

## HOW TO BAPTISE SOMEONE IN AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency, a lay person may conduct a baptism, as outlined in the *Code of Canon Law*, canon 230, article 3.

### *What Constitutes an Emergency?*

It is an emergency if:

- Despite having received the best available medical attention, the candidate is reasonably worried that they might die, and they urgently request baptism.  
*or*  
The candidate is a small child in immediate danger of death, and the parents or carers request baptism.
- You have tried and failed to contact a member of the clergy, or a member of the clergy cannot arrive in time.

### *Important Considerations*

- Do not baptise an adult unless they request it.
- Do not baptise a person while they are unconscious, unless they are dying and the caregiver requests it.
- Do not baptise a person who has already been baptised in any Christian denomination.
- Do not baptise a person if a member of the clergy is available.
- If a member of the clergy declines to baptise the person, do not take it upon yourself to do it.
- Do not baptise a person if a member of the clergy instructs you not to do it or tells you it is unnecessary.
- Do not ask the person to confess sins to you.
- Do not require the person to show you evidence of repentance.
- Do not attempt to determine whether the person is worthy of baptism.

### *The Essential Parts*

- You must have the intention of performing a valid baptism. For example, if children are “playing church” or if you perform a baptism as part of a play, or you are horsing around in a swimming pool, it is not a valid baptism.
- Real water must be involved. Pour water on the candidate’s head three times, or immerse them in water three times.
- You must use the formula in Matthew 28:19: “**(Name)**, I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
- If the person is unable to verify whether or not they have already been baptised, or if it cannot be determined if the person’s baptism was valid, then you can perform a *conditional* baptism, saying: “**(Name)**, *if you are not already baptised*, I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
- If there is time, it is appropriate to recite the Creed before the baptism, and to pray the Lord’s Prayer afterwards. However, these aren’t absolutely essential.

You don't need special equipment for pouring. You can pour the water simply by cupping your hands and letting the water flow onto the candidate's head. There doesn't have to be a lot of water, but be sure to apply it three times.

If you do ever perform an emergency baptism, please inform your parish priest about it as soon as possible.

NB. If you are with a person who is suddenly afflicted with a medical emergency, whether they are dying or not, your first priority should be to summon professional medical help and to administer first aid until it arrives. Only then should you attempt to administer spiritual help.