



# NewsLetter

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## Ten Questions on Implementing the *Order of Baptism of Children*

### 1. What is different in the *Order of Baptism of Children (OBC)* compared to the previous edition?

Most ritual editions of the previous *Rite of Baptism for Children* were based on the 1969 first Latin typical edition; some reprints incorporated emendations of the 1973 second typical edition. The OBC is a new translation of the 1973 Latin text, based on the principles articulated in *Liturgiam authenticam* and follows the Latin more closely than the previous English edition, but the differences in the Baptismal rite itself are very minimal.

The decisions regarding adaptations permitted to Conferences of Bishops by the rite itself (see Introduction, no. 24) are the same as in the previous U.S. edition. However, the new edition integrates those adaptations into the text more cohesively, both in their description in the introduction and in the way they are incorporated in the rites themselves. Other adjustments have been made to the text to follow the pattern set by the U.S. Spanish edition of the *Ritual para el Bautismo de los Niños*, confirmed in 2009.

Finally, the OBC includes several new adaptations proposed by the USCCB and approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments:

- an optional text for the greeting of the parents and godparents is provided;
- certain acclamations are included in-place in the rites, and not just confined to chapter VII (“Various Texts”), as in the Latin edition;
- an expanded Litany of the Saints is provided for optional use; and
- a new appendix lays out the ritual for the celebration of Baptism of children within Mass.

### 2. What changes have been made to the *Rite of Receiving the Child(ren)*?

The Latin typical edition asks the celebrant to greet those present for the Baptism, but without providing a text with which to do so. In the 2009 U.S. Spanish edition of the Baptism rite, a short optional text (“con éstas u otras palabras”) was provided for the celebrant. The new U.S. English edition includes a somewhat expanded version of the Spanish text, and the celebrant is free to use, adapt, or disregard it. The greeting first addresses the parents and godparents, assuring them that the Church shares their joy, summarizing the meaning of Baptism, and assuring them of the community’s support. It concludes by encouraging all present to prepare themselves to participate in the celebration. It is both welcoming and theological, situating Baptism in the life of the Church and the local community.

In the celebrant's words to formally receive the children accompanied by the signing with the cross, the text has been changed from "the Christian community receives you" to "the Church of God receives you." Pope Benedict XVI ordered the change in text shortly before his resignation in 2013. The decree promulgating the change explains that Baptism "is the sacrament of faith by which men and women are incorporated into Christ's one Church, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him." Thus, it is more accurate to say that Baptism incorporates us into the "Church of God," rather than into the more generic "Christian community." (Baptisms in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite also use the phrase "the Church of God" in welcoming the children.) The Committee on Divine Worship opted to delay mandatory implementation of this textual change until the new translation of the Baptismal rite was completed, and so the OBC now includes the final text.

### **3. Why is there a new Appendix in the U.S. edition that is not found in the Latin typical edition?**

The new appendix in the OBC concerns the celebration of Baptism within Mass. Although nos. 28-30 of the introduction indicate the manner of celebrating the Baptism of children during Mass, the directions provided are not particularly clear. This ambiguity seems to have led to a variety of practices in different places. Therefore, during the approval process, the bishops believed it would be helpful to include an appendix that combines the texts from the Order of Mass and Order of Baptism in the proper sequence to better assist priests when the Baptism of children takes place during Mass. The appendix has two sections: one for the Baptism of several children within Mass and one for the Baptism of one child. It is important to note, however, that the ritual book indicates that "this should not happen too often" (Introduction, no. 9; see also no. 250).

### **4. Does the new English edition affect the status of the U.S. Spanish edition of Baptism? Are there differences between the English and Spanish editions?**

No, the *Ritual para el Bautismo para los Niños* confirmed for the United States in 2009 remains in force. The Spanish-only ritual edition published at that time may continue to be used. There exist only minor textual or layout differences between the English and Spanish editions, which becomes evident when both are viewed side-by-side in the bilingual editions.

The preparation of new bilingual editions of the book, however, presented the opportunity to emend the Spanish text slightly. Namely, various errata in the 2009 edition have been corrected, a few texts have been updated for consistency with the U.S. edition of the *Misal Romano*, and a Spanish translation of the appendix for celebrating Baptism within Mass has been added. Pope Benedict's change of "la comunidad cristiana" to "la Iglesia de Dios" in the Rite of Receiving the Children (mentioned above) is now also reflected on the Spanish side of the bilingual editions. Thus, the Spanish texts in the 2020 bilingual editions are more correct than the original 2009 edition, but the latter version may nonetheless still be used.

### **5. Are there guidelines for a bilingual celebration of Baptism?**

Three publishers have prepared bilingual editions of the *Order of Baptism of Children/Ritual para el Bautismo para los Niños*, and they can serve various purposes. Priests or deacons who frequently have Baptisms in both languages can rely on one book for this ministry rather than two. Celebrants not fluent in one language or the other may find it helpful to have the two translations on facing pages for reference. Finally, in situations in which the congregation is multilingual and/or multicultural, the celebrant might choose to repeat certain texts in both languages, or alternate languages during the course of the ceremony.

In 2013, the Secretariat of Divine Worship, in collaboration with the *Instituto Nacional Hispano de Liturgia* and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, revised and issued a document with informal guidelines and suggestions for multilingual celebrations of Mass, available at [USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/frequently-asked-questions/guidelines-for-a-multilingual-celebration-of-mass.cfm](https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/frequently-asked-questions/guidelines-for-a-multilingual-celebration-of-mass.cfm).

Some of the principles articulated in those guidelines could be applied in the celebration of Baptism. For example, elements of the ceremony that involve welcoming the families or commentary on the ritual could easily be duplicated in both languages, and readings and petitions could alternate between languages. When there are multiple children being baptized, the Renunciation of Sin, Profession of Faith, and sacramental formula could be

done for each family according to their preferred language. However, individual instances of blessings and prayers, and especially the formula of Baptism, should always be done in their integrity in one language.

**6. Is the use of the new English edition mandatory, or can the previous edition still be used?**

The OBC may be used in celebrations of Baptisms for the first time as of February 2, 2020, and its use is mandatory on Easter Sunday, April 12. On that latter date, the former *Rite of Baptism for Children* may no longer be used in the United States.

**7. Does the new edition overlap with other liturgical books, especially the *Roman Missal*?**

The OBC includes several texts that coincide with material found in the Easter Vigil Mass in the *Roman Missal*: the Blessing of Baptismal Water, formulas for the renunciation of sin, and the threefold profession of faith. The new Baptism translation will now be consistent with what is found in the *Missal*. In addition, the book now includes an optional expanded form of the Litany of the Saints, also drawn from the Easter Vigil. The OBC also includes texts from the *Order of Confirmation* that will now be consistent with that rite (published in 2016). Finally, the Baptism rite shares various texts with the *Lectionary for Mass* and *The Abbey Psalms and Canticles*.

**8. What is the role of the deacon when assisting a priest at Baptism outside Mass? Within Mass?**

Outside of Mass, the ritual refers to the deacon mostly in reference to larger celebrations. “If there are very many children to be baptized, and there are several Priests or Deacons present, these may assist the celebrant in performing those rites that are indicated in the text” (OBC, no. 34). In these cases a deacon might assist in the prebaptismal anointing with the Oil of Catechumens, the baptism of some of the children, and the anointing with Chrism afterward. When the number of children to be baptized is small, deacons could assist the priest as needed with some of the logistical elements of the ceremony, such as distributing the white garments or the baptismal candles; echoing his role at the Easter Vigil Mass, the deacon could instead hold the paschal candle as the baptismal candles are lit.

Within Mass, the deacon performs his usual roles at Mass. If he preaches the homily, he follows the instructions given in the Order of Baptism, basing his homily on the sacred text but also considering the Baptism being celebrated. In the Universal Prayer the deacon reads the petitions, but the priest celebrant leads the invocation of the saints, as indicated by the rubrics. During the rite of Baptism, the deacon assists as described above.

The May 2019 *Newsletter* also provides a more comprehensive answer to this question.

**9. Does the Baptism rite make provision for the role of a non-Catholic minister in a Catholic Baptism?**

The participation of a non-Catholic minister in a Catholic Baptism is addressed in the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*. It notes that Baptism is always conferred “in a given Church or ecclesial Community,” and so it “may not be conferred jointly by two ministers belonging to different Churches or ecclesial Communities. Moreover, according to Catholic liturgical and theological tradition, baptism is celebrated by just one celebrant” (no. 97).

It does concede that “[f]or pastoral reasons, in particular circumstances the local Ordinary may sometimes permit, however, that a minister of another Church or ecclesial Community take part in the celebration by reading a lesson, offering a prayer, etc. Reciprocity is possible only if a baptism celebrated in another Community does not conflict with Catholic principles or discipline” (no. 97).

Because godparents are representatives of a community of faith, “[i]t is the Catholic understanding that godparents, in a liturgical and canonical sense, should themselves be members of the Church or ecclesial Community in which the baptism is being celebrated” (no. 98). “A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be received only as a witness of the Baptism and only together with a Catholic godparent, at the request of the parents” (*Christian Initiation*, General Introduction, no. 10, 6; see Code of Canon Law, can. 873 and 874, §1 and §2). “A Catholic may do the same for a person being baptized in another ecclesial Community” (*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, no. 98a).

**10. What impact does the liturgical calendar have on the celebration of Baptism? Are there days when Baptism within Mass is not permitted?**

According to the Code of Canon Law, “baptism can be celebrated on any day” (can. 856). Circumstances will dictate the most prudent time for the celebration, and the OBC offers several considerations for the scheduling of Baptism. Three factors are especially important: first, “the welfare of the child, lest he or she be deprived of the benefit of the Sacrament”; second, “the health of the mother, so that, as far as possible, she may also be present”; and third, “the pastoral need to allow sufficient time to prepare the parents and properly to arrange the celebration itself, so that the nature of the rite may be evident” (Introduction, no. 8). In a more general way, the ritual instructs that “[t]he celebration of Baptism should take place during the first weeks after the birth of the child” (Introduction, no. 8, 3). As for the day of the week, the Church recommends the celebration of Baptism at the Easter Vigil or on a Sunday, in order to highlight better “the paschal character of Baptism” (Introduction, no. 9).

The liturgical season has no bearing on the celebration of Baptism outside of Mass. However, the liturgical time can dictate the choice of Mass formularies and Lectionary readings when Baptism is celebrated within Mass: “When Baptism is conferred during Sunday Mass, the Mass of the day is said or, during the Sundays of Christmas Time or of Ordinary Time, the Mass for the Conferral of Baptism is said” (Introduction, no. 29; see also no. 252). Along with other ritual Mass formularies, the Mass for the Conferral of Baptism is prohibited on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, on solemnities, days within the Easter Octave, All Souls’ Day, Ash Wednesday, and during Holy Week (see no. 252 and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 372); the Mass of the day must be used on those occasions.

