

21 Centuries of Catholic Doctrine: BAPTISM

As taught in the Church's historical writings, from the time of the Apostles down to today

ca. 70 A.D.—*Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*

—Necessity of the Trinitarian formula; pouring (Infant Baptism)—

7:1-4 In regard to Baptism—baptize thus: After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), in living water [i.e., a flowing stream]. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water [i.e., a lake or pool]; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Before the Baptism, let the one baptizing and the one to be baptized fast, as also any others who are able. Command the one who is to be baptized to fast beforehand for one or two days. ...

9:5 Let no one eat or drink of the Eucharist with you except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord; for it was in reference to this that the Lord said: "Do not give that which is holy to dogs" (Matt. 7:6).

—ca. 100, Death of Saint John, the last of the Apostles

ca. 150—*Saint Justin the Martyr, First Apology*

—Infant Baptism—

15 [M]any, both men and women, who have been Christ's disciples from childhood, remain pure at the age of sixty or seventy years ...

—Necessity of Trinitarian formula; "born again" through Baptism—

61 I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanation we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are

past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (John 3:5). Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers' wombs, is manifest to all. And how those who have sinned and repent shall escape their sins, is declared by Esaias the prophet ...; he thus speaks: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from your souls And though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white like wool; and though they be as crimson, I will make them white as snow" (Isa. 1:16, 18).

ca. 150—*Hermas, brother of Pope Saint Pius, The Shepherd*

—"Born again" through Baptism—

Mand. 4:3:1 "I have heard, sir," said I, "from some teachers, that there is no other repentance except that which took place when we went down into the water and obtained the remission of our former sins." He said to me, "You have heard rightly, for so it is. ...

Par. 9:16:2-4 "They had need," [the shepherd] said, "to come up through the water, so that they might be made alive; for they could not otherwise enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5), except by putting away the mortality of their former life. These also, then, who had fallen asleep, received the seal of the Son of God, and entered into the kingdom of God. For," he said, "before a man bears the name of the Son of God, he is dead. But when he receives the seal, he puts mortality aside and again receives life. The seal, therefore, is the

water. They go down into the water dead, and come out of it alive.”

ca. 156—*The Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp*

—*Infant Baptism*—

9:3 [Polycarp:] “Eighty and six years have I served [Jesus Christ].”

181—Saint Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, *To Autolytus*

2:16 Moreover, those things which were created from the waters were blessed by God, so that this might also be a sign that men would at a future time receive repentance and remission of sins through water and the bath of regeneration (Titus 3:5)—all who proceed to the truth and are born again and receive a blessing from God.

ca. 185—Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