

Sacramental Validity Guide

for R.C.I.A. Coordinators and Candidates

Concerning Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist

The Catholic Church recognizes certain sacraments as valid in other Churches and ecclesial communities. It is necessary, while being sensitive to the responsiveness of our separated brethren and our earnest desire for stronger communion with them, to distinguish between a true particular Church and an ecclesial community. This distinction is necessary so as to understand why certain sacraments are or are not considered valid by the Catholic Church.

A true particular Church, according to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, paragraph 15, and the declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, paragraph 17, must have a valid Apostolic Succession and thus a valid Eucharist. Examples of true Churches are: all Eastern Orthodox, Assyrian Church of the East (*formerly known as the Nestorians*), Polish National Church, Old Catholic Church, and S.S.P.X. (Society of St. Pius X). In these Churches all of their Sacraments are valid, even though they lack full incorporation in the Catholic Church. When receiving a person into the Catholic Church from one of these true Churches candidates make a profession of faith after a suitable time of catechesis. There are no other liturgical rites that are required. The Sacrament of Penance is encouraged, but not required for full reception into the Catholic Church unless one is reconciling a Catholic to the Church after a formal act of separation. Thus, there may exist the need for canonical reconciliation. (*Please refer to the Tribunal*) None of these candidates are ever re-confirmed or conditionally baptized.

In regards persons seeking full communion with the Catholic Church coming from the Eastern Orthodox and Assyrian Church of the East, they are not Latin Catholics, but Eastern Catholics. Thus, unless one petitions for a change of Rite, they may not be received by the Latin Church, but the corresponding Eastern Catholic Church to their Orthodox Church must receive them into full communion. Eastern Catholics are already in full communion with the Catholic Church and need not any form of reception. They are free to participate in all Latin Catholic liturgies when it is not possible for them to participate in their own Eastern Catholic Church's Rite. If an Eastern Rite Catholic desires to transfer to the Latin Catholic Rite this requires the permission of the Holy See, but is in no way treated as part of R.C.I.A.

An ecclesial community pertains to those Christian communities and their subsequent divisions derived, typically, from the Reformation and thereafter. These Christians are subject to being received into full communion with the Catholic Church through the Latin Catholic Church. These ecclesial communities have a valid Baptism, and thus they are conjoined to the Church (See *Lumen Gentium*, 14-15) but lack Apostolic Succession and therefore lack a valid Eucharist and are not true Churches. Being that they do not have a valid Apostolic Succession and thus a

valid priesthood, the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist are not recognized by the Catholic Church. Though, so long as the proper form and matter, the use of the Trinitarian invocation and pure water being poured, sprinkled or the person immersed therein, the Sacrament of Baptism is valid.

Non-Valid Baptisms

Invalid Baptisms are the result not of the lack of valid orders of the minister administering Baptism, as in the case for Confirmation and the Eucharist, but of the usage of an invalid Baptismal formula. On February 1, 2008 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith decreed that the following formulae are invalid: “*I baptize you in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier*” and “*I baptize you in the name of the Creator, and of the Liberator, and of the Sustainer*”. Thus, anyone Baptized with these formulae need to be baptized absolutely and not merely conditionally.

The only valid Baptismal formula recognized by the Catholic Church is the Trinitarian formula that follows:

N., I Baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The following communities do not use a valid Trinitarian formula and/or lack the proper intention of Baptism; therefore they have an invalid Baptism:

Apostolic Church
Bohemian Free Thinkers
Christadelphian
Christian and Divine Sciences
Church of Scientology
Jehovah’s Witness
Masons
Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)
Pentecostal Churches
People’s Church of Chicago
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Salvation Army
Unitarian Universalist

***Note:** This list is not exhaustive and may be added to depending upon the theological and liturgical shifts that occur within the communities of our separated brethren. In the case of a person that is not validly baptized, they are thus rendered a catechumen and not a candidate. A conditional Baptism can be administered when the validity of one’s prior Baptism remains doubtful after serious investigation. (See CIC, 869 §1-3) Questions needing to be asked, as are pertinent to what constitutes a thorough investigation, should be referred to the diocesan tribunal. The Church never re-Baptizes as once one is validly baptized, they are baptized.

Non-Valid Confirmation

This list consists of those ecclesial communities that celebrate a “confirmation”, but do not have a valid Sacrament of Confirmation recognized by the Catholic Church.

Anglicans/Episcopalians
Lutherans
Latter-Day Saints/Mormons
Methodists
Presbyterians

Non-Valid Eucharist

This list consists of those ecclesial communities that celebrate a “eucharistic” liturgy, but do not have a valid Sacrament of the Eucharist recognized by the Catholic Church.

Anglicans/Episcopalians
Assemblies of God
Baptists
Bretheren and Mennonite/Anabaptists
Disciples of Christ
Exclusive Bretheren
Jehovah’s Witnesses
Latter-Day Saints/Mormons
Lutherans
Non-Denominational
Plymouth Bretheren (Open Bretheren)
Presbyterian/Reformed
Seventh Day Adventists
United Churches of Christ
United Methodists

Pastoral Notes:

- Pastoral care should be taken that when children of parents who are entering full communions through R.C.I.A. have not been baptized or received the other Sacraments of Initiation, that these children also are provided the Sacraments of Initiation. If they are not baptized and they are under the age of reason (7), they may be baptized and enrolled into parish formation with children their own age to receive the regular program of catechesis and Christian instruction leading to the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist. If they are older than 7 years of age, they enter the catechumenate for a suitable period of time and are fully initiated at the Easter Vigil with the rest of the catechumens and candidates. Regardless of who baptizes them, children retain the rite of their parents. Children who have been validly baptized in another ecclesial communion and are under the age of reason need not make a profession of faith to be received into full communion. They may enter the catechetical program of the parish or catholic

elementary school with their peers and they will make the profession of faith with their peers prior to their First Holy Communion.

- The utmost pastoral charity should be employed when discussing the invalidity of Baptism, Confirmation or Eucharist received by a candidate or thus catechumen. This should be used as a moment to invite them to receive the fullness of the fruits of the Church and not to destroy what may have been a special memory in their life.