



Right Formula for Baptism

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
has published the following on 1 February 2008:

Responses to Questions on the validity of Baptism conferred with the formulas:

“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.”*

Questions:

1. Whether the Baptism conferred with the formulas “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 Sanctifier” is **valid**?
2. Whether the persons baptized with those formulas have to be baptized in *forma absoluta*? (LC = Baptized again with the proper formula as in the Rite of Baptism)

Responses:

1. To the first question: **Negative.**
2. To the second question: **Affirmative.**

The Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI at the audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, approved these responses, adopted in the Ordinary Session of the Congregation and ordered their publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,
February 1, 2008

William, Card. Levada, Prefect

Archbishop Angelo Amato, Secretary.

Here are parts of the Commentary by Msgr. Antonio Miralles, canonist, which was given with the official document:

“The present Response concerns a question about the validity of Baptism conferred within the Catholic Church with two specific formulas in the English language... This is not simply a hypothetical question, but rather relates to events that have taken place in some English-speaking countries. Obviously, the problem does not relate to the fact that the words are in the English language, but to the formula itself, which could be expressed in any language.”

“Baptism conferred in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit conforms to the command of the Lord found at the end of Matthew’s Gospel: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19). The Church has no right to change what Christ himself has instituted. Therefore any Baptism is invalid when it does not contain the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity, with the distinct expression of the three Persons with their respective names.”

“Throughout the ages, the Magisterium of the Church has repeatedly taught that Christian Baptism is administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The liturgical documents on the Rite of Baptism do not offer alternatives...”

“The Trinitarian faith is not adequately expressed when the three divine Persons are designated by names common to the Three... The whole divine economy is the common work of the three divine Persons. For as the Trinity has only one and the same nature, so too does it have only one and the same operation. Redemption is also the work of the entire Trinity as its first cause, even though the name Redeemer is proper to Christ as man because, in his humanity, he suffered and died on the Cross.”

“Trinitarian faith calls for careful precision in language... What is conferred with the formulas considered in the questions presented to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is not true Baptism...”

“The Church’s pastors must also be vigilant regarding other possible invalid baptismal formulas.”

Or, in brief:

What the Declaration says:

The Church must obey the explicit command of Christ, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Baptism conferred with any other formula is declared invalid.

In accordance with Church documents, especially on biblical and liturgical translations, Rome reacts against the so-called “inclusive” language, inspired by a feminist theology that avoids to name the Father and the Son, words which are deemed too “macho” and offensive.

What the consequences are:

Baptism conferred with any formula other than “I baptize you in the name of the Father...” is null and void.

The declaration is directed at certain protestant churches and many “fringe” churches (evangelical, charismatic, independent...) whose baptism the Catholic Church does not recognize as valid.

The sacraments of Confirmation and eventually Holy Orders, conferred after such a baptism, would not be valid either. As for marriage, it would be non-sacramental.

Pastors must be vigilant. Careful investigation is required regarding the manner in which catechumens might have been baptized in other Christian churches. If it can be ascertained that the Baptism formula was not the proper one, Baptism must be conferred again. If there is a doubt, Baptism must be conferred 'ad cautelam' (as a precautionary measure).

Baptism and Confirmation during

In response to the many enquiries made to the Archbishop with regards to the abovementioned, His Grace, through the Liturgy Commission, would like to convey the following.

The Archbishop graciously grants to all priests, who administer the Sacrament of Baptism to Adults during the **Easter Vigil**, the permission to confer on them the Sacrament of **Confirmation** (CIC 883.2).

The Rites for this celebration are clearly spelt out in "The Rites Vol. One, Christian Initiation of Adults, pp. 1-466, 1990."

Washing of feet on Holy

With regards to **foot washing**, on Holy Thursday, His Grace would like to reiterate that Rome has made no changes in the rubrics referring to "**men**"; indeed, it says that the "**tradition should be maintained**": Any modification of this rite would require permission from the Holy See.

The rubrics for Holy Thursday clearly state that the priest washes the feet of men ("viri") in order to recall Christ's action toward his apostles.

