



# DIOCESE OF DALLAS

---

November 6, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Recently, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued an important [clarification](#), alerting the Church throughout the world that baptisms are not valid in cases where the words said during the baptism have been changed. Specifically, when the minister says “*We* baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” the individual is not validly baptized. Rather, the minister must say, “*I* baptize you...” and not “*We* baptize you...” in order to validly celebrate the sacrament and baptize the person. The Congregation reminded us that no one “even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority.”

Since the announcement from the Congregation, we have been made aware of cases where deacons of the Diocese of Dallas have used the “we baptize” wording. Of note, a deacon of the Diocese of Dallas had used the “we baptize” wording while attempting to baptize an individual who later served as a priest for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Because this man’s baptism was invalid, so too was his ordination, as baptism is the gateway to all other sacraments. Therefore, the man had to be baptized anew and re-ordained in order to correct the mistake.

While these issues may seem like burdensome technicalities, it is important to remember that Christ himself gave the sacraments to the Church, and with them the duty to safeguard the form of their celebration. Please understand that, as in all things, God is merciful in this matter, especially to those who came to the Church in good faith. Even so, it is my obligation as shepherd of this diocese to ensure that the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of baptism, has been properly celebrated.

Through information received from members of the faithful with video recordings of their baptisms, we have been able to identify three deacons who have used the invalid “we baptize” formula. I am releasing the names of those three deacons in the following **Frequently Asked Questions document**, but please know it is not to draw criticism. Instead it is to give those baptized by one of these three deacons an opportunity to reach out to their parish priest for next steps.

I can also assure you that we have searched the records of the priests of the Diocese of Dallas to ensure that none were baptized by any cleric who is known to have used an invalid form. Misuse of the formula is a rare occurrence in the Diocese, and after a diligent search, we have been unable to discover any other cleric who has used the “we baptize” formula. If you know that this formula or any other invalid formula has been used, please contact the Chancellor’s office at the pastoral center.

I ask that you join me in praying for all who are impacted by this situation, and for the entire Diocese of Dallas Catholic community. On behalf of our local Church, I am deeply sorry that this human error has resulted in disruption to the sacramental lives of some members of the faithful. I will take every step necessary to remedy the situation.

Fraternally Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name "Edward J. Burns" in a cursive script.

Most Reverend Edward J. Burns  
Bishop of Dallas