

Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News

Oops! The Priest Fumbled the Baby's "Baptism": *Now What?*

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Rome Says: "Baptism Necessary for Salvation"

The Roman Catholic institution teaches that what it calls "baptism" is the first of its seven sacraments, and that by it a person is regenerated (born again) and thus becomes a Christian. Here are the words: "Baptism... is necessary for salvation.... By it people are freed from sins, are born again as children of God and, made like to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church. It is validly conferred only by a washing in real water with the proper form of words."¹ This is utterly false, unbiblical doctrine

But What If the "Baptism" is Invalid?

What happens to a Roman Catholic if his "baptism" was performed incorrectly, and he didn't know? This suddenly surfaced as a huge issue in August 2020, because some priests had apparently been using a modified (and false) baptismal formula. It meant that for perhaps thousands, or tens of thousands, of people who thought they had been regenerated and made "Christians" by their Popish "baptism", they were now in the (for them) terrifying position of *not* being validly "baptized", and therefore not being "Christians"!

The correct "baptismal formula" (according to Rome) is when the priest says, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". And indeed this would be correct, *if* Romish "baptism" was correct – but it isn't. Anyway, it came to the notice of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – which used to be called the Inquisition – that certain priests might have been using a somewhat modified formula – something which sought to express the "communitarian significance" and participation of the family and others present at a child's "baptism". In these warm and fuzzy times, where no one wants to be left out and everyone is being told their participation is important, and when even Roman Catholics often balk at the idea of such spiritual power in the hands of one man and not in their own hands as well, it appears that some trendy priests have been altering the formula and have been saying, as they "baptized" the child, "We baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." *We* instead of *I*.

This doubtless made the family and friends present all feel nice and warm and fuzzy inside, but alas for the little baby, this inclusiveness invalidated its "baptism", because according to Rome, it is the person of Christ himself who is acting through the priest, not through the mixed bag of assorted family and friends hovering around the baptismal font. And Romish "baptism" is only valid if the correct formula is pronounced.

So then: what about the spiritual state of the poor baby who was "baptized" with the incorrect words, "We baptize you..."? Well, Rome declares that anyone for whom the sacrament was celebrated with this formula must be baptized *in forma absoluta*, meaning that baby (or adult for that matter) must be

considered as *not* having been validly “baptized”! The Inquisition stated that modifying “the form of the celebration of a sacrament does not constitute simply a liturgical abuse, like the transgression of a positive norm, but a *vulnus* [wound] inflicted upon the ecclesial communion and the identifiability of Christ’s action, and in the most grave cases rendering invalid the sacrament itself.” “Therefore, in the specific case of the sacrament of baptism, not only does the minister not have the authority to modify the sacramental formula to his own liking, but neither can he even declare that he is acting on behalf of the parents, godparents, relatives or friends, nor in the name of the assembly gathered for the celebration.... When the minister says, ‘I baptize you’, he does not speak as a functionary who carries out a role entrusted to him, but he enacts ministerially the sign-presence of Christ.”²

But think what this means for that person who believes that without valid Popish “baptism” he is not born again, he is not a Christian, and therefore will in fact be eternally damned if he does not take immediate steps to rectify the problem. And such steps mean he must immediately seek to be validly “baptized”. After all, if he dies unbaptized...!

Thus the eternal salvation of a soul, according to Rome, is held in the hands of the one (usually a priest) doing the “baptizing”! If he was tired at the time and fumbled the wording; if he was perhaps drunk and fumbled the wording; if he just had a lapse of memory and fumbled the wording – the one he supposedly “baptized” but actually didn’t, will (according to the teaching of his false “church”) close his eyes in death, perhaps many decades later after living the life of a sincere Roman Catholic, and find himself in hell. *Not* because of his own sins, but because his trusted priest got the wording of the formula wrong, and said “We” instead of “I”.

And over a billion people on this planet call this monstrous system the true Christian Church!

From Roman Catholic Priest to... Not Even a Real Roman Catholic!

Here is what happened to one Roman Catholic priest who found out that he had not been “validly baptized” as a baby. Think about it: this man *believed* he was validly baptized, grew up as a Roman Catholic, partook of such sacraments of Rome as the mass and confession, and then was even *ordained as a Roman Catholic priest!*

This priest, Matthew Hood, of the Romish archdiocese of Detroit, Michigan, believed all his life that he had been “born again” when he was “baptized” as a baby. But, prompted by the Inquisition’s notice, he reviewed the video of his “baptism”, and learned that the deacon had said, “*We* baptize you...” It came as a huge shock to him. “In one fell swoop, Hood went from being a Catholic priest to being... well, not technically a Catholic at all.”³

He acted swiftly to remedy the situation. “In short order, he was baptized, confirmed, and received the Eucharist. After making a retreat, he was ordained a deacon, and then ordained a priest Aug. 17.”

