

Determining Baptismal/Confirmation Validity by Church of Origin

Introduction

“Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. “
(CCC#1271)

This quote contains two basic truths:

The majority of Christians, not just Catholics, are doing the same thing when they baptize.

The baptism of a non-Catholic is respected as much as Catholic baptism.

“Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. Because of the character, Baptism cannot be repeated.” (CCC#1280). This is also a matter of Canon Law (#845)

This means the Catholic Church will under no circumstance baptize anyone unless it is certain they have not been validly baptized. Per the RCIA Statutes (#37) the diocesan bishop determines how a conditional baptism is celebrated. It is always done privately. Every effort must be made to investigate the baptism, including some or all of the following: eyewitness testimony from others or from the person themselves if old enough to remember details, photographs, video.

Please note, for purposes here, children over the age of reason are treated as adults, although specifics for children are listed.

Validly baptized:

Those baptized in a non-Catholic ecclesial community are not to be baptized conditionally unless there is a serious reason for doubting the validity of their baptism on the ground of the matter or the form of the words used in the baptism, or of the intention of the adult being baptized or that of the baptizing minister. (CC # 869 § 2)

This means for validity, Baptism involves the following:

Intent

The baptism must be “into Christ”

Form

The formula must invoke Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Matter

Water must be used and must flow over some part of the skin.

The following has been compiled to assist parishes in determining the canonical status of your people in RCIA and children being brought forward for Sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church. This list is not exhaustive. It is difficult to discern intent of either the minister or the recipient, and so this list focuses on the matter and the form in most cases.

Eastern Churches in Communion with Rome

Baptism and Confirmation conferred in the Eastern Churches are always valid. Since Confirmation is conferred at the same time as Baptism, it is sufficient to establish that Baptism was conferred. Usually, the child has also received First Communion at the time of Baptism. The Eastern Churches in Communion with Rome include the following:

The Alexandrian Rite

- The Coptic Catholic Church
- The Ethiopian Catholic Church

The Antiochene Rite (West Syrian)

- The Malankara (Malankaese) Catholic Church
- The Maronite Catholic Church
- The Syrian (Syriac) Catholic Church

The Armenian Rite

- The Armenian Holy Apostolic Church

The Chaldean Rite (East Syrian)

- The Chaldean Catholic Church
- The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church

The Byzantine Rite

- The Melkite Catholic Church
- The Byzantine Slovak Catholic Church
- The Byzantine Ukrainian Catholic Church
- The Albanian Catholic Church
- The Byelorussian Catholic Church
- The Bulgarian Catholic Church•
- The Greek Catholic Church
- The Italo-Albanian Catholic Church
- The Byzantine Yugoslav Catholic Church
- The Russian Catholic Church
- The Byzantine -Romanian Catholic Church
- The Ruthenian Catholic Church

Notes:

- Children who have celebrated full initiation in one of the above Eastern Rite Churches will need further catechesis concerning the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation. Families should enroll these children in a religious education program either in a Catholic School or Parish School of Religious Education.
- Adults who desire to change ritual must receive special permission from the Holy See. Their children may join them when permission is given for their parents to change ritual.

Eastern Churches not in Communion with Rome

The initiation rites conferred by the Eastern Churches not in communion with Rome are considered **valid**. The churches included here are any of the Orthodox Churches and the Assyrian Churches of the East. (Nestorian Church). The certificate of Baptism will refer to “Chrismation”, which is Confirmation.

- In the case of children, a child will have received full initiation at Baptism. After catechesis of a minimum of two years, they would simply make a profession of faith (RCIA #473- 474).
- In the case of adults, an adult would receive a formal RCIA process which would end with a profession of faith. (RCIA #473-474)

Christian Baptism

It is important to read a baptismal certificate thoroughly. Occasionally, a certificate may read that the person has been baptized in the ‘holy catholic church.’ This does not mean that they have been baptized Roman Catholic.

The Roman Catholic norm for valid Baptism must follow the proper matter and form. The “matter” is water Baptism either by immersion or pouring. The “form” is the Trinitarian formula described in Code of Canon Law #849, 850 and in RCIA #226. Always insure that this has been followed.

If the rituals or established customs of a church or community describe Baptism by immersion, pouring or sprinkling together with the Trinitarian formula (in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit) it can only be doubtful if that minister did not observe the regulations of his or her own church or community.

The Roman Catholic Church considers the validity of baptisms and where appropriate confirmations. This is based on what is normally done by each denomination. Recall a valid Confirmation must follow apostolic succession. For the RCIA process, all those with valid Baptisms would be candidates. (RCIA 400-504) Those with invalid Baptisms would be Catechumens.

Adventist	Valid
African Methodist Episcopal	Valid
African Methodist Episcopal Zion	Valid
American (United American Catholic)	Valid Baptism, Invalid Confirmation
Amish	Valid
Anglican	Valid

Apostolic Church	Invalid
Armenian Apostolic	Invalid
Assembly of God	Valid
Baha'i Faith	Invalid
Baptist	Valid
Bohemian Free Thinkers	Invalid
Chinese Catholic	both Baptism and Confirmation recognized
Christadelphians	Invalid
Christian Community (Rudolf Steiner)	Invalid
Christian Fellowship	Valid
Christian and Missionary Alliance	Valid
Christian Scientist	No baptism
Church of Christ	Valid
Church of Divine Science	Invalid
Church of God	Valid
Church of the Brethren	Valid
Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons)	Invalid
(see end of document for more information on this)*	
Church of the Nazarene	Valid
Church of the New Jerusalem	Invalid
Church of Scientology	Invalid
Church of the Universal Brotherhood (Doukhobors)	Invalid
Community of Pope Pius X (Lefebvre)	both Baptism and Confirmation recognized
Congregational Church	Valid
Disciples of Christ	Valid
Dutch Reform Church	Valid
Eastern Non-Catholics (Orthodox)	both Baptism and Confirmation recognized
Episcopal Church	Valid, Invalid Confirmation
Evangelical Church of the Covenant	Valid
Evangelical Churches	Valid
Evangelical United Brethren	Valid
Holy Order of Mans	Invalid
International Council of Community Churches	Valid

Jehovah's Witnesses	Invalid
Liberal Catholic Church	Valid
Lutheran	Valid, Invalid Confirmation
Masons	No baptism
Mennonite	Valid
Methodist	Valid
Missionary Hill Church	Valid
Moravian Church	Valid
New Apostolic Church	Valid
New Church of Mr. Emmanuel Swedenborg	Invalid
Old Catholic Church	Valid
Old Roman Catholic Church	Valid, Valid Confirmation
Old Roman Church	Valid
Orthodox (see above)	both Baptism and Confirmation recognized
Pentecostal Churches	Invalid
People's Church of Chicago	Invalid
Philippine Independent Church (Iglesia Filipina Independiente)	Determine case by case
Polish National Church (is Eastern Rite)	both Baptism and Confirmation recognized
Presbyterian	Valid
Quakers (Society of Friends)	No baptism
Reformed Church	Valid
Salvation Army	Invalid
Seventh Day Adventist	Valid
Shakers	No baptism
Unitarians/Universalists	Invalid
United Church of Canada	Valid
United Church of Christ	Valid
United Reformed	Valid
Uniting Church of Australia	Valid
Waldensian	Valid
World Harvest Church	Invalid
Zion	Valid

Miscellaneous Notes

If an individual has a valid Baptism and Confirmation and they wish to enter into the full communion with the Roman Catholic Church, they will need to make a profession of faith after a suitable period of catechesis. (RCIA 473-504)

In regards to children:

If a child is not baptized and is under the age of reason (7), after catechesis of both the child and their parents the child can be baptized. It is assumed that at least one parent is Roman Catholic. These children should also be enrolled in Catholic School or Parish Religious Education Program.

If the child is older than 7 years of age, they enter an RCIA process.

If a child's parents are from the Eastern Rite, they remain in the rite of their parents.

Children of adults received into the Church who are under the age of seven and who are validly baptized should be enrolled in Catholic School or Parish Religious Education Program and undergo sacramental preparation with their age group. When they receive their First Communion, they make a profession of faith with the other children. Note in the First Communion registry that they have made their profession of faith. Information about their Baptism should be noted in the baptismal registry with a note that they made their profession of faith at the time of their First Communion. Include the date.

***Mormon (Church of Latter Day Saints)**

In 2001, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared that Mormon baptism is invalid. This was a declaration based on the divine law and is therefore retroactive.

Resources:

Archdiocese of Baltimore, Office of Worship

Diocese of Columbus, Office for Divine Worship

Chancery Policy Manual, Diocese of St. Augustine Enclosure 3 in RCIA Policy

Huels, John M. J.C.D. The Pastoral Companion: A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry