

VII. BAPTISM-ENTRIES

See canons 877, §1, and 878 of the *Code of Canon Law*, and canon 296, §2 of the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*.

A. Required Data

The following data are to be entered into the Baptism Register:

- Name of the person baptized
- Name of the minister
- Names of the parents
- Names of the sponsor(s)
- Name of the witness, if any
- Place and date of the baptism
- Place and date of birth

B. Source of Data

Ordinarily, the data indicated above, which is used to create a record of baptism, originates on a "Sacristy Record", a small form sold by commercial vendors or created by the parish. The Sacristy Record is completed either by someone in the parish office at the time the baptism is scheduled, by a member of the baptism preparation team during the catechetical program, or by the minister of baptism at the time of the actual baptism. Before the data are transferred to the Baptism Register, a parent, guardian or adult candidate should verify the data written on the Sacristy Record (usually at the time of baptism), and the minister should sign the Sacristy Record verifying that the sacrament was conferred. There should be a clear procedure in place for assuring that the data are transferred from the Sacristy Record to the Baptism Register as quickly as possible.

C. Recipients from more than one Parish

When persons from more than one parish are baptized or received into full communion with the Catholic Church at a single ceremony, the record for all persons is to be retained at the parish where the rites are celebrated.

D. Emergency and other Baptisms outside the Parish Church

In the exceptionally rare situation when baptism is conferred solemnly (that is, with a priest or deacon celebrating the full rite of baptism) in a chapel, hospital or home, the minister of baptism is to see to it that the requisite data are transmitted in writing to the local pastor for recording in the Baptism Register. In the equally rare situation when emergency baptism is conferred (that is, with any person celebrating the bare matter and form of baptism when the recipient is in danger of death), the minister (or some other witness) is to notify the pastor of the recipient. No record of emergency baptism is to be made in the Baptism

Register; instead the pastor of the recipient should celebrate the Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church (properly adapted in the case of an adult recipient) and create a record of that event, with a notation of the date, place and minister of the emergency baptism in the “Notations” column. The same procedure should be followed when a person is baptized illicitly by a lay person, even though there is no danger of death.

E. Conditional Baptism

When conditional baptism is conferred, “Baptized conditionally” is to be written in the “Notations” column. Otherwise the entry is the same as for any baptism. A person is baptized conditionally when there is doubt about the validity of a previous baptism.

F. RCIA and Reception into Full Communion

After fully initiating non-baptized adults or receiving baptized non-Catholics into full communion, see that the proper information is recorded in the sacramental registers.

For a non-baptized person, the following information should be recorded in the Baptism Register:

- The name of the person receiving the sacraments of initiation
- Date and place of birth
- Names of parents
- Name of the sponsor
- Date and place of baptism and confirmation
- Name of the bishop or delegated priest
- The notation of any previously celebrated marriage before the person entered the Catholic Church
- Notation of the confirmation should also be made in the Confirmation Register.

For a baptized non-Catholic entering full communion, the following information should be recorded in the Baptism Register:

- The name of the person entering full communion
- Date and place of birth
- Names of parents
- Name of the sponsor
- The date and place of confirmation in the Catholic Church
- Name of the bishop or delegated priest
- In the notations section – date and place of baptism in the non-Catholic community and the notation of any previously celebrated marriage before the person entered the Catholic Church

- Notation of the confirmation should also be made in the Confirmation Register.

Special care must be taken to create a record for young children who are received into full communion along with their parents, even though there may be no ritual involving the children; for example in the case when they have already been baptized and they are still too young to make a profession of faith and receive confirmation.

G. Unmarried Parents

In the case of unmarried parents, the mother's name is to be entered if her maternity is publicly known or if she requests that this be done either in writing or before two witnesses. Similarly, the father's name is to be entered if paternity is established by a public document or by his own declaration in the presence of the parish priest and two witnesses. In other cases, the name of the baptized person is entered without mention of the father or of the parents. The expression "*pater ignotus*" (Father unknown) is not to be used in the register or on any certificates.

H. Adoption

Documentary proof of the adoption should be provided.

(1) For children baptized after their adoption is finalized, the following information is entered in the register:

- The Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the adoptive parent(s)
- The name(s) of the adoptive parent(s)
- The date and place of birth
- The names of the sponsors selected by the adoptive parent(s)
- The place and date of the baptism
- The name of the priest or deacon performing the baptism
- In the notations section, indicate the fact of adoption but not the names of the natural parents. The fact of the adoption is not indicated on any baptismal certificates.

(2) For children baptized before their adoption is finalized, the following notations shall be added to the Baptism Register, but only after the adoption has been finalized and with due regard for the civil law of the jurisdiction:

- Parentheses shall be placed around the names of the natural parents
- The name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) shall then be added
- Parentheses are placed around the child's former surname and the new surname added
- In the notations section, indicate that the child was legally adopted.

Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for these individuals indicate only the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s), the child's new legal surname, the date and place of baptism, and the name of the minister who conferred the sacrament. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) is not to be given, and the fact of the adoption is not indicated.

I. Number of Godparents

No more than two names may be entered in the "Godparents" or "Sponsors" column. If there are two Godparents, there is to be one male and one female (cf. canon 873).

J. Proxy Godparent

When a godparent or sponsor appoints a proxy to participate in the rite of baptism, both names should be entered in the register, with "Proxy" written after that person's name.

K. Christian Witness

When a baptized non-Catholic serves as a witness to baptism, along with a Catholic sponsor, in accord with canon 874, §2, the words "Christian Witness" should be placed after the witness's name in the register.

L. Ascription to Proper Church *Sui Iuris*

Ascription to a Catholic Church *sui iuris* (In addition to the Latin or Roman Church there are 21 other Eastern Churches, e.g., Ukrainian, Melkite, Maronite, etc. Each Church is known as a Church *sui iuris*) is determined by the rite of the parents, not the rite of the minister or parish of baptism, unless the person is 14 years of age or older. Thus, when a Latin priest baptizes someone who by law is ascribed to an Eastern Catholic Church, a notation should be made in the "Notations" column indicating to which Catholic Church *sui iuris* the person belongs, for example, "ascribed to the Ukrainian Catholic Church".⁶

M. Registers for Ritual Use

A register used as part of the Church's ritual (e.g., Book of the Elect) should be completely distinct from the regular sacramental registers. The data from the ritual register should be transferred to the Baptism or Confirmation Registers as soon as possible after the conferral of sacraments or the reception into full communion.

⁶ If it is determined that one or both of the parents are ascribed to an Eastern Catholic Church, contact should be made with the Chancery before the celebration of baptism. According to the tradition of the Eastern Catholic Churches, baptism and chrismation (confirmation) are conferred at the same time. The Chancery can assist in contacting the proper Eastern Catholic Eparchy to request the necessary faculties. Similar requirements apply to Orthodox Christians who are received into full communion with the Catholic Church.

N. Defection from the Catholic Church

Occasionally, a parish will receive a notice from an individual indicating that the person is no longer wishes to be a Catholic, and even asking that his or her name be removed from Catholic Church records. Contact the Chancellor's office for instructions on how make the proper notation.

O. Style for Notations

The notations should be made neatly and succinctly in the "Notations" column. Names, dates, places and protocol numbers are usually the only information needed. Unless specified otherwise, such as in the case of adoption, these notations are not confidential and should be included on certificates.