

CANON LAW ON BAPTISM – FROM THE VATICAN WEBSITE

Canon Law Baptism: http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann834-878_en.html#TITLE_I.

Canon Law Full Document: http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html

TITLE I.

BAPTISM (Cann. 849 - 878)

Can. 849 Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments and necessary for salvation by actual reception or at least by desire, is validly conferred only by a washing of true water with the proper form of words. Through baptism men and women are freed from sin, are reborn as children of God, and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church.

CHAPTER I.

THE CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

Can. 850 Baptism is administered according to the order prescribed in the approved liturgical books, except in case of urgent necessity when only those things required for the validity of the sacrament must be observed.

Can. 851 The celebration of baptism must be prepared properly; consequently:

1/ an adult who intends to receive baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and is to be led insofar as possible through the various stages to sacramental initiation, according to the order of initiation adapted by the conference of bishops and the special norms issued by it;

2/ the parents of an infant to be baptized and those who are to undertake the function of sponsor are to be instructed properly on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it. The pastor personally or through others is to take care that the parents are properly instructed through both pastoral advice and common prayer, bringing several families together and, where possible, visiting them.

Can. 852 §1. The prescripts of the canons on adult baptism are to be applied to all those who, no longer infants, have attained the use of reason.

§2. A person who is not responsible for oneself (*non sui compos*) is also regarded as an infant with respect to baptism.

Can. 853 Apart from a case of necessity, the water to be used in conferring baptism must be blessed according to the prescripts of the liturgical books.

Can. 854 Baptism is to be conferred either by immersion or by pouring; the prescripts of the conference of bishops are to be observed.

Can. 855 Parents, sponsors, and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to Christian sensibility is not given.

Can. 856 Although baptism can be celebrated on any day, it is nevertheless recommended that it be celebrated ordinarily on Sunday or, if possible, at the Easter Vigil.

Can. 857 §1. Apart from a case of necessity, the proper place of baptism is a church or oratory.

§2. As a rule an adult is to be baptized in his or her parish church and an infant in the parish church of the parents unless a just cause suggests otherwise.

Can. 858 §1. Every parish church is to have a baptismal font, without prejudice to the cumulative right already acquired by other churches.

§2. After having heard the local pastor, the local ordinary can permit or order for the convenience of the faithful that there also be a baptismal font in another church or oratory within the boundaries of the parish.

Can. 859 If because of distance or other circumstances the one to be baptized cannot go or be brought to the parish church or to the other church or oratory mentioned in can. 858, §2 without grave inconvenience, baptism can and must be conferred in another nearer church or oratory, or even in another fitting place.

Can. 860 §1. Apart from a case of necessity, baptism is not to be conferred in private houses, unless the local ordinary has permitted it for a grave cause.

§2. Except in a case of necessity or for some other compelling pastoral reason, baptism is not to be celebrated in hospitals unless the diocesan bishop has established otherwise.

CHAPTER II.

THE MINISTER OF BAPTISM

Can. 861 §1. The ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop, a presbyter, or a deacon, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 530, n. 1.

§2. When an ordinary minister is absent or impeded, a catechist or another person designated for this function by the local ordinary, or in a case of necessity any person with the right intention, confers baptism licitly. Pastors of souls, especially the pastor of a parish, are to be concerned that the Christian faithful are taught the correct way to baptize.

Can. 862 Except in a case of necessity, no one is permitted to confer baptism in the territory of another without the required permission, not even upon his own subjects.

Can. 863 The baptism of adults, at least of those who have completed their fourteenth year, is to be deferred to the diocesan bishop so that he himself administers it if he has judged it Expedient.

CHAPTER III.

THOSE TO BE BAPTIZED

Can. 864 Every person not yet baptized and only such a person is capable of baptism.

Can. 865 §1. For an adult to be baptized, the person must have manifested the intention to receive baptism, have been instructed sufficiently about the truths of the faith and Christian obligations, and have been tested in the Christian life through the catechumenate. The adult is also to be urged to have sorrow for personal sins.

§2. An adult in danger of death can be baptized if, having some knowledge of the principal truths of the faith, the person has manifested in any way at all the intention to receive baptism and promises to observe the commandments of the Christian religion.

Can. 866 Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, an adult who is baptized is to be confirmed immediately after baptism and is to participate in the eucharistic celebration also by receiving communion

Can. 867 §1. Parents are obliged to take care that infants are baptized in the first few weeks; as soon as possible after the birth or even before it, they are to go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared properly for it.

§2. An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without delay.

Can. 868 §1. For an infant to be baptized licitly:

1/ the parents or at least one of them or the person who legitimately takes their place must consent;

2/ there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be delayed according to the prescripts of particular law after the parents have been advised about the reason.

§2. An infant of Catholic parents or even of non-Catholic parents is baptized licitly in danger of death even against the will of the parents.

Can. 869 §1. If there is a doubt whether a person has been baptized or whether baptism was conferred validly and the doubt remains after a serious investigation, baptism is to be conferred conditionally.

§2. Those baptized in a non-Catholic ecclesial community must not be baptized conditionally unless, after an examination of the matter and the form of the words used in the conferral of baptism and a consideration of the intention of the baptized adult and the minister of the baptism, a serious reason exists to doubt the validity of the baptism.

§3. If in the cases mentioned in §§1 and 2 the conferral or validity of the baptism remains doubtful, baptism is not to be conferred until after the doctrine of the sacrament of baptism is explained to the person to be baptized, if an adult, and the reasons of the doubtful validity of the baptism are explained to the person or, in the case of an infant, to the parents.

Can. 870 An abandoned infant or a foundling is to be baptized unless after diligent investigation the baptism of the infant is established.

Can. 871 If aborted fetuses are alive, they are to be baptized insofar as possible.

CHAPTER IV.

SPONSORS

Can. 872 Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.

Can. 873 There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

Can. 874 §1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

1/ be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;

2/ have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;

3/ be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;

4/ not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;

5/ not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

§2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROOF AND REGISTRATION OF THE CONFERRAL OF BAPTISM

Can. 875 A person who administers baptism is to take care that, unless a sponsor is present, there is at least a witness who can attest to the conferral of the baptism.

Can. 876 To prove the conferral of baptism, if prejudicial to no one, the declaration of one witness beyond all exception is sufficient or the oath of the one baptized if the person received baptism as an adult.

Can. 877 §1. The pastor of the place where the baptism is celebrated must carefully and without any delay record in the baptismal register the names of the baptized, with mention made of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses, if any, the place and date of the conferral of the baptism, and the date and place of birth.

§2. If it concerns a child born to an unmarried mother, the name of the mother must be inserted, if her maternity is established publicly or if she seeks it willingly in writing or before two witnesses. Moreover, the name of the father must be inscribed if a public document or his own declaration before the pastor and two witnesses proves his paternity; in other cases, the name of the baptized is inscribed with no mention of the name of the father or the parents.

§3. If it concerns an adopted child, the names of those adopting are to be inscribed and, at least if it is done in the civil records of the region, also the names of the natural parents according to the norm of §§1 and 2, with due regard for the prescripts of the conference of bishops.

Can. 878 If the baptism was not administered by the pastor or in his presence, the minister of baptism, whoever it is, must inform the pastor of the parish in which it was administered of the conferral of the baptism, so that he records the baptism according to the norm of can. 877, §1.

(ⁿ: indicates that the text corresponds to a new version or a new paragraph)

Cf: [Apostolic Letter issued motu proprio of the Supreme Pontiff Francis *Magnum Principium* by which can. 838 of the Code of Canon Law is modified \(3 September 2017\)](#)

(earlier version):

Can. 838 §1. The direction of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church which resides in the Apostolic See and, according to the norm of law, the diocesan bishop.

§2. It is for the Apostolic See to order the sacred liturgy of the universal Church, publish liturgical books and review their translations in vernacular languages, and exercise vigilance that liturgical regulations are observed faithfully everywhere.

§3. It pertains to the conferences of bishops to prepare and publish, after the prior review of the Holy See, translations of liturgical books in vernacular languages, adapted appropriately within the limits defined in the liturgical books themselves.

§4. Within the limits of his competence, it pertains to the diocesan bishop in the Church entrusted to him to issue liturgical norms which bind everyone.

For the new text of Canon 868, see: **Apostolic Letter issued 'Motu Proprio' "De concordia inter Codices" modifying some norms of the Code of Canon Law (31 May 2016)**

[\[Latin\]](#)