

## **BAPTISM: VALID AND INVALID**

The following information has been provided to the Office of Worship and Christian Initiation by Father Jerry Plotkowski, Judicial Vicar. It is our hope that it will help you in discerning the canonical status of your candidates.

### **BAPTISM IN PROTESTANT RELIGIONS**

Most Protestant baptisms are recognized as valid baptisms. Some are not. It is very difficult to question the validity of a baptism because of an intention either on the part of the minister or on the part of the one being baptized.

#### **ADVENTISTS:**

Water baptism is by immersion with the Trinitarian formula. **Valid.** Baptism is given at the age of reason. A dedication ceremony is given to infants. The two ceremonies are separate. (Many Protestant religions have the dedication ceremony or other ceremony, which is not a baptism. If the church has the dedication ceremony, baptism is generally not conferred until the age of reason or until the approximate age of 13).

#### **AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL:**

Baptism with water by sprinkling, pouring, or dunking. Trinitarian form is used. **Valid.** There is an open door ceremony, which is not baptism.

#### **AMISH:**

This is coupled with Mennonites. No infant baptism. The rite of baptism seems **valid.**

#### **ANGLICAN:**

**Valid** baptism.

#### **APOSTOLIC CHURCH:**

An affirmative decision has been granted in one case involving "baptism" in the apostolic church. The minister baptized according to the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and not St. Matthew. The form used was: "We baptize you into the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive a gift of the Holy Ghost." No Trinitarian form was used. **Valid.**

#### **THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD:**

A dedication ceremony is possible. Infants are not customarily baptized. Baptism through water takes place when a person is mature enough to understand its implications. The method of baptism is not outlined, but appears **valid.**

#### **BAPTISTS:**

No infant baptism. There is a ceremony of dedication. **Valid** baptism takes place at the approximate age of 13.

### **EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN:**

Members are not received into this church unless they have been baptized. Assurance of baptism is required before membership is extended. There is a dedication ceremony. Baptism by water seems **valid** and is generally done by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling. The Trinitarian form is used.

### **UNIVERSALISTS:**

Universalists and Unitarians voted to merge in May of 1960, with the union taking effect in 1961. Even before that time, Universalists favored ultimate salvation and rejected original sin. With time, they denied the Trinity and the Divinity of Jesus. **No valid baptism** in either church.

### **SALVATION ARMY:**

The Salvation Army Headquarters state they do not have a baptismal service, but a religious ceremony called a dedication service of children, and also a cradle role. A certificate is issued for the dedication service, but is not to be confused with water baptism. **No baptism.**

### **LATTER DAY SAINTS CHURCH (MORMON):**

There is a dedication ceremony in which no water is used. Baptism takes place by immersion, but not before the age of 8. The Vatican Congregation on the Doctrine of the Faith has recently declared this baptism **invalid**.

### **PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES:**

**Invalid** baptism because of Unitarian formula. This is found in the official book of the Pentecostal Assembly. Yet baptism is considered necessary for salvation and is done by immersion.

### **CHRISTADELPHIANS:**

Belief is in spiritual rebirth by immersion. Baptism appears **invalid** since there is no belief in a Trinity, but in one God, Jesus, who was the son of God, but not God the Son. There is no Trinitarian formula, since there is no belief in the Trinity.

### **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES:**

An affirmative decision was granted in such a case because of lack of proper form and intention on the part of the ministers. It appears that the Jehovah's Witnesses are fundamentalists, Unitarians. The Divinity of Christ is explicitly denied, as is the existence of the Holy Spirit as a person. In the ceremony of baptism there is a discourse. It is really a symbol of dedication rather than baptism. The person enters the water, but his name is not called out. No words or formula are pronounced while the person is submerged or immersed in the water. If matter and form are valid, the intention of the minister is to baptize the person into the Jehovah's Witness sect, thereby not intending that the person be baptized in the name of the triune God. This is evident since the Divinity of Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit are denied. These latter refer simply to a power exerted by Jehovah, who alone is God. Invalid.

### **CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN: (Formerly called Dunkers)**

Baptism is made by triune immersion. The formula in Matthew is used. **Valid** Baptism.

**BOHEMIAN FREE THINKERS:**

An affirmative decision was given in a case of this type in 1964. A name giving ceremony is had which is not baptism. There is no Trinitarian belief. **No baptism** of any kind is practiced.

**CHURCH OF GOD:**

There is a public baby dedication with no sacramental significance. Baptism is conferred later by immersion and with the Trinitarian formula. Baptism is conferred when the individual asks for it. **Valid** Baptism.

**CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE:**

No belief in infant baptism, but only to those who give evidence of repentance and new birth. Baptism is seldom conferred before the age of 12. It is conferred by immersion. It is given upon the personal confession of Christ as the Savior of this person. **Valid**.

**CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS:**

The mother church of all Christian Science Churches states: "Baptism is an individual spiritual experience. It is not a religious rite or ceremony performed by an ordained minister or priest." The textbook states that it is a purification by spirit. A letter from the board of directors states there is no baptismal ritual in the Christian science movement. In other words, they have **no true baptism**.

**CHURCH OF DIVINE SCIENCE:**

Apparently **invalid** baptism. The ceremony is a christening ceremony, but not one of baptism. There is no change brought about in the person who is blessed. The church does not believe in original sin, so that the child is blessed only when received into the church. An affirmative decision has been granted in such a case.

**DISCIPLES AND CHRISTIANS:**

There is a dedication service; no infant baptism; Trinitarian formula used in baptism by immersion at an older age. **Valid** baptism. These churches are sometimes known as the Disciples of Christ.

**EPISCOPALIAN CHURCH:**

**Valid** baptism.

**CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH:**

**Valid** baptism.

**LUTHERAN CHURCH:**

**Valid** baptism.

**EVANGELICAL CHURCHES:**

**Valid** baptism.

**METHODIST CHURCH:**

**Valid** baptism.

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH:**

**Valid** baptism.