



Regarding Baptisms
August 27, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I pray this letter finds you well and enjoying these final weeks before Labor Day, in what has turned out to be a year we won't forget anytime soon. Although these times have been challenging in many ways, I remain grateful for the blessings that the Lord has given us. From simple pleasures like the beautiful weather, to more profound blessings like the relationships with those we love, there is much to be thankful for even when circumstances are less than ideal.

As the Church, one thing we remain grateful for is the immeasurable gift of the sacraments and the grace we receive from our sacramental life. With this in mind, I write today in regards to a recent response from the Vatican regarding the sacrament of baptism. I share the following, both to inform you, as well as to address questions that may arise for you in response.

Doctrinal Response on the Validity of Baptism with a Modified Formula

Earlier this month, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a [doctrinal response and commentary](#) regarding the validity of baptisms conferred with a modified formula. This doctrinal note informed the Church that baptisms conferred using a first person *plural* formula are considered invalid through a lack of proper form. This means that baptisms conferred with the form of “*We* baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” and other similar variations (rather than “*I* baptize you ...”) are not valid baptisms.

This clarification from the Vatican reaffirms the truth that in the sacrament of baptism the person of Christ is acting through the minister, not through the assembly. Additionally, this response reminds that no one “even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority,” which was established by the Second Vatican Council.

What Does This Mean for You?

After reading this, you may begin to question, “What does this mean for me?” “Is *my* baptism invalid?” “Should I be concerned about this?” As a general rule, the answer is no, unless there is evidence to the contrary. It is appropriate that this reminder should prompt us to reflect and take pause. But this reflection should be in thanksgiving for the gift of grace we receive freely through baptism, and in humility for our continued obedience and reverence in receiving this gift in the manner handed down to us by our Lord and through sacred Tradition. It should not be out of fear or anxiety.

The overwhelming majority of baptisms are valid. Only a small number may be affected by this decree. All sacraments are presumed to be valid unless established to be otherwise. With this in mind, I encourage you *not to doubt* the validity of your baptism without good cause to do so.

Those who may have a recording of their baptism, or other confirmation of the fact, and are concerned should review this in order to verify that the baptism is valid. If this leads to the conclusion that the modified

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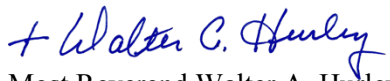
formula was used and the baptism is invalid, contact your parish or the diocese. For the majority of those baptized who do *not* have a recording or other confirmation, again, I urge you not to doubt your baptism's validity if there is no evidence suggesting the contrary.

Closing Thoughts

Archbishop Vigneron of the Archdiocese of Detroit recently shared on this same topic, "The Church, following the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, recognizes that God has bound Himself *to* the sacraments, but He is not bound *by* the sacraments." This beautifully articulates that while we consider this matter to be of the utmost importance in our spiritual journey as followers of Christ, we recognize that God's grace extends far beyond what we can comprehend. I am reassured in knowing that God in His infinite love and mercy is not bound by our rules and determinations, as important as they are for the good and salvation of us all.

This letter is not to alarm anyone regarding the validity of their baptism, but rather to give anyone who has concerns the opportunity to address it. It also provides us all with the opportunity to reflect on the great gift that God has given to us in this sacrament.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Apostolic Administrator