Hood, devoted Roman Catholic that he is, doubtless is extremely relieved he didn’t die before his “valid” baptism was performed! But the thing is, the ramifications did not end with him. Not by a long shot. The “baptisms” he had performed remained valid in the eyes of Rome, because the Romish “sacrament of baptism” can be validly performed by anyone using the correct wording and having the correct intention. One does not have to be a priest. However, as he was not truly a priest in the eyes of Rome because he himself had not been validly “baptized”, and in fact he was not truly even a valid Roman Catholic, this meant that all the confirmations he performed as a priest, all the confessions he heard in the confessional box, and all the dying people to whom he had administered the last sacrament, were not valid either!

It caused a panic, to say the least. The archdiocese of Detroit encouraged all those who had received the Romish sacraments from either priest Hood or from the deacon who had “baptized” him as a baby all those years before, to contact the archdiocese. The ripple effects were immense.

And it wasn’t long before another man, who had all along believed himself to be a validly baptized Roman Catholic and who had been ordained as a priest of Rome, learned that his “baptism” was invalid and had to “re-receive” all of his sacraments as well! This was Zachary Boazman, a priest of the archdiocese of Oklahoma City.⁴

Now multiply these (so far) two instances by probably tens of thousands of others. And then think back: in all the long centuries in which the Roman Catholic institution has been “baptizing” babies, how many *millions* must have been invalid according to Rome, for one reason or the other? Which means that all those poor, deceived millions, who trusted their “church” and their priest to do right by them for the sake of their eternal souls (as they believed), were never (according to Rome) “born again”, never truly Roman Catholic, and were therefore eternally lost!

“Don’t Worry – the Majority Will be Fine!”

So what should the poor, frightened Roman Catholic do if he either suspects, or knows certainly, that his “baptism” was not valid according to Rome? “The Vatican has issued no guidance to the faithful on how to determine whether their baptism is valid, whether those in doubt should abstain from partaking in the sacraments reserved for the baptised, or how to seek remedy.”⁵ Oh, that’s comforting! The person who thought he was a Roman Catholic for years, and now finds out he is not because his own “church” fumbled his “baptism”, receives no guidance from that selfsame “church”! Yet for a faithful Roman Catholic (at least, for the one who thought he was before his “baptism” was found to be invalid) it’s his eternal salvation that’s at stake!

Here was the answer provided by Thomas Petri, a Roman Catholic priest and theologian at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C. He said it was not unreasonable for anyone who had a video of their “baptism” to review the tape – *just in case*. “If I had a video, I would be reviewing my own baptism, just to be sure,” Petri said.⁶ All fine and well for those with a video – but millions upon millions worldwide would have no such convenient record to hand. And what about the multiplied millions in all the centuries before modern technology enabled some, at least, to record such events? Here comes Petri’s best effort at providing comfort to fearful Roman Catholics:

“Having a home video is one thing, but trying to investigate through witnesses [i.e. those who had been present at the “baptism”] is a whole other thing that will just take over your life... in the vast majority of cases, the vast majority are going to be fine, and valid. I suspect we’re talking about a very small percentage [that are invalid].”

Oh, *that’s* really re-assuring, if you’re a Roman Catholic! “The vast majority are going to be fine”? The vast majority is not everyone! The vast majority still leaves multiplied millions in the “minority” group! “A very small percentage” *is still unknown millions*, given the numerical size of the Roman Catholic religion! And as for saying, “I suspect we’re talking about a very small percentage”, that’s hardly comforting if you as a Roman Catholic might be a part of that “small percentage” *but you don’t even know if you are or not!*

In fact, priest Matthew Hood (or rather, priest-then-not-priest-then-priest Matthew Hood) said pretty much the same thing: “I don’t think people need to all of the sudden doubt the validity of their own baptism. By and large, baptisms are celebrated correctly in the Church.” *By and large?*

Then he added: “If someone knows for certain that the wrong words were used, then they can act. But if you don’t know, or there’s no evidence, you don’t need to be worried about it.” Really? A Roman Catholic doesn’t need to be worried? According to the teaching of his “church”, his eternal salvation is at stake – but he doesn’t need to be worried? Without valid Popish “baptism” Rome says he is not born again, he is not a child of God, and therefore he must be lost – and he shouldn’t be worried? How can a Roman Catholic just shrug it off?

