

What is a valid baptism?

The Church requires three conditions for a valid baptism. The baptism must be conferred by pouring or washing of water, the use of the essential sacramental formula, and with the intent to baptize.



What is the “essential sacramental formula”?

Jesus, before the Ascension, commissioned the apostles to preach, teach, and baptize all nations. This is often called the “Great Commission.” In this commission, Jesus instructed his disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Through baptism, Christ himself incorporates souls into his family and mission of salvation, as he acts through the person of the minister who confers the baptism in his name. Therefore, the Roman Catholic Church has always held the sacramental formula necessary for baptism to be: “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

What is an “invalid” baptism?

An invalid baptism is one in which the celebration of the sacrament is attempted, but one of the three required conditions is absent.

How do I know if my baptism was invalid?

The Church presumes that all baptisms are celebrated validly. Proof is necessary to determine an invalid baptism. Such proofs can be a video of a baptism in which the celebrant can be heard using words that are not the essential sacramental formula, or witnesses at the baptism can verify that words other than the essential sacramental formula were used.

How many people may not have a valid baptism?

We do not know exactly how many people may be affected in the United States or in our Diocese. The Vatican has provided bishops an opportunity to correct any errors that may have occurred.

Who do I contact if I believe my baptism was not valid?

The Church presumes that all baptisms are celebrated validly. The Diocese is prepared to assist individuals with a concern about the validity of their baptism. Submit the *Valid Baptism Intake Form* or questions to worship@dmdiocese.org. For more information, call 515-243-7653 or go to dmdiocese.org/baptism.

