

The Importance of Baptism

The Catholic Church teaches and professes one baptism for the remission of sin. To be valid, water is either poured over the head three times or the person is fully immersed (dunked) while the Trinitarian formula is used. It must include the words:

"I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

BAPTISM OUTSIDE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

If you were baptized in other Christian churches or ecclesial communities- such as the Eastern Orthodox and mainline Protestant- then your baptism is **valid**. Most Christians follow the Bible concerning baptism and use the water pouring/immersion with the Trinitarian formula. *We presume that your baptism was valid*, but due to the serious nature of this sacrament, we will need to investigate a particular community's baptismal practice and/or the circumstances of your own baptism. This is done through a baptismal certificate or other form of documentation from your church or ecclesial community so that we can have the required moral certainty that a valid baptism took place.



Invalid Baptism? Some Christian groups and communities may use an *invalid* form, however, in which case you will need to receive a valid baptism from the Catholic Church. They might not use water or they might baptize "In the name of Jesus" rather than use "in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." **This is not valid**. Some groups which use the water and formula, but have incorrect or non-Christian theology, have *invalid* baptisms and you will need to be baptized in the Catholic Church. An example of this would be the Latter Day Saints (Mormonism), Jehovah's Witnesses, or Oneness Pentecostals.

Do we Re-baptize? We do not "re-baptize" a person that is already validly baptized; in Catholic theology there simply is no such thing. A valid baptism may only occur one time in a person's life because of the indelible spiritual mark or character that is imprinted on the person's soul. This spiritual mark or character cannot be removed, repeated, or forgotten; it consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship.

What is 'Conditional Baptism'? If there is serious doubt as to whether a valid baptism took place, we perform a conditional baptism. Basically, we say, "If you have not been baptized, then [name], I baptize you..." Out of sensitivity to our non-Catholic Christian brethren, we try not to use this unless we have serious doubt. And remember, this is *not* a re-baptism.

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church [on Baptism](#) | Code of Canon Law [on Baptism](#)

Catholic Answers: short articles on different aspects of Catholic Baptism:

[The Necessity of Baptism](#)

[Trinitarian Baptism](#)

[Baptism Saves You](#)

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Initiation 2016