"It is certainly true that in Christ there is neither male nor female and that all disciples are equal before the Lord. But this reality need not be expressed in every rite, especially one that is so tied up to the concrete historical circumstances of the Last Supper.

Pope John Paul II attests that the washing of the feet has to do with the "ministerial priesthood". The Church has certainly underscored the **link between the footwashing ritual and the sacrament of Holy Orders**, and this is precisely why, when the Church re-enacts this ritual on Holy Thursday, the rubrics prohibit women from taking part in the ceremony. Men alone are to be symbolic stand-ins for the disciples, not just because the original disciples were men (after all, women can be disciples of Christ as well, if that were all that this liturgical action intended to convey), but because only men can be "priests".

The footwashing ceremony in John 13 is intimately related to the sacrament of Holy Orders. By having their feet washed, the disciples entered into a participation of Jesus' priestly ministry and were elevated to the priesthood itself." (Cf. Jacob Michael, Catholic Studies)

The rite of the washing of feet is not obligatory and may be legitimately omitted. However, this is usually not pastorally advisable.

For further reading: Raymond Brown, The Gospel according to St. John – Jerome H. Neyrey, sj, Foot washing in John 13 – F.J. Moloney, A sacramental reading of John 13 – Jacob Michael, Ritual footwashing and the Sacrament of Holy Orders,

Forthcoming

In answer to queries received, please note what the Ordo says:

Pentecost

Saturday evening, 10 May: Mass of the Vigil of Pentecost:

1st Reading: Gen. 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b or Ex 37:1-14 or Joel 3:1-5

Ps. 103, 1-2a, 24 and 35c, 27-28, 29c-30

2nd Reading: Rom 8:22-27

Gospel: Jn 7: 37-39

Sunday, 11 May: Solemnity of Pentecost, Mass of the day:

1st Reading: Act 2:1-11

Ps. 103, 1ab and 24ac, 29ac, 29bc-30, 11 and 34

2nd Reading: 1 Cor 12: 3b-7, 12-13

Gospel: Jn 20: 19-23

Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul

Saturday evening 28 June: Mass of the Vigil

1st Reading: Acts 3: 1-10

Ps. 18: 2-3, 4-5

2nd Reading: Gal 1: 11-20

Gospel: Jn 21: 15-19

Sunday 29 June: Mass of the day

1st Reading: Acts 12: 1-11

Ps. 33: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

2nd Reading: 2 Tim 4: 6-8, 17-18

Gospel: Mt 16: 13-19

Solemnity of All Saints

Saturday 1 Nov. – All evening Masses must be of the Solemnity.

Sunday 2 Nov. – Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, all Masses proper.

A reminder to parish

1. Following numerous complaints to the Archbishop and the Liturgy Commission, we would like to remind parish priests that it is within their purview - however unpleasant it may be - to insist on the **proper attire and behaviour in church**.

2. According to the recommendation of the Archbishop and the Senate, there should be a **Liturgy Committee** in every parish, liaising with the Liturgy Commission through the District Representatives.

3. It has been brought to our attention that, in some parishes, the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament after the Holy Thursday Mass is done with a monstrance. This is a complete misunderstanding of the Holy Thursday liturgy. Please, refer to what the Missal says:

*“After the prayer, the priest stands before the altar and puts incense in the thurible. Kneeling, he incenses the Bld. Sacrament three times. Then he receives the humeral veil, takes the **ciborium** and **covers it** with the ends of the veil.*

The Bld. Sacrament is carried through the church in procession...to the place of reposition...

*When the procession reaches the place of reposition, the priest sets the **ciborium** down. Then he puts incense in the thurible and, kneeling, incenses the Bld. Sacrament, while *Tantum ergo Sacramento* is sung. The **tabernacle of reposition** is then **closed**...”*

The Congregation for Divine Worship, in its document on Popular Piety and Liturgy, Dec. 2001, specifically says: *“The Bld. Sacrament should be conserved in a closed tabernacle and should not be exposed in a monstrance”* (147)

*The Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission
Your comments and queries are most welcome
In writing, by fax or e-mail*