

Ten After Ten Session 62: Sacrament of Baptism, continued

1246 Every person not yet baptized and only such a person is able to be baptized.

1247 Since the beginning of the Church, adult Baptism is the common practice where the proclamation of the Gospel is still new...this initiation into Christian faith and life should dispose the catechumen to receive the gift of God in Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

1248 The catechumenate, or formation of catechumens, aims at bringing their conversion and faith to maturity, in response to the divine initiative and in union with an ecclesial community. The catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and charity of the People of God by successive sacred rites.

1249 Catechumens are already joined to the Church, they are already of the household of Christ, and are quite frequently already living a life of faith, hope, and charity. With love and solicitude mother Church already embraces them as her own.

1250 Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called...The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.

1251 Christian parents will recognize that this practice also accords with their role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them.

1252 The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole "households" received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.

1253 Baptism is the sacrament of faith...It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop.

1254 For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow after Baptism. For this reason the Church celebrates each year at the Easter Vigil the renewal of baptismal promises...Baptism is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.

1255 For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too... the whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.

1256 The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon. In case of necessity, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize, by using the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The intention required is to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes.

1257 The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude...God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.

1258 The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This Baptism of blood, like the desire for Baptism, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament.

1259 For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament.

1260 Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity.

1261 As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved... allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism.