that **ministers** of the same **sect** do not everywhere follow a uniform method of baptizing.

The practical method of reconciling **heretics** with the **Church** is as follows:-- If baptism be conferred absolutely, the **convert** is to make no **abjuration** or profession of **faith**, nor is he to make a confession of his **sins** and receive **absolution**, because the **sacrament** of **regeneration** washes away his past offences. If his baptism is to be conditional, he must first make an **abjuration** of his **errors**, or a profession of **faith**, then receive the conditional baptism, and lastly make a **sacramental confession** followed by conditional **absolution**. If the **convert's** former baptism was judged to be certainly valid, he is only to make the **abjuration** or the profession of **faith** and receive **absolution** from the **censures** he may have incurred (Excerpta Rit. Rom., 1878). The **abjuration** or profession of **faith** here prescribed is the **Creed** of **Pius IV**, translated into the vernacular. In the case of conditional baptism, the confession may precede the administration of the **rite** and the conditional **absolution** be imparted after the baptism. This is often done as a matter of fact, as the confession is an excellent preparation for the reception of the **sacrament** (De Herdt, VI, viii; Sabetti, no. 725).

## Rebaptism

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To complete the consideration of the validity of baptism conferred by [heretics](#), we must give some account of the celebrated controversy that raged around this point in the ancient [Church](#). In [Africa](#) and [Asia Minor](#) the [custom](#) had been introduced in the early part of the third century of rebaptizing all [converts](#) from [heresy](#). As far as can be now ascertained, the practice of rebaptism arose in [Africa](#) owing to [decrees](#) of a [Synod of Carthage](#) held probably between 218 and 222; while in [Asia Minor](#) it seems to have had its origin at the [Synod of Iconium](#), celebrated between 230 and 235. The controversy on rebaptism is especially connected with the names of [Pope St. Stephen](#) and of [St. Cyprian of Carthage](#). The latter was the main champion of the practice of rebaptizing. The [pope](#), however, absolutely condemned the practice, and commanded that [heretics](#) on entering the [Church](#) should receive only the [imposition of hands](#) *in paenitentiam*. In this celebrated controversy it is to be noted that [Pope Stephen](#) declares that he is upholding the primitive [custom](#) when he declares for the validity of baptism conferred by [heretics](#).

[Cyprian](#), on the contrary, implicitly admits that antiquity is against his own practice, but stoutly maintains that it is more in accordance with an enlightened study of the subject. The [tradition](#) against him he declares to be "a human and unlawful tradition". Neither [Cyprian](#), however, nor his [zealous](#) abettor, [Firmilian](#), could show that rebaptism was older than the century in which they were living. The contemporaneous but anonymous author of the book "De Rebaptismate" says that the ordinances of [Pope Stephen](#), forbidding the rebaptism of [converts](#), are in accordance with antiquity and [ecclesiastical tradition](#), and are [consecrated](#) as an ancient, memorable, and [solemn](#) observance of all the [saints](#) and of all the [faithful](#). [St. Augustine](#) believes that the [custom](#) of not rebaptizing is an [Apostolic tradition](#), and [St. Vincent of Lérins](#) declares that the [Synod of Carthage](#) introduced rebaptism against the [Divine Law](#) (*canonem*), against the rule of the [universal Church](#), and against the customs and institutions of the ancients. By [Pope Stephen's](#) decision, he continues, antiquity was retained and novelty was destroyed (*retenta est antiquitas, explosa novitas*). It is [true](#) that the so-called [Apostolic Canons](#) (xlv and xlvi) speak of the non-validity of baptism conferred by [heretics](#), but [Döllinger](#) says that these canons are comparatively recent, and [De Marca](#) points out that [St. Cyprian](#) would have [appealed](#) to them had they been in [existence](#) before the controversy. [Pope St. Stephen](#), therefore, upheld a [doctrine](#) already ancient in the third century when he declared against the rebaptism of [heretics](#), and decided that the [sacrament](#) was not to be repeated because its first administration had been valid, This has been the [law](#) of the [Church](#) ever since.

## Necessity of baptism

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[Theologians](#) distinguish a twofold [necessity](#), which they call a [necessity](#) of means (*medii*) and a [necessity](#) of precept (*præcepti*). The first (*medii*) indicates a thing to be so [necessary](#) that, if lacking (though inculpably), [salvation](#) can not be attained. The second (*præcepti*) is

had when a thing is indeed so **necessary** that it may not be omitted voluntarily without **sin**; yet, **ignorance** of the **precept** or inability to fulfill it, excuses one from its observance.

Baptism is held to be **necessary** both *necessitate medii* and *præcepti*. This **doctrine** is grounded on the words of **Christ**. In **John 3**, He declares: "Unless a man be born again of water and the **Holy Ghost**, he can not enter into the **kingdom of God**." **Christ** makes no exception to this **law** and it is therefore general in its application, embracing both adults and infants. It is consequently not merely a **necessity** of precept but also a **necessity** of means.

This is the sense in which it has always been understood by the **Church**, and the **Council of Trent** (Sess, IV, cap, vi) teaches that **justification** can not be obtained, since the promulgation of the **Gospel**, without the washing of **regeneration** or the desire thereof (*in voto*). In the seventh session, it declares (can. v) **anathema** upon anyone who says that baptism is not **necessary** for **salvation**. We have rendered *votum* by "desire" for want of a better word. The council does not mean by *votum* a simple desire of receiving baptism or even a resolution to do so. It means by *votum* an **act** of perfect charity or **contrition**, including, at least implicitly, the will to do all things **necessary** for **salvation** and thus especially to receive baptism.

The absolute **necessity** of this **sacrament** is often insisted on by the **Fathers of the Church**, especially when they speak of infant baptism. Thus **St. Irenæus** (*Against Heresies 2.22*): "**Christ** came to **save** all who are reborn through Him to **God** — infants, children, and youths" (*infantes et parvulos et pueros*). **St. Augustine** (*On the Soul, Book III*) says "If you wish to be a **Catholic**, do not **believe**, nor say, nor teach, that infants who die before baptism can obtain the remission of **original sin**." A still stronger passage from the same **doctor** (*Epistle 28*) reads: "Whoever says that even infants are vivified in **Christ** when they depart this life without the participation of His **Sacrament** (Baptism), both opposes the **Apostolic** preaching and condemns the whole **Church** which hastens to baptize infants, because it unhesitatingly **believes** that otherwise they can not possibly be vivified in **Christ**," **St. Ambrose** (II De Abraham., c. xi) speaking of the **necessity** of baptism, says: "No one is excepted, not the infant, not the one hindered by any **necessity**."

In the **Pelagian** controversy we find similarly strong pronouncements on the part of the **Councils of Carthage and Milevis**, and of **Pope Innocent I**. It is owing to the **Church's belief** in this **necessity** of baptism as a means to **salvation** that, as was already noted by **St. Augustine**, she committed the power of baptism in certain contingencies even to **laymen** and **women**. When it is said that baptism is also **necessary**, by the **necessity** of precept (*præcepti*), it is of course understood that this applies only to such as are capable of receiving a **precept**, viz. adults.

The **necessity** in this case is shown by the command of **Christ** to His **Apostles** (**Matthew 28**): "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them", etc. Since the **Apostles** are commanded to

baptize, the **nations** are commanded to receive baptism. The **necessity** of baptism has been called in question by some of the **Reformers** or their immediate forerunners. It was denied by **Wyclif**, **Bucer**, and **Zwingli**. According to **Calvin** it is **necessary** for adults as a precept but not as a means. Hence he contends that the infants of **believing parents** are sanctified in the womb and thus freed from **original sin** without baptism. The **Socinians** teach that baptism is merely an external profession of the **Christian faith** and a **rite** which each one is free to receive or neglect.

An argument against the absolute **necessity** of baptism has been sought in the text of **Scripture**: "Unless you eat the flesh of the **Son of man** and drink his blood, you shall not have **life** in you" (**John 6**). Here, they say, is a parallel to the text: "Unless a man be born again of water". Yet everyone admits that the Eucharist is not **necessary** as a means but only as a precept. The reply to this is obvious. In the first instance, **Christ** addresses His words in the second person to adults; in the second, He speaks in the third person and without any distinction whatever.

Another favorite text is that of **St. Paul** (**1 Corinthians 7**): "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the **believing** wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the **believing** husband; otherwise your children should be **unclean**; but now they are **holy**." Unfortunately for the strength of this argument, the context shows that the **Apostle** in this passage is not treating of **regenerating or sanctifying grace** at all, but answering certain questions proposed to him by the Corinthians concerning the validity of marriages between **heathens** and believers. The validity of such marriages is **proved** from the fact that children born of them are legitimate, not spurious. As far as the term "sanctified" is concerned, it can, at most, mean that the **believing** husband or wife may **convert** the unbelieving party and thus become an occasion of their sanctification.

A certain statement in the funeral oration of **St. Ambrose** over the **Emperor Valentinian II** has been brought forward as a **proof** that the **Church** offered **sacrifices** and **prayers** for **catechumens** who died before baptism. There is not a vestige of such a **custom** to be found anywhere. **St. Ambrose** may have done so for the **soul** of the **catechumen Valentinian**, but this would be a solitary instance, and it was done apparently because he **believed** that the emperor had had the baptism of desire. The practice of the **Church** is more correctly shown in the canon (xvii) of the **Second Council of Braga**: "Neither the commemoration of **Sacrifice** [*oblationis*] nor the service of **chanting** [*psallendi*] is to be employed for **catechumens** who have died without the **redemption** of baptism." The arguments for a contrary usage sought in the **Second Council of Arles** (c. xii) and the Fourth Council of Carthage (c. lxxix) are not to the point, for these councils speak, not of **catechumens**, but of penitents who had died suddenly before their expiation was completed. It is **true** that some **Catholic** writers (as Cajetan, Durandus, **Biel**, **Gerson**, Toletus, **Klee**) have held that infants may be saved by an act of desire on the part of their **parents**, which is applied to them by some external sign, such as **prayer** or the invocation of the **Holy Trinity**; but **Pius**

V, by expunging this opinion, as expressed by Cajetan, from that author's commentary on [St. Thomas](#), manifested his judgment that such a theory was not agreeable to the [Church's belief](#).

## Substitutes for the sacrament

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The [Fathers](#) and [theologians](#) frequently divide baptism into three kinds: the baptism of water (*aquæ* or *fluminis*), the baptism of desire (*flaminis*), and the baptism of blood (*sanguinis*). However, only the first is a real [sacrament](#). The latter two are denominated baptism only analogically, inasmuch as they supply the principal effect of baptism, namely, the [grace](#) which remits [sins](#). It is the [teaching](#) of the [Catholic Church](#) that when the baptism of water becomes a physical or moral impossibility, [eternal life](#) may be obtained by the baptism of desire or the baptism of blood.

### ***The baptism of desire***

The baptism of desire (*baptismus flaminis*) is a perfect [contrition](#) of heart, and every act of perfect charity or pure [love](#) of [God](#) which contains, at least implicitly, a desire (*votum*) of baptism. The Latin word *flamen* is used because *Flamen* is a name for the [Holy Ghost](#), Whose special office it is to move the heart to [love God](#) and to conceive penitence for [sin](#). The "baptism of the [Holy Ghost](#)" is a term employed in the third century by the anonymous author of the book "De Rebaptismate". The efficacy of this baptism of desire to supply the place of the baptism of water, as to its principal effect, is [proved](#) from the words of [Christ](#). After He had declared the [necessity](#) of baptism ([John 3](#)), He [promised justifying grace](#) for acts of charity or perfect [contrition](#) ([John 14](#)): "He that [loveth](#) Me, shall be [loved](#) of my Father: and I will [love](#) him and will manifest myself to him." And again: "If any one [love](#) me, he will keep my word, and my Father will [love](#) him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him." Since these texts declare that [justifying grace](#) is bestowed on account of acts of perfect charity or [contrition](#), it is evident that these acts supply the place of baptism as to its principal effect, the remission of [sins](#). This [doctrine](#) is set forth clearly by the [Council of Trent](#). In the fourteenth session (cap. iv) the council teaches that [contrition](#) is sometimes perfected by charity, and reconciles [man to God](#), before the [Sacrament of Penance](#) is received. In the fourth chapter of the sixth session, in speaking of the [necessity](#) of baptism, it says that [men](#) can not obtain original justice "except by the washing of [regeneration](#) or its desire" (*voto*). The same [doctrine](#) is taught by [Pope Innocent III](#) (cap. Debitum, iv, De Bapt.), and the contrary propositions are condemned by [Popes Pius V](#) and [Gregory XII](#), in proscribing the 31st and 33rd propositions of [Baius](#).

We have already alluded to the funeral oration pronounced by [St. Ambrose](#) over the [Emperor Valentinian II](#), a [catechumen](#). The [doctrine](#) of the baptism of desire is here clearly

set forth. **St. Ambrose** asks: "Did he not obtain the **grace** which he desired? Did he not obtain what he asked for? Certainly he obtained it because he asked for it." **St. Augustine** (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists, IV.22*) and **St. Bernard** (Ep. lxxvii, ad H. de S. Victore) likewise discourse in the same sense concerning the baptism of desire. If it be said that this **doctrine** contradicts the universal **law** of baptism made by **Christ** (**John 3**), the answer is that the lawgiver has made an exception (**John 14**) in favor of those who have the baptism of desire. Neither would it be a consequence of this **doctrine** that a **person justified** by the baptism of desire would thereby be **dispensed** from seeking after the baptism of water when the latter became a possibility. For, as has already been explained the *baptismus flaminis* contains the *votum* of receiving the *baptismus aquæ*. It is **true** that some of the **Fathers of the Church** arraign severely those who content themselves with the desire of receiving the **sacrament of regeneration**, but they are speaking of **catechumens** who of their own accord delay the reception of baptism from unpraiseworthy motives. Finally, it is to be noted that only adults are capable of receiving the baptism of desire.

## **The baptism of blood**

The baptism of blood (*baptismus sanguinis*) is the obtaining of the **grace** of **justification** by suffering **martyrdom** for the **faith** of **Christ**. The term "washing of blood" (*lavacrum sanguinis*) is used by **Tertullian** (*On Baptism 16*) to distinguish this species of **regeneration** from the "washing of water" (*lavacrum aquæ*). "We have a second washing", he says "which is one and the same [with the first], namely the washing of blood." **St. Cyprian** (*Epistle 73*) speaks of "the most **glorious** and greatest baptism of blood" (*sanguinis baptismus*). **St. Augustine** (*City of God 13.7*) says: "When any die for the confession of **Christ** without having received the washing of **regeneration**, it avails as much for the remission of their **sins** as if they had been washed in the **sacred font of baptism**."

The **Church** grounds her **belief** in the efficacy of the baptism of blood on the fact that **Christ** makes a general statement of the saving power of **martyrdom** in the **tenth chapter of St. Matthew**: "Every one therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in **heaven**" (**verse 32**); and: "He that shall lose his life for me shall find it" (**verse 39**). It is pointed out that these texts are so broadly worded as to include even infants, especially the latter text. That the former text also applies to them, has been constantly maintained by the **Fathers**, who declare that if infants can not confess **Christ** with the mouth, they can by **act**. **Tertullian** (*Against the Valentinians 2*) speaks of the **infants slaughtered by Herod** as **martyrs**, and this has been the constant teaching of the **Church**.

Another evidence of the mind of the **Church** as to the efficacy of the baptism of blood is found in the fact that she never **prays** for **martyrs**. Her opinion is well voiced by **St. Augustine** (*Tractate 74 on the Gospel of John*): "He does an injury to a **martyr** who **prays**

for him." This shows that **martyrdom** is **believed** to remit all **sin** and all punishment due to **sin**. Later **theologians** commonly maintain that the baptism of blood justifies adult **martyrs** independently of an act of charity or perfect **contrition**, and, as it were, *ex opere operato*, though, of course, they must have **attrition** for past **sins**. The reason is that if perfect charity, or **contrition**, were required in **martyrdom**, the distinction between the baptism of blood and the baptism of desire would be a useless one. Moreover, as it must be conceded that infant **martyrs** are **justified** without an act of charity, of which they are incapable, there is no solid reason for denying the same **privilege** to adults. (Cf. **Francisco Suárez**, *De Bapt.*, disp. xxxix.)

## Unbaptized infants

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The fate of infants who die without baptism must be briefly considered here. The **Catholic teaching** is uncompromising on this point, that all who depart this **life** without baptism, be it of water, or blood, or desire, are perpetually excluded from the **vision of God**. This teaching is grounded, as we have seen, on **Scripture** and **tradition**, and the **decrees** of the **Church**. Moreover, that those who die in **original sin**, without ever having contracted any actual **sin**, are deprived of the **happiness of heaven** is stated explicitly in the Confession of Faith of the **Eastern Emperor Michael Palæologus**, which had been proposed to him by **Pope Clement IV** in 1267, and which he accepted in the presence of **Gregory X** at the **Second Council of Lyons** in 1274. The same **doctrine** is found also in the Decree of Union of the Greeks, in the **Bull "Lætentur Caeli"** of **Pope Eugene IV**, in the Profession of Faith prescribed for the Greeks by **Pope Gregory XIII**, and in that authorized for the Orientals by **Urban VIII** and **Benedict XIV**. Many **Catholic theologians** have declared that infants dying without baptism are excluded from the **beatific vision**; but as to the exact state of these **souls** in the next world they are not agreed.

In speaking of **souls** who have failed to attain **salvation**, these **theologians** distinguish the pain of loss (*paena damni*), or privation of the **beatific vision**, and the pain of sense (*paena sensus*). Though these **theologians** have thought it **certain** that unbaptized infants must endure the pain of loss, they have not been similarly **certain** that they are subject to the pain of sense. **St. Augustine** (*Of Sin and Merit* I.16) held that they would not be exempt from the pain of sense, but at the same time he thought it would be of the mildest form. On the other hand, **St. Gregory Nazianzen** (*Oration 40*) expresses the **belief** that such infants would suffer only the pain of loss. **Sfondrati** (*Nod. Prædest.*, I, i) declares that while they are certainly excluded from **heaven**, yet they are not deprived of natural **happiness**. This opinion seemed so objectionable to some **French bishops** that they asked the judgment of the **Holy See** upon the matter. **Pope Innocent XI** replied that he would have the opinion examined into by a **commission** of **theologians**, but no **sentence** seems ever to have been passed upon it. Since the twelfth century, the opinion of the majority of **theologians** has been that unbaptized infants are immune from all pain of sense. This was

taught by [St. Thomas Aquinas](#), Scotus, [St. Bonaventure](#), [Peter Lombard](#), and others, and is now the common teaching in the [schools](#). It accords with the wording of a [decree](#) of [Pope Innocent III](#) (III Decr., xlii, 3): "The punishment of [original sin](#) is the deprivation of the [vision of God](#); of actual [sin](#), the [eternal](#) pains of [hell](#)." Infants, of course, can not be guilty of actual [sin](#).

Other [theologians](#) have urged that, under the [law of nature](#) and the [Mosaic dispensation](#), children could be [saved](#) by the [act](#) of their [parents](#) and that consequently the same should be even more easy of attainment under the [law](#) of [grace](#), because the power of [faith](#) has not been diminished but increased.

Common objections to this theory include the fact that infants are not said to be deprived of [justification](#) in the New Law through any decrease in the power of [faith](#), but because of the [promulgation](#) by [Christ](#) of the [precept](#) of baptism which did not exist before the New Dispensation. Nor would this make the case of infants worse than it was before the [Christian Church](#) was instituted. While it works a hardship for some, it has undoubtedly improved the [condition](#) of most. [Supernatural faith](#) is now much more diffused than it was before the coming of [Christ](#), and more infants are now saved by baptism than were [justified](#) formerly by the active [faith](#) of their [parents](#). Moreover, baptism can more readily be applied to infants than the [rite](#) of [circumcision](#), and by the [ancient law](#) this [ceremony](#) had to be deferred till the eighth day after birth, while baptism can be bestowed upon infants immediately after they are born, and in case of [necessity](#) even in their mother's womb. Finally it must be borne in mind that unbaptized infants, if deprived of [heaven](#), would not be deprived [unjustly](#). The [vision of God](#) is not something to which [human beings](#) have a [natural](#) claim. It is a free gift of the [Creator](#) who can make what [conditions](#) He chooses for imparting it or withholding it. No [injustice](#) is involved when an undue [privilege](#) is not conferred upon a [person](#). [Original sin](#) deprived the [human race](#) of an unearned [right](#) to [heaven](#). Through the Divine mercy this bar to the [enjoyment of God](#) is removed by baptism; but if baptism be not conferred, [original sin](#) remains, and the unregenerated [soul](#), having no claim on [heaven](#), is not [unjustly](#) excluded from it.

As to the question, whether in addition to freedom from the pain of sense, unbaptized infants enjoy any positive [happiness](#) in the next world, [theologians](#) are not agreed, nor is there any pronouncement of the [Church](#) on the subject. Many, following [St. Thomas](#) (De Malo, Q. v, a. 3), declare that these infants are not saddened by the loss of the [beatific vision](#), either because they have no [knowledge](#) of it, and hence are not sensible of their privation; or because, knowing it, their will is entirely conformed to [God's](#) will and they are [conscious](#) that they have missed an undue [privilege](#) through no fault of their own. In addition to this freedom from regret at the loss of [heaven](#), these infants may also enjoy some positive [happiness](#). [St. Thomas](#) (In II Sent., dist. XXXIII, Q. ii, a. 5) says: "Although unbaptized infants are separated from [God](#) as far as [glory](#) is concerned, yet they are not separated from Him entirely. Rather are they joined to Him by a participation of [natural](#)

goods; and so they may even rejoice in Him by **natural** consideration and **love**," Again (a. 2) he says: "They will rejoice in this, that they will share largely in the divine **goodness** and in **natural** perfections." While the opinion, then, that unbaptized infants may enjoy a **natural knowledge** and **love** of **God** and rejoice in it, is perfectly tenable, it has not the **certainty** that would arise from a unanimous consent of the **Fathers of the Church**, or from a favorable pronouncement of ecclesiastical authority.

We may add here some brief remarks on the **discipline of the Church** in regard to unbaptized **persons**. As baptism is the door of the **Church**, the unbaptized are entirely without its pale. As a consequence:

- Such **persons**, by the ordinary **law** of the **Church**, may not receive **Catholic** funeral **rites**. The reason of this regulation is given by **Pope Innocent III** (Decr., III, XXVIII, xii): "It has been **decreed** by the sacred canons that we are to have no communion with those who are dead, if we have not communicated with them while alive." According to **Canon Law** (CIC 1183), however, **catechumens** "are to be considered members of the **Christian faithful**" as regard funeral **rites**. The **Plenary Council of Baltimore** also **decrees** (No. 389) that the **custom** of burying the unbaptized relatives of **Catholics** in the **family** sepulchers may be tolerated.
- A **Catholic** may not **marry** an unbaptized **person** without **dispensation**, under pain of nullity. This **impediment**, as far as illicity is concerned, is derived from the **natural law**, because in such unions the **Catholic** party and the offspring of the marriage would, in most cases, be exposed to the loss of **faith**. The invalidity of such marriage, however, is a consequence only of positive law. For, in the beginning of **Christianity**, unions between the baptized and unbaptized were frequent, and they were certainly held valid. When, then, circumstances arise where the danger of perversion for the **Catholic** party is removed, the **Church dispenses** in her **law** of prohibition, but always requires guarantees from the non-Catholic party that there will be no interference with the spiritual **rights** of the partner of the union. (See IMPEDIMENTS OF MATRIMONY.)

In general, we may state that the **Church** claims no authority over unbaptized **persons**, as they are entirely without her pale. She makes **laws** concerning them only in so far as they hold relations with the subjects of the **Church**.

## Effects of baptism

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This **sacrament** is the door of the **Church of Christ** and the entrance into a new life. We are reborn from the state of slaves of **sin** into the freedom of the **Sons of God**. Baptism incorporates us with **Christ's mystical body** and makes us partakers of all the **privileges** flowing from the **redemptive act** of the **Church's Divine Founder**. We shall now outline the principal effects of baptism.



## ***The remission of all sin, original and actual***

This is clearly contained in the [Bible](#). Thus we read ([Acts 2:38](#)): "Be baptized every one of you in the name of [Jesus Christ](#), for the remission of your [sins](#); and you shall receive the [Holy Ghost](#). For the [promise](#) is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, whomsoever the [Lord our God](#) shall call." We read also in the [twenty-second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles \(verse 16\)](#):

*" Be baptized, and wash away thy [sins](#)." [St. Paul](#) in the [fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians](#) beautifully represents the whole [Church](#) as being baptized and purified ([5:25 sq.](#)): "[Christ loved](#) the [Church](#), and delivered Himself up for it: that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the washing of water in the word of life: that he might present it to Himself a [glorious Church](#), not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be [holy](#) and without blemish.*

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The [prophecy](#) of [Ezekiel \(36:25\)](#) has also been understood of baptism: "I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness (*inquinamentis*), where the [prophet](#) is unquestionably speaking of [moral](#) defilements.

This is also the solemn teaching of the [Church](#). In the profession of [faith](#) prescribed by [Pope Innocent III](#) for the [Waldensians](#) in 1210, we read: We [believe](#) that all [sins](#) are remitted in baptism, both [original sin](#) and those [sins](#) which have been [voluntarily](#) committed." The [Council of Trent](#) (Sess. V., can. v) [anathematizes](#) whomsoever denies that the [grace](#) of [Christ](#) which is conferred in baptism does not remit the guilt of [original sin](#); or asserts that everything which can truly and properly be called [sin](#) is not thereby taken away.

The same is taught by the [Fathers](#). [St. Justin Martyr](#) ([First Apology 66](#)) declares that in baptism we are created anew, that is, consequently, free from all stain of [sin](#). [St. Ambrose](#) ([On the Mysteries 3](#)) says of baptism: "This is the water in which the flesh is submerged that all carnal [sin](#) may be washed away. Every transgression is there buried." [Tertullian](#) ([On Baptism 7](#)) writes: "Baptism is a carnal act in as much as we are submerged in the water; but the effect is spiritual, for we are freed from our [sins](#)." The words of [Origen](#) (In Gen., xiii) are classic: "If you transgress, you write unto yourself the handwriting [*chirographum*] of [sin](#). But, behold, when you have once approached to the cross of [Christ](#) and to the [grace](#) of baptism, your handwriting is affixed to the cross and blotted out in the [font of baptism](#)." It is needless to multiply testimonies from the early ages of the [Church](#). It is a point on which the [Fathers](#) are unanimous, and telling quotations might also be made from [St. Cyprian](#), [Clement of Alexandria](#), [St. Hilary](#), [St. Cyril of Jerusalem](#), [St. Basil](#), [St. Gregory Nazianzen](#), and others.

## ***Remission of temporal punishment***

Baptism not only washes away **sin**, it also remits the punishment of **sin**. This was the plain teaching of the primitive **Church**. We read in **Clement of Alexandria** (*Pædagog.*, i) of baptism: "It is called a washing because we are washed from our **sins**: it is called **grace**, because by it the punishments which are due to **sin** are remitted." **St. Jerome** (*Ep.* lxi) writes: "After the pardon (*indulgentiam*) of baptism, the severity of the **Judge** is not to be **feared**." And **St. Augustine** (*De Pecc. et Mer.*, II, xxviii) says plainly: "If immediately [after baptism] there follows the departure from this **life**, there will be absolutely nothing that a **man** must answer for [quod obnoxium hominem teneat], for he will have been freed from everything that bound him." In perfect accord with the early **doctrine**, the **Florentine decree** states: "No satisfaction is to be enjoined upon the baptized for past **sins**; and if they die before any **sin**, they will immediately attain to the **kingdom of heaven** and to the **vision of God**." In like manner the **Council of Trent** (*Sess. V*) teaches: "There is no cause of **damnation** in those who have been truly buried with **Christ** by baptism . . . Nothing whatever will delay their entrance into **heaven**."

## ***Infusion of supernatural grace, gifts, and virtues***

Another effect of baptism is the infusion of **sanctifying grace** and **supernatural gifts** and **virtues**. It is this **sanctifying grace** which renders **men** the **adopted sons of God** and confers the **right** to **heavenly glory**. The **doctrine** on this subject is found in the seventh chapter on **justification** in the sixth session of the **Council of Trent**. Many of the **Fathers of the Church** also enlarge upon this subject (as **St. Cyprian**, **St. Jerome**, **Clement of Alexandria**, and others), though not in the technical language of later **ecclesiastical decrees**.

## ***Conferral of the right to special graces***

**Theologians** likewise teach that baptism gives **man** the **right** to those special **graces** which are **necessary** for attaining the end for which the **sacrament** was instituted and for enabling him to fulfill the baptismal promises. This doctrine of the **schools**, which claims for every **sacrament** those **graces** which are peculiar and diverse according to the end and object of the **sacrament**, was already enunciated by **Tertullian** (*On the Resurrection* 8). It is treated and developed by **St. Thomas Aquinas** (*III:62:2*). **Pope Eugene IV** repeats this **doctrine** in the **decree** for the **Armenians**. In treating of the **grace** bestowed by baptism, we presume that the recipient of the **sacrament** puts no obstacle (*obex*) in the way of **sacramental grace**. In an infant, of course, this would be impossible, and as a consequence, the infant receives at once all the baptismal **grace**. It is otherwise in the case of an adult, for in such a one it is **necessary** that the requisite dispositions of the **soul** be present.

The [Council of Trent](#) (Sess. VI, c. vii) states that each one receives [grace](#) according to his disposition and co-operation. We are not to confound an obstacle (obex) to the [sacrament](#) itself with an obstacle to the [sacramental grace](#). In the first case, there is implied a defect in the [matter](#) or [form](#), or a lack of the requisite [intention](#) on the part of [minister](#) or recipient, and then the [sacrament](#) would be simply null. But even if all these essential requisites for constituting the [sacrament](#) be present, there can still be an obstacle put in the way of the [sacramental grace](#), inasmuch as an adult might receive baptism with improper motives or without real detestation for [sin](#). In that case the [person](#) would indeed be validly baptized, but he would not participate in the [sacramental grace](#). If, however, at a later [time](#) he made amends for the past, the obstacle would be removed and he would obtain the [grace](#) which he had failed to receive when the [sacrament](#) was conferred upon him. In such a case the [sacrament](#) is said to revive and there could be no question of rebaptism.

### ***Impression of a character on the soul***

Finally, baptism, once validly conferred, can never be repeated. The [Fathers](#) ([St. Ambrose](#), [Chrysostom](#), and others) so understand the words of [St. Paul](#) ([Hebrews 6:4](#)), and this has been the constant teaching of the [Church](#) both [Eastern](#) and [Western](#) from the earliest times. On this account, baptism is said to impress an ineffaceable [character](#) on the [soul](#), which the [Tridentine](#) Fathers call a spiritual and indelible mark. That baptism (as well as [Confirmation](#) and [Holy orders](#)) really does imprint such a [character](#), is defined explicitly by the [Council of Trent](#) (Sess. VII, can. ix). [St. Cyril](#) ([Prologue to the Catechetical Lectures 17](#)) calls baptism a "holy and indelible seal", and [Clement of Alexandria](#) ([Who is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved? 42](#)), "the seal of the [Lord](#)". [St. Augustine](#) compares this [character](#) or mark imprinted upon the [Christian soul](#) with the *character militaris* impressed upon soldiers in the imperial service. [St. Thomas](#) treats of the [nature](#) of this indelible seal, or [character](#), in the [Summa \(III:63:2\)](#).

The early leaders of the so-called [Reformation](#) held very different doctrines from those of [Christian](#) antiquity on the effects of baptism. [Luther](#) ([De Captiv. Bab.](#)) and [Calvin](#) ([Antid. C. Trid.](#)) held that this [sacrament](#) made the baptized certain of the perpetual [grace](#) of [adoption](#). Others declared that the calling to mind of one's baptism would free him from [sins](#) committed after it; others again, that transgressions of the [Divine law](#), although [sins](#) in themselves, would not be imputed as [sins](#) to the baptized [person](#) provided he had [faith](#). The [decrees](#) of the [Council of Trent](#), drawn up in opposition to the then prevailing [errors](#), bear witness to the many strange and novel theories broached by various exponents of the nascent [Protestant theology](#).

### **Minister of the sacrament**

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The Church distinguishes between the ordinary and the extraordinary minister of baptism. A distinction is also made as to the mode of administration. Solemn baptism is that which is conferred with all the rites and ceremonies prescribed by the Church, and private baptism is that which may be administered at any time or place according to the exigencies of necessity. At one time solemn and public baptism was conferred in the Latin Church only during the paschal season and Whitsuntide. The Orientals administered it likewise at the Epiphany.

## **Ordinary minister**

The ordinary minister of solemn baptism is first the bishop and second the priest. By delegation, a deacon may confer the sacrament solemnly as an extraordinary minister.

Bishops are said to be ordinary ministers because they are the successors of the Apostles who received directly the Divine command: "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Priests are also ordinary ministers because by their office and sacred orders they are pastors of souls and administrators of the sacraments, and hence the Florentine decree declares: "The minister of this Sacrament is the priest, to whom it belongs to administer baptism by reason of his office." As, however, bishops are superior to priests by the Divine law, the solemn administration of this sacrament was at one time reserved to the bishops, and a priest never administered this sacrament in the presence of a bishop unless commanded to do so. How ancient this discipline was, may be seen from Tertullian (*On Baptism 17*):

*" The right to confer baptism belongs to the chief priest who is the bishop, then to priests and deacons, but not without the authorization of the bishop.*

*"*

Ignatius (*Epistle to the Smyrnæans 8*): "It is not lawful to baptize or celebrate the agape without the bishop." St. Jerome (*Against the Luciferians 9*) witnesses to the same usage in his days: "Without chrism and the command of the bishop, neither priest nor deacon has the right of conferring baptism."

Deacons are only extraordinary ministers of solemn baptism, as by their office they are assistants to the priestly order. St. Isidore of Seville (*De Eccl. Off.*, ii, 25) says: "It is plain that baptism is to be conferred by priests only, and it is not lawful even for deacons to administer it without permission of the bishop or priest." That deacons were, however, ministers of this sacrament by delegation is evident from the quotations adduced. In the service of ordination of a deacon, the bishop says to the candidate: "It behooves a deacon

to minister at the altar, to baptize and to preach." Philip the deacon is mentioned in the Bible (Acts 8) as conferring baptism, presumably by delegation of the Apostles.

It is to be noted that though every priest, in virtue of his ordination is the ordinary minister of baptism, yet by ecclesiastical decrees he can not use this power licitly unless he has jurisdiction. Hence the Roman Ritual declares: The legitimate minister of baptism is the parish priest, or any other priest delegated by the parish priest or the bishop of the place." The Second Plenary Council of Baltimore adds: "Priests are deserving of grave reprehension who rashly baptize infants of another parish or of another diocese." St. Alphonsus (n. 114) says that parents who bring their children for baptism without necessity to a priest other than their own pastor, are guilty of sin because they violate the rights of the parish priest. He adds, however, that other priests may baptize such children, if they have the permission, whether express, or tacit, or even reasonably presumed, of the proper pastor. Those who have no settled place of abode may be baptized by the pastor of any church they choose.

### ***Extraordinary minister***

In case of necessity, baptism can be administered lawfully and validly by any person whatsoever who observes the essential conditions, whether this person be a Catholic layman or any other man or woman, heretic or schismatic, infidel or Jew.

The essential conditions are that the person pour water upon the one to be baptized, at the same time pronouncing the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Moreover, he must thereby intend really to baptize the person, or technically, he must intend to perform what the Church performs when administering this sacrament.

The Roman Ritual adds that, even in conferring baptism in cases of necessity, there is an order of preference to be followed as to the minister. This order is: if a priest be present, he is to be preferred to a deacon, a deacon to a subdeacon, a cleric to a layman, and a man to a woman, unless modesty should require (as in cases of childbirth) that no other than the female be the minister, or again, unless the female should understand better the method of baptizing. The Ritual also says that the father or mother should not baptize their own child, except in danger of death when no one else is at hand who could administer the sacrament. Pastors are also directed by the Ritual to teach the faithful, and especially midwives, the proper method of baptizing. When such private baptism is administered, the other ceremonies of the rite are supplied later by a priest, if the recipient of the sacrament survives.

This right of any person whatsoever to baptize in case of necessity is in accord with the constant tradition and practice of the Church. Tertullian (*On Baptism 7*) says, speaking of

laymen who have an opportunity to administer baptism: "He will be guilty of the loss of a soul, if he neglects to confer what he freely can," St. Jerome (*Against the Luciferians* 9): "In case of necessity, we know that it is also allowable for a layman [to baptize]; for as a person receives, so may he give," The Fourth Council of the Lateran (cap. Firmiter) decrees: "The Sacrament of Baptism . . . no matter by whom conferred is available to salvation," St. Isidore of Seville (can. Romanus de cons., iv) declares: "The Spirit of God administers the grace of baptism, although it be a pagan who does the baptizing," Pope Nicholas I teaches the Bulgarians (Resp. 104) that baptism by a Jew or a pagan is valid.

Owing to the fact that women are barred from enjoying any species of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the question necessarily arose concerning their ability to bestow valid baptism. Tertullian (*On Baptism* 17) strongly opposes the administration of this sacrament by women, but he does not declare it void. In like manner, St. Epiphanius (Hær., lxxix) says of females: "Not even the power of baptizing has been granted to them", but he is speaking of solemn baptism, which is a function of the priesthood. Similar expressions may be found in the writings of other Fathers, but only when they are opposing the grotesque doctrine of some heretics, like the Marcionites, Pepuzians, and Cataphrygians, who wished to make Christian priestesses of women. The authoritative decision of the Church, however, is plain. Pope Urban II (c. Super quibus, xxx, 4) writes, "It is true baptism if a woman in case of necessity baptizes a child in the name of the Trinity." The Florentine decree for the Armenians says explicitly: "In case of necessity, not only a priest or a deacon, but even a layman or woman, nay even a pagan or heretic may confer baptism."

The main reason for this extension of power as to the administration of baptism is of course that the Church has understood from the beginning that this was the will of Christ. St. Thomas (III:62:3) says that owing to the absolute necessity of baptism for the salvation of souls, it is in accordance with the mercy of God, who wishes all to be saved, that the means of obtaining this sacrament should be put, as far as possible, within the reach of all; and as for that reason the matter of the sacrament was made of common water, which can most easily be had, so in like manner it was only proper that every man should be made its minister. Finally, it is to be noted that, by the law of the Church, the person administering baptism, even in cases of necessity, contracts a spiritual relationship with the child and its parents. This relationship constitutes an impediment that would make a subsequent marriage with any of them null and void unless a dispensation were obtained beforehand. See AFFINITY.

## Recipient of baptism

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Every living human being, not yet baptized, is the subject of this sacrament.

## ***Baptism of adults***

As regards adults there is no difficulty or controversy. **Christ's** command expects no one when He bids the **Apostles** teach all nations and baptize them.

## ***Baptism of infants***

Infant baptism has, however, been the subject of much dispute. The **Waldenses** and **Cathari** and later the **Anabaptists**, rejected the **doctrine** that infants are capable of receiving valid baptism, and some sectarians at the present day hold the same opinion.

The **Catholic Church**, however, maintains absolutely that the **law** of **Christ** applies as well to infants as to adults. When the **Redeemer** declares (**John 3**) that it is **necessary** to be born again of water and the **Holy Ghost** in order to enter the **Kingdom of God**, His words may be justly understood to mean that He includes all who are capable of having a **right** to this **kingdom**. Now, He has asserted such a **right** even for those who are not adults, when He says (**Matthew 19:14**): "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the **kingdom of heaven** is for such." It has been objected that this latter text does not refer to infants, inasmuch as **Christ** says "to come to me". In the parallel passage in **St. Luke (18:15)**, however, the text reads: "And they brought unto him also infants, that he might touch them"; and then follow the words cited from **St. Matthew**. In the Greek text, the words *brephe* and *prosepheron* refer to infants in arms.

Moreover, **St. Paul (Colossians 2)** says that baptism in the New Law has taken the place of **circumcision** in the **Old**. It was especially to infants that the **rite** of **circumcision** was applied by Divine precept. If it be said that there is no example of the baptism of infants to be found in the **Bible**, we may answer that infants are included in such phrases as: "She was baptized and her household" (**Acts 16:15**); "Himself was baptized, and all his house immediately" (**Acts 16:33**); "I baptized the household of Stephanus" (**1 Corinthians 1:16**).

The **tradition** of **Christian** antiquity as to the **necessity** of infant baptism is clear from the very beginning. We have given many striking quotations on this subject already, in dealing with the **necessity** of baptism. A few, therefore, will suffice here.

- **Origen** (in cap. vi, Ep. ad Rom.) declares: "The **Church** received from the **Apostles** the **tradition** of giving baptism also to infants".
- **St. Augustine** (Serm. xi, De Verb Apost.) says of infant baptism: "This the **Church** always had, always held; this she received from the **faith** of our ancestors; this she perseveringly guards even to the end."
- **St. Cyprian (Epistle 58)** writes: "From baptism and from **grace** . . . must not be kept the infant who, because recently born, has committed no **sin**, except, inasmuch as it

was born carnally from Adam, it has contracted the contagion of the ancient death in its first nativity; and it comes to receive the remission of sins more easily on this very account that not its own, but another's sins are forgiven it."

- St. Cyprian's letter to Fidus declares that the Council of Carthage in 253 reprobated the opinion that the baptism of infants should be delayed until the eighth day after birth.
- The Council of Milevis in 416 anathematizes whosoever says that infants lately born are not to be baptized.
- The Council of Trent solemnly defines the doctrine of infant baptism (Sess. VII, can. xiii). It also condemns (can. xiv) the opinion of Erasmus that those who had been baptized in infancy, should be left free to ratify or reject the baptismal promises after they had become adult.

Theologians also call attention to the fact that as God sincerely wishes all men to be saved, He does not exclude infants, for whom baptism of either water or blood is the only means possible. The doctrines also of the universality of original sin and of the all-comprehending atonement of Christ are stated so plainly and absolutely in Scripture as to leave no solid reason for denying that infants are included as well as adults.

To the objection that baptism requires faith, theologians reply that adults must have faith, but infants receive habitual faith, which is infused into them in the sacrament of regeneration. As to actual faith, they believe on the faith of another; as St. Augustine (*De Verb. Apost.*, xiv, xviii) beautifully says: "He believes by another, who has sinned by another."

As to the obligation imposed by baptism, the infant is obliged to fulfill them in proportion to its age and capacity, as is the case with all laws. Christ, it is true, prescribed instruction and actual faith for adults as necessary for baptism (*Matthew 28*; *Mark 16*), but in His general law on the necessity of the sacrament (*John 3*) He makes absolutely no restriction as to the subject of baptism; and consequently while infants are included in the law, they can not be required to fulfill conditions that are utterly impossible at their age.

While not denying the validity of infant baptism, Tertullian (*De Bapt.*, xviii) desired that the sacrament be not conferred upon them until they have attained the use of reason, on account of the danger of profaning their baptism as youths amid the allurements of pagan vice. In like manner, St. Gregory Nazianzen (*Or. xl, De Bapt.*) thought that baptism, unless there was danger of death, should be deferred until the child was three years old, for then it could hear and respond at the ceremonies. Such opinions, however, were shared by few, and they contain no denial of the validity of infant baptism. It is true that the Council of Neocæsarea (can. vi) declares that an infant can not be baptized in its mother's womb, but it was teaching only that neither the baptism of the mother nor her faith is common to her and the infant in her womb, but are acts peculiar to the mother alone.



## ***Baptism of unborn infants***

This leads to the baptism of infants in cases of difficult delivery. When the **Roman Ritual** declares that a child is not to be baptized while still enclosed (*clausus*) in its mother's womb, it supposes that the baptismal water can not reach the body of the child. When, however, this seems possible, even with the aid of an instrument, **Benedict XIV** (Syn. Diaec., vii, 5) declares that **midwives** should be instructed to confer conditional baptism. The **Ritual** further says that when the water can flow upon the head of the infant the **sacrament** is to be administered absolutely; but if it can be poured only on some other part of the body, baptism is indeed to be conferred, but it must be conditionally repeated in case the child survives its birth. It is to be noted that in these last two cases, the **rubric** of the **Ritual** supposes that the infant has partly emerged from the womb. For if the fetus was entirely enclosed, baptism is to be repeated conditionally in all cases (Lehmkuhl, n, 61).

In case of the death of the mother, the fetus is to be immediately extracted and baptized, should there be any **life** in it. Infants have been taken alive from the womb well after the mother's death. After the Cæsarean incision has been performed, the fetus may be conditionally baptized before extraction if possible; if the **sacrament** is administered after its removal from the womb the baptism is to be absolute, provided it is **certain** that **life** remains. If after extraction it is **doubtful** whether it be still alive, it is to be baptized under the **condition**: "If thou art alive". Physicians, mothers, and **midwives** ought to be reminded of the grave **obligation** of administering baptism under these circumstances. It is to be borne in mind that according to the prevailing opinion among the learned, the fetus is animated by a **human soul** from the very beginning of its conception. In cases of delivery where the issue is a mass that is not certainly animated by **human life**, it is to be baptized conditionally: "If thou art a **man**."

## ***Baptism of insane persons***

The perpetually **insane**, who have never had the use of **reason**, are in the same **category** as infants in what relates to the conferring of baptism, and consequently the **sacrament** is valid if administered.

If at one **time** they had been sane, baptism bestowed upon them during their **insanity** would be probably invalid unless they had shown a desire for it before losing their **reason**. **Moralists** teach that, in practice, this latter class may always be baptized conditionally, when it is uncertain whether or not they had ever asked for baptism (Sabetti, no. 661). In this connection it is to be remarked that, according to many writers, anyone who has a wish to receive all things **necessary** to **salvation**, has at the same **time** an implicit desire for baptism, and that a more specific desire is not absolutely **necessary**.

## ***Foundlings***

Foundlings are to be baptized conditionally, if there is no means of finding out whether they have been validly baptized or not. If a note has been left with a foundling stating that it had already received baptism, the more common opinion is that it should nevertheless be given conditional baptism, unless circumstances should make it plain that baptism had undoubtedly been conferred. O'Kane (no. 214) says that the same rule is to be followed when **midwives** or other **lay persons** have baptized infants in case of **necessity**.

## ***Baptism of the children of Jewish and Infidel parents***

The question is also discussed as to whether the infant children of **Jews** or **infidels** may be baptized against the will of their **parents**. To the general query, the answer is a decided negative, because such a baptism would violate the natural **rights** of **parents**, and the infant would later be exposed to the danger of perversion. We say this, of course, only in regard to the liceity of such a baptism, for if it were actually administered it would undoubtedly be valid. **St. Thomas (III:68:10)** is very express in denying the lawfulness of imparting such baptism, and this has been the constant judgment of the **Holy See**, as is evident from various **decrees** of the Sacred Congregations and of **Pope Benedict XIV (II Bullarii)**. We say the answer is negative to the general question, because particular circumstances may require a different response. For it would undoubtedly be licit to impart such baptism if the children were in proximate danger of death; or if they had been removed from the **parental** care and there was no likelihood of their returning to it; or if they were perpetually **insane**; or if one of the **parents** were to **consent** to the baptism; or finally, if, after the death of the father, the paternal grandfather would be willing, even though the mother objected. If the children were, however, not infants, but had the use of **reason** and were sufficiently instructed, they should be baptized when **prudence** dictated such a course.

In the celebrated case of the **Jewish** child, Edgar Mortara, **Pius IX** indeed ordered that he should be brought up as a **Catholic**, even against the will of his **parents**, but baptism had already been administered to him some years before when in danger of death.

## ***Baptism of the children of Protestant Parents***

It is not licit to baptize children against the will of their **Protestant parents**; for their baptism would violate **parental right**, expose them to the danger of perversion, and be contrary to the practice of the **Church**. **Kenrick** also strongly condemns nurses who baptize the children of **Protestants** unless they are in danger of death.

## ***Baptism with the consent of non-Catholic parents***

Should a **priest** baptize the child of non-Catholic **parents** if they themselves desire it? He certainly can do so if there is reason to **hope** that the child will be brought up a **Catholic** (**First Provincial Council of Baltimore**, decr. x). An even greater security for the **Catholic education** of such child would be the promise of one or both **parents** that they themselves will embrace the **Faith**.

## ***Baptism of the dead***

Concerning baptism for the dead, a curious and difficult passage in **St. Paul's Epistle** has given rise to some controversy. The **Apostle** says: "Otherwise what shall they do that are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not again at all? Why are they then baptized for them?" (**1 Corinthians 15:29**). There seems to be no question here of any such absurd **custom** as conferring baptism on corpses, as was practiced later by some **heretical sects**. It has been conjectured that this otherwise unknown usage of the Corinthians consisted in some **living person** receiving a symbolic baptism as representing another who had died with the desire of becoming a **Christian**, but had been prevented from realizing his wish for baptism by an unforeseen death. Those who give this explanation say that **St. Paul** merely refers to this **custom** of the Corinthians as an *argumentum ad hominem*, when discussing the **resurrection of the dead**, without approving the usage mentioned.

Archbishop MacEvilly in his exposition of the **Epistles** of **St. Paul**, holds a different opinion. He paraphrases **St. Paul's** text as follows: "Another argument in favor of the **resurrection**. If the dead will not arise, what means the profession of **faith** in the **resurrection of the dead**, made at baptism? Why are we all baptized with a profession of our **faith** in their **resurrection**?" The **archbishop** comments, as follows:

*"It is almost impossible to glean anything like **certainty** as to the meaning of these very abstruse words, from the host of interpretations that have been hazarded regarding them (see **Calmet's** Dissertation on the matter).*

*In the first place, every interpretation referring the words 'baptized', or 'dead' to either **erroneous** or **evil** practices, which **men** might have employed to express their **belief** in the **doctrine of the resurrection**, should be rejected; as it appears by no means likely that the **Apostle** would ground an argument, even though it were what the **logicians** call an *argumentum ad hominem*, on either a **vicious** or **erroneous** practice.*

*Besides, such a system of reasoning would be quite inconclusive. Hence, the words should not be referred to either the **Catholics**, baptized at the hour of death, or to the vicarious baptisms in use among the **Jews**, for their departed friends who departed without baptism.*

The interpretation adopted in the paraphrase makes the words refer to the Sacrament of Baptism, which all were **obliged** to approach with **faith** in the **resurrection of the dead** as a **necessary condition**. 'Credo in **resurrectionem mortuorum**'. This interpretation — the one adopted by **St. Chrysostom** — has the advantage of giving the words 'baptized' and 'dead' their literal signification.

The only inconvenience in it is that the word resurrection is introduced. But, it is understood from the entire context, and is warranted by a reference to other passages of **Scripture**. For, from the **Epistle of the Hebrews (6:2)** it appears that a **knowledge** of the **faith** of the **resurrection** was one of the elementary points of instruction required for adult baptism; and hence the **Scriptures** themselves furnish the ground for the introduction of the word.

There is another probable interpretation, which understands the words 'baptism' and 'dead' in a metaphorical sense, and refers them to the sufferings which the **Apostles** and heralds of **salvation** underwent to preach the **Gospel** to the **infidels**, dead to **grace** and spiritual life, with the **hope** of making them sharers in the **glory** of a **happy resurrection**. The word 'baptism' is employed in this sense in **Scripture**, even by our **divine Redeemer** Himself — 'I have a baptism wherewith to be baptized', etc. And the word 'dead' is employed in several parts of the **New Testament** to designate those spiritually dead to **grace** and **justice**. In the Greek, the words 'for the dead', *uper ton nekron* that is, on account of or, in behalf of the dead, would serve to confirm, in some degree, this latter interpretation.

These appear to be the most probable of the interpretations of this passage; each, no **doubt**, has its difficulties. The meaning of the words was known to the Corinthians at the time of the **Apostle**. All that can be known of their meaning at this remote period, can not exceed the bounds of probable conjecture.

(loc. cit., chap. xv; cf. also **Cornely** in Ep. I Cor.)

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## Adjuncts of baptism

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### **Baptistery**

According to the canons of the **Church**, baptism except in case of **necessity** is to be administered in churches (**First Provincial Council of Baltimore**, Decree 16). The **Roman Ritual** says: "Churches in which there is a **baptismal font**, or where there is a **baptistery** close to the church". The term "**baptistery**" is commonly used for the space set aside for the conferring of baptism. In like manner the Greeks use *photisterion* for the same purpose — a word derived from **St. Paul's** designation of baptism as an "illumination".

The words of the [Ritual](#) just cited, however, mean by "baptistery", a separate building constructed for the purpose of administering baptism. Such buildings have been erected both in the East and [West](#), as at [Tyre](#), [Padua](#), [Pisa](#), [Florence](#), and other places. In such [baptisteries](#), besides the [font](#), [altars](#) were also built; and here the baptism was conferred. As a rule, however, the church itself contains a railed-off space containing the [baptismal font](#). Anciently [fonts](#) were attached only to [cathedral churches](#), but at the present day nearly every [parish](#) church has a [font](#). This is the sense of the [Baltimore decree](#) above cited. The [Second Plenary Council of Baltimore](#) declared, however, that if missionaries judge that the great difficulty of bringing an infant to church is a sufficient [reason](#) for baptizing in a private house, then they are to administer the [sacrament](#) with all the prescribed [rites](#).

The ordinary [law](#) of the [Church](#) is that when private baptism is conferred, the remaining [ceremonies](#) are to be supplied not in the house but in the church itself. The [Ritual](#) also directs that the [font](#) be of solid material, so that the baptismal water may be safely kept in it. A railing is to surround the [font](#), and a representation of [St. John](#) baptizing [Christ](#) should adorn it. The cover of the [font](#) usually contains the [holy oils](#) used in baptism, and this cover must be under lock and key, according to the [Ritual](#).

## ***Baptismal water***

In speaking of the [matter](#) of baptism, we stated that [true](#), natural water is all that is required for its validity. In administering [solemn](#) baptism, however the [Church](#) prescribes that the water used should have been [consecrated](#) on [Holy Saturday](#) or on the [eve](#) of [Pentecost](#). For the liceity (not validity) of the [sacrament](#), therefore, the [priest](#) is [obliged](#) to use [consecrated](#) water. This [custom](#) is so ancient that we can not discover its origin. It is found in the most ancient [liturgies](#) of the [Latin](#) and [Greek Churches](#) and is mentioned in the [Apostolic Constitutions](#) (VII, 43). The [ceremony](#) of its [consecration](#) is striking and symbolic. After signing the water with the [cross](#), the [priest](#) divides it with his hand and casts it to the four corners of the earth. This signifies the baptizing of all the [nations](#). Then he breathes upon the water and immerses the [paschal candle](#) in it.

Next he pours into the water, first the [oil](#) of [catechumens](#) and then the [sacred chrism](#), and lastly both [holy oils](#) together, pronouncing appropriate [prayers](#). But what if during the year, the supply of [consecrated](#) water should be insufficient? In that case, the [Ritual](#) declares that the [priest](#) may add common water to what remains, but only in less [quantity](#). If the [consecrated](#) water appears putrid, the [priest](#) must examine whether or not it is really so, for the appearance may be [caused](#) only by the admixture of the sacred oils. If it has really become putrid, the [font](#) is to be renovated and fresh water to be [blessed](#) by a form given in the [Ritual](#). In the [United States](#), the [Holy See](#) has [sanctioned](#) a short formula for the [consecration](#) of baptismal water ([Second Plenary Council of Baltimore](#)).

## **Holy oils**

In baptism, the **priest** uses the **oil** of **catechumens**, which is olive oil, and **chrism**, the latter being a mixture of **balsam** and oil. The oils are **consecrated** by the **bishop** on **Maundy Thursday**. The anointing in baptism is recorded by **St. Justin**, **St. John Chrysostom**, and other ancient **Fathers**. **Pope Innocent I** declares that the **chrism** is to be applied to the crown of the head, not to the forehead, for the latter is reserved to **bishops**. The same may be found in the Sacramentaries of **St. Gregory** and **St. Gelasius** (*Martène*, I, i). In the **Greek Rite** the **oil** of **catechumens** is **blessed** by the **priest** during the baptismal **ceremony**.

## **Sponsors**

When infants are solemnly baptized, **persons** assist at the **ceremony** to make profession of the **faith** in the child's name. This practice comes from antiquity and is **witnessed** to by **Tertullian**, **St. Basil**, **St. Augustine**, and others. Such **persons** are designated *sponsors*, *offerentes*, *susceptores*, *fidejussores*, and *patrini*. The English term is godfather and godmother, or in Anglo-Saxon, *gossip*.

These sponsors, in default of the child's **parents**, are **obliged** to instruct it concerning **faith** and **morals**. One sponsor is sufficient and not more than two are allowed. In the latter case, one should be male and the other **female**. The object of these restrictions is the fact that the sponsor contracts a spiritual **relationship** to the child and its **parents** which would be an **impediment** to marriage. Sponsors must themselves be baptized **persons** having the use of **reason** and they must have been designated as sponsors by the **priest** or **parents**. During the baptism they must physically touch the child either personally or by proxy. They are required, moreover, to have the **intention** of really assuming the **obligations** of godparents. It is desirable that they should have been confirmed, but this is not absolutely **necessary**. Certain **persons** are prohibited from acting as sponsors. They are: members of religious orders, married **persons** in respect to each other, or **parents** to their children, and in general those who are objectionable on such grounds as **infidelity**, **heresy**, **excommunication**, or who are members of condemned **secret societies**, or **public sinners** (*Sabetti*, no. 663). Sponsors are also used in the **solemn** baptism of adults. They are never **necessary** in private baptism.

## **Baptismal name**

From the earliest times **names** were given in baptism. The **priest** is directed to see that obscene, fabulous, and ridiculous names, or those of **heathen** gods or of **infidel** men be not imposed. On the contrary the **priest** is to recommend the **names** of **saints**. This **rubric** is not a rigorous **precept**, but it is an instruction to the **priest** to do what he can in the matter. If

parents are unreasonably obstinate, the priest may add a saint's name to the one insisted upon.

## **Baptismal robe**

In the primitive Church, a white robe was worn by the newly baptized for a certain period after the ceremony (St. Ambrose, *On the Mysteries* 7). As solemn baptisms usually took place on the eves of Easter or Pentecost, the white garments became associated with those festivals. Thus, *Sabbatum in Albis* and *Dominica in Albis* received their names from the custom of putting off at that time the baptismal robe which had been worn since the previous vigil of Easter. It is thought that the English name for Pentecost — Whitsunday or Whitsuntide, also derived its appellation from the white garments of the newly baptized. In our present ritual, a white veil is placed momentarily on the head of the catechumen as a substitute for the baptismal robe.

## Ceremonies of baptism

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The rites that accompany the baptismal ablution are as ancient as they are beautiful. The writings of the early Fathers and the antique liturgies show that most of them are derived from Apostolic times.

The infant is brought to the door of the church by the sponsors, where it is met by the priest. After the godparents have asked faith from the Church of God in the child's name, the priest breathes upon its face and exorcises the evil spirit. St. Augustine (Ep. cxciv, Ad Sixtum) makes use of this Apostolic practice of exorcising to prove the existence of original sin. Then the infant's forehead and breast are signed with the cross, the symbol of redemption.

Next follows the imposition of hands, a custom certainly as old as the Apostles. Some blessed salt is now placed in the mouth of the child. "When salt", says the Catechism of the Council of Trent "is put into the mouth of person to be baptized, it evidently imports that, by the doctrine of faith and the gift of grace, he should be delivered from the corruption of sin, experience a relish for good works, and be delighted with the food of divine wisdom."

Placing his stole over the child the priest introduces it into the church, and on the way to the font the sponsors make a profession of faith for the infant. The priest now touches the ears and nostrils of the child with spittle. The symbolic meaning is thus explained (Cat. C. Trid.) "His nostrils and ears are next touched with spittle and he is immediately sent to the baptismal font, that, as sight was restored to the blind man mentioned in the Gospel, whom the Lord, after having spread clay over his eyes, commanded to wash them in the

waters of [Siloe](#); so also he may understand that the efficacy of the sacred ablution is such as to bring light to the [mind](#) to discern [heavenly truth](#)."

The [catechumen](#) now makes the triple renunciation of [Satan](#), his works and his pomps, and he is anointed with the [oil](#) of [catechumens](#) on the breast and between the shoulders: "On the breast, that by the [gift](#) of the [Holy Ghost](#), he may cast off [error](#) and [ignorance](#) and may receive the [true faith](#), 'for the [just man](#) liveth by [faith](#)' ([Galatians 3:11](#)); on the shoulders, that by the [grace](#) of the [Holy Spirit](#), he may shake off [negligence](#) and torpor and engage in the performance of [good works](#); 'faith without [works](#) is dead' ([James 2:26](#))", says the Catechism.

The infant now, through its sponsors, makes a declaration of [faith](#) and asks for baptism. The [priest](#), having meantime changed his [violet stole](#) for a [white](#) one, then administers the threefold ablution, making the [sign of the cross](#) three times with the stream of water he pours on the head of the child, saying at the same [time](#): "N\_\_\_\_, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the [Son](#) and of the [Holy Ghost](#)." The sponsors during the ablution either hold the child or at least touch it. If the baptism be given by immersion, the [priest](#) dips the back part of the head three times into the water in the form of a cross, pronouncing the [sacramental](#) words. The crown of the child's head is now anointed with [chrism](#), "to give him to understand that from that day he is united as a member to [Christ](#), his head, and engrafted on His body; and therefore he is called a [Christian](#) from [Christ](#), but [Christ](#) from [chrism](#)" (Catech.). A white veil is now put on the infant's head with the words: "Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry without stain before the judgment seat of [Our Lord Jesus Christ](#), that thou mayest have [eternal life](#). [Amen](#)." Then a lighted [candle](#) is placed in the [catechumen's](#) hand, the [priest](#) saying: "Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism so as to be without blame. Observe the [commandments of God](#); that, when [Our Lord](#) shall come to His nuptials, thou mayest meet Him together with all the Saints and mayest have [life everlasting](#), and live for ever and ever. [Amen](#)." The new [Christian](#) is then bidden to go in peace.

In the baptism of adults, all the essential [ceremonies](#) are the same as for infants. There are, however, some impressive additions. The [priest](#) wears the [cope](#) over his other [vestments](#), and he should be attended by a number of [clerics](#) or at least by two. While the [catechumen](#) waits outside the church door, the [priest](#) recites some [prayers](#) at the [altar](#). Then he proceeds to the place where the candidate is, and asks him the questions and performs the [exorcisms](#) almost as prescribed in the [ritual](#) for infants. Before administering the [blessed salt](#), however, he requires the [catechumen](#) to make an explicit renunciation of the form of [error](#) to which he had formerly adhered, and he is then [signed with the cross](#) on the brow, ears, eyes, nostrils, mouth, breast, and between the shoulders. Afterwards, the candidate, on [bended knees](#), recites three several times the [Lord's Prayer](#), and a [cross](#) is made on his forehead, first by the godfather and then by the [priest](#). After this, taking him by the hand, the [priest](#) leads him into the church, where he [adores](#) prostrate and then



rising he recites the [Apostles' Creed](#) and the [Lord's Prayer](#). The other [ceremonies](#) are practically the same as for infants. It is to be noted that owing to the difficulty of carrying out with proper splendor the [ritual](#) for baptizing adults, the [bishops](#) of the [United States](#) obtained permission from the [Holy See](#) to make use of the ceremonial of infant baptism instead. This general [dispensation](#) lasted until 1857, when the ordinary [law](#) of the [Church](#) went into force. (See COUNCILS OF BALTIMORE.) Some American [dioceses](#), however, obtained [individual](#) permissions to continue the use of the [ritual](#) for infants when administering adult baptism.

## Metaphorical baptism

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The name "baptism" is sometimes applied improperly to other [ceremonies](#).

### ***Baptism of bells***

This name has been given to the [blessing](#) of [bells](#), at least in [France](#), since the eleventh century. It is derived from the washing of the [bell](#) with [holy water](#) by the [bishop](#), before he anoints it with the [oil](#) of the infirm without and with [chrism](#) within. A fuming [censer](#) is then placed under it. The [bishop](#) [prays](#) that these [sacramentals](#) of the [Church](#) may, at the sound of the [bell](#), put the [demons](#) to flight, protect from storms, and call the [faithful](#) to [prayer](#).

### ***Baptism of ships***

At least since the [time](#) of the [Crusades](#), rituals have contained a [blessing](#) for ships. The [priest](#) begs [God](#) to [bless](#) the vessel and protect those who sail in it, as He did the [ark of Noah](#), and [Peter](#), when the [Apostle](#) was sinking in the sea. The ship is then sprinkled with [holy water](#).

About this page

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