Let’s imagine this scenario for a moment: someone who was present at his “baptism” (perhaps his “godparent”) comes up to him and says, “You know, after reading what the Vatican said about invalid baptisms, I recall that at your baptism the priest used the words which the Vatican says are invalid. At least I think he did. I’m not positive of course, I’m not 100% sure, but I’m pretty sure.” A seed of doubt has now been planted in that man’s mind, and it’s going to grow and grow. If he has any concern for his soul at all, it’s going to eat away at him for the rest of his life! He would think to

himself, “My church says that without valid baptism I am not born again, I am not freed from my sins, I am not made like to Christ, I am not incorporated into the one true church. But this priest, Matthew Hood, says I mustn’t worry about it. *He* was worried about it for himself! He was devastated by the news that *his* baptism was invalid. And he went through the entire rigmarole of becoming a Roman Catholic, and then a priest, all over again. At least he had a video he could go and check. I don’t have a video of my baptism, but my sponsor at my baptism – or what I’ve always thought was my baptism – now tells me he’s not absolutely sure I was validly baptized. What happens then when I die and God says to me, ‘You were not validly baptized; you were never truly a Roman Catholic. You are lost!’” Can anyone even imagine how that doubt is going to trouble him for the rest of his life?

Romish “Baptism” Essential to Salvation – Until It’s Not

But although Rome provides no guidance on how to determine whether one’s “baptism” was valid or not, it does seek to allay the fears of those who suspect all was not well with their “baptisms” – and fails miserably to be of any comfort at all. Priest Petri reminded Roman Catholics of what the “Church” of Rome teaches: “God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.”⁷ Petri’s comment on this was, “So I think we have to believe that God can still give graces, and we know that he does give graces apart from the sacraments. So I think only in cases where there’s proof that it is invalid should we worry.”⁸ Not very reassuring at all, when this priest-theologian uses the words, “I think”, twice. The eternal salvation of a Roman Catholic is thus supposedly based on what this man (and others like him) *think*.

Clarifying further, he said that discovering one’s “baptism” was invalid would not mean one was unable to receive graces from God, but that any graces received would have been given by God in an “extraordinary” way, not via the “ordinary” channel of “baptism”. Oh, it just gets better and better, doesn’t it? So which “extraordinary” ways could these graces come to one? Well, Petri mentioned the “baptism of desire” for those about to die; i.e. they desire the sacrament even though they cannot receive it, and their desire is accepted by God. But this hardly answers the case of the poor Roman Catholic who was invalidly “baptized” as a baby, and doesn’t even know it! And Petri had no other comfort to offer. That was it – the “baptism of desire”. It doesn’t even fit the case of a person “invalidly baptized”.

Opening his mouth just to change feet, Petri added that the case of priest Matthew Hood was a good example of how God’s grace can operate outside the sacraments: “Somehow, by the grace of God he discerned a vocation to the priesthood, even though he wasn’t baptized,” he said. But wait a minute: if he was not validly “baptized” he was not even born again, not even a child of God (according to Rome)! How then could someone still dead in his sins “discern” a vocation to the priesthood?

Then came the explanation of yet another priest-theologian, Mark Morozowich, dean of the school of theology and religious studies at The Catholic University of America. He said the words of the sacrament of “baptism” do matter; however, “we always have to remember that God does not desire the death of a person, but desires that they live. And if a person has lived their entire life believing in God, and believing that they were baptized, God will bring them unto Himself. Even though this person may have been denied the specific graces of baptism, it did not mean that he did not lead a life that was blessed by God.”⁹ The problem, however, for the faithful Romanist is this: there is a huge difference between having the desire to be “baptized” but not having the opportunity, and believing one’s “baptism” was valid. Just believing it does not make it so. A man can believe he is a “Christian” because he shakes the hand of the priest (or even of the pastor) at the door after the service, but believing it doesn’t make it so. For a faithful Papist, who has been told all his life that “baptism” is absolutely essential to his salvation, this kind of nebulous teaching would hardly fill him with confidence, now would it?

What a tangled web of lies and deceit Rome weaves, as it stumbles from one shocking, diabolical

doctrine to another. On the one hand, it claims “baptism” is essential to salvation; on the other, one can be saved without it. On the one hand, an invalidly “baptized” person isn’t even a Roman Catholic; on the other, he can still “discern” a vocation to the priesthood. On the one hand, Roman Catholics are desperately scrambling to check if they can be certain they were validly “baptized”, because all their lives they’ve been taught that this sacrament is necessary to salvation; on the other, priests are telling them not to panic, “the vast majority will be fine”. Cold comfort to someone who believes their eternal destiny is at stake here!

The Already Muddy Waters of Romish “Baptism” Become as Thick as Sludge...

As if all this was not bad enough, it gets a whole lot worse...

As explained above, the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – the Inquisition – concluded that the use of the formula, “We baptize”, instead of, “I baptize”, invalidates any Romish “baptism”. However, *another* Vatican congregation had previously taught the *very opposite!*

An under-secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments had published a letter in the 2003 issue of “Roman Replies and CLSA Advisory Opinions” which addressed this very matter of the formula, “We baptize you”. This was the conclusion:

“Employing the first person plural, rather than the singular... does not cast into doubt the validity of the Baptism conferred. That is, if the three divine Persons are named specifically as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the use of the first person plural does not invalidate the conferral of the Sacrament.”¹⁰

So which Vatican congregation is right and which is wrong? The Congregation for Divine Worship stated that using the formula, “We baptize you”, does *not* invalidate the sacrament of “baptism”; but the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated that it *does!* Which one are Roman Catholics to heed?

What utter confusion! A Roman Catholic may have been concerned about the validity of his “baptism” years ago, only to be comforted by the assurance of the Congregation for Divine Worship that he had nothing to be concerned about. Years go by, and then once again he is told that his “baptism” is invalid, this time by the powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith!

These poor deceived people are trusting in fallible men to lead them to heaven! Jesus said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13,14). It is a very broad way indeed when the false “Church” of Rome says *two absolutely contradictory things* on a matter as vitally important as this one, as far as Roman Catholics are concerned! *So* broad, in fact, that if one strays to the left one will be told his “baptism” is valid even if the baptizer got the words wrong, but if he strays to the right he will be told his “baptism” is invalid!

The Biblical Truth about Baptism and Salvation

Dear Roman Catholic friend, *you have been lied to.* Turn from this stinking garbage pile of man-made teaching, and trust in the living God alone, whose absolute truth is laid out in His own Word, the Bible, divinely inspired and without error! Baptism does not make anyone a child of God. It does not bring about the new birth. Your eternal destiny does not depend on the application of some water to your head and the “right” words which some man mumbled over you at the time! When Simon the sorcerer was baptized by Philip, the mode of baptism was absolutely correct (as shown by Acts 8:30-39), and the words he pronounced were correct as well (Matt. 28:19); *yet Simon was not regenerated!* He had “believed”, but only intellectually (Acts 8:13); he was still in a perishing state, his heart was not right in God’s sight, he had not yet truly repented of his sins, but was still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity (vv.20-23).

Baptism should *follow* regeneration and conversion, but is not the *cause* of these spiritual blessings. One who is a true Christian should submit to baptism out of love for and obedience to the Lord, but it

does not save anyone.

What then did Jesus mean when He said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:5)? He did not mean *physical* water. Over and over in the Bible water is used as a symbol of spiritual realities. Water symbolises being made clean (Jn. 15:3). What then does the water symbolise in Jn. 3:5? It can refer to the Word of God, which is the means, the instrument which the Holy Spirit uses in regeneration, as it is written in Jas. 1:18: “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth”; and in 1 Pet. 1:23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” And it can refer to the grace of God, figuratively, as in Ezek. 36:25: “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.” Mere physical water cannot cleanse a person from the filthiness of inward sin; only the grace of God can do that.

Take heed to the words of Paul the apostle: “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius” (1 Cor. 1:14); “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (v.17); “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (v.18). And again these words of his: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). Just think about these verses. If baptism was essential to salvation; if by baptism a person is born again, made a child of God, and incorporated into the Church; then why would Paul have written that he actually thanked God he had baptized so few? He should instead have mourned that he had not baptized more! But he could write thus, because he knew that Christ had not sent him to baptize, but to *preach the Gospel*. And the reason? It is the *Gospel* – the preaching of the glad tidings of salvation by the crucified, risen Saviour – which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who *believes!* Faith in Christ is that whereby one is saved from his sins. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8,9).

No man can save you from your sins. You can’t save yourself. A priest can’t do it for you. Some drops of water on your head won’t do it. The right verbal formula, like some magic incantation, doesn’t do it either. If you would be saved from your sins, *go to Christ*. He alone is the Saviour, He alone can save. This is why He came into the world: “to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). His name is JESUS (meaning Saviour); “for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Repent of your sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, trusting in none but Him to save you. He has said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*” (Jn. 6:37).

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ENDNOTES:

1. *The Code of Canon Law*, Canon 849. The Canon Law Society Trust, 1983. Collins Liturgical Publications, London.
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