

Why is this announcement being made?

Baptism is fundamental to life in the Church, and it is imperative that those be able to receive it validly. As the Church has stated: “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.”

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recently clarified that baptisms performed with the words “*We* baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” instead of “*I* baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” are invalid. This invalid “we baptize” formula has been used in the Diocese of Dallas on rare occasions by three deacons, and it is important to reach out to the faithful to ensure that this error is corrected.

Does the use of “we” really make a difference?

In making its clarification, the Congregation focused primarily on Christ’s role in the process of baptism. It notes: “when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes” and “the Lord has the principal role in the event being celebrated.” In other words, the minister is not performing a communal action among or on behalf of many people (“we”) but is performing an action fundamentally by Christ Himself (“I”). To use a communal or plural notion is to act contrary to the nature of the sacrament itself.

Additionally, the sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ and were entrusted to the Church to act as a steward over them, to protect them and preserve them. For this reason, the fundamental form is not to be changed by any person, especially in cases when the change violates the sacrament itself.

Is someone really not baptized if this mistake was made?

If an invalid form is used, the sacramental baptism is invalid. God may act in ways not bound by the sacraments, especially for those who approach the Church in good faith, but it is important to remember that we have no authority to presume to know the ways in which he does so.

That said, we can be certain, with divine faith, that the sacraments as they were given to us are efficacious in conveying God’s grace, and this is why it is so important to ensure that the sacraments are performed properly.

Can’t the Church just fix this problem without baptizing people again? Can’t the Church just supply validity?

No. The Church cannot make the sacrament of baptism valid when it was missing an essential part. In this case, the form of the sacrament (the proper wording) was missing. Individuals affected by this error would need to be baptized anew for the sacrament to be valid.

Who does this affect?

The deacons who are known to have used the invalid “we baptize” formula are Deacon Phil Webb, Deacon Carl Macero and Deacon Larry Harmon.

Deacon Phil Webb’s assignments are as follows:

Mary Immaculate in Farmers Branch: 1978 – 1989
St. Catherine of Siena in Carrollton: 1989 – 2009
Mary Immaculate in Farmers Branch: 2009 – 2014

Deacon Carl Macero’s assignments are as follows:

Prince of Peace in Plano: 1992 – 1996
St. Thomas Aquinas in Charlotte, North Carolina: 1996 – 2004
St. Francis of Assisi in Frisco: 2004 – 2014

Deacon Larry Harmon’s assignments are as follows:

Cathedral Guadalupe in Dallas: June 2002 – October 2012
Holy Family of Nazareth in Irving: October 2012 – Present

If you or one of your children was baptized by any of these three deacons, please contact your parish office, who can help to have you or your child baptized immediately and provide other sacraments where necessary.

It is possible that the Diocese is unaware of other individuals in the Diocese who utilized this “we baptize” formula. If you know that this occurred or have video evidence of this, please contact the Chancellor’s office at chancellor@cathdal.org.

Should I be worried that I am not baptized?

The vast majority of baptisms that have been performed in the Diocese of Dallas are valid. There is no reason for individuals who were not baptized by the aforementioned deacons to doubt the validity of their baptisms.

How did this happen?

As is being discovered in many dioceses around the country, it not entirely clear when, where or why this improper practice began. There is no indication whatsoever that the practice came from a place of malice or intentional wrongdoing, but instead was likely done in mistaken good faith.

If I was invalidly baptized, are the other sacraments I received invalid?

Yes. Baptism is the gateway to all other sacraments. Sacraments performed after baptism (such as Confirmation) will need to be performed again.

What about Confession?

Like the other sacraments, baptism is required for a valid Sacramental Confession. But you must always remember that one cannot be responsible for things outside of his or her control and that God, in his infinite mercy, desires to forgive all who approach Him with good will.

If I was invalidly baptized, is my marriage invalid?

It is possible that an invalid baptism can cause a marriage to be invalid. Please contact your parish if you believe you were invalidly baptized. Any issues related to marriage can be remedied quickly and without any additional ceremony.

Please note that this error in no way carries any moral guilt for the couple, as neither party could have been aware of the invalidity, and that any children born to an invalid marriage are *not* illegitimate.

What is being done to fix this?

The Diocese is contacting individuals who may have received an invalid baptism and is providing guidelines to all parishes for next steps. Any individual who was baptized by these three deacons can approach any parish in the Diocese to be baptized anew and immediately receive other sacraments where necessary.

Is this still occurring in the Diocese?

No. All clerics have been instructed that the use of the “we baptize” formula invalidates the sacrament. It may not be used under any circumstance.

I believe I was baptized by one of these deacons; does this mean my baptism was necessarily invalid?

No. While we do have evidence that these deacons used the invalid “we baptize” formula, we do not have evidence that they did so at every baptism they performed. In fact, we know that sometimes “I baptize” was used and at other times “We baptize” was used. Because there is a prudent doubt concerning validity though, any person baptized by these three deacons should approach a parish for immediate baptism.

A person who received an invalid baptism by one of these deacons has died; what does this mean?

The Church recognizes the value of individuals’ desire for salvation and, in the case of infants, their parents’ desire for their salvation. One should always remain faithful that God both understands the circumstances of life outside of our control and genuinely seeks communion with those who desire communion with Him.

Are there any priests in the Diocese who were invalidly baptized and so are not valid priests?

We have done a diligent search of all of our records, and we have not found any priest of the Diocese of Dallas who was invalidly baptized.