

“Valid Baptisms and Confirmations”

Criteria for Determining a Valid Non-Catholic Baptism

There are three criteria for determining that any Baptism is valid, whether Catholic or not. These are: **the use of water, the use of the Trinitarian formula, and the intention to do what the Church does when it baptizes.** If the ritual books of a non-Catholic Church or communion prescribe Baptism by water (either by immersion, or pouring, or sprinkling) and the Trinitarian formula, the only way that one can question the validity of a Baptism in such a Church or communion is to have reasonable proof that the minister did not use the proper matter or form or did not intend to baptize, or in the case of an adult recipient, that the proper intention was lacking in the one being baptized (canon 869.2). Inability to obtain a baptismal certificate from the particular Church or communion in question does not in itself constitute reasonable proof that a Baptism was invalid. Ordinarily a certificate should be able to be obtained, but sometimes there are valid reasons why written records do not exist or have become unavailable. Each case should be considered individually, and the chancery should be consulted in doubtful cases. Preferably, the certificate of Baptism should be obtained before the Rite of Acceptance or Welcome. If, however, there is a doubt about the fact or validity of Baptism, and the doubt remains after serious investigation, Baptism may be conferred conditionally (canon 869.1).

Conditional Baptism

Conditional Baptism must always be celebrated privately and with limited rites (NCCB Statutes no. 37). The doctrine of the sacrament of Baptism, and the reasons for the doubtful validity of the Baptism must be explained to the person before conditional Baptism is conferred (canon 869.3).

+Some of the Churches or Communions that either Do Not Baptize or Do Not Have a Valid Baptism Recognized by the Catholic Church:

Bohemian Free Thinkers	Salvation Army
Christadelphians	Unitarians
Christian Science Church	Jehovah's Witnesses
Mormons*	Quakers

For information about other Churches or communions, which are not listed here, contact the Chancery Office and/or see the Archdiocesan RCIA Guidelines (March 2017).

+Non-Catholic Confirmations

The only non-Catholic Churches whose sacrament of Confirmation is accepted as valid by the Catholic Church are: the Eastern Non-Catholic Churches, the Polish National Catholic Church, and the Society of Pius X. All candidates from Christian Churches other than these must be confirmed when they are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

* Please note that Mormon baptism will, however, affect the disposition of marriage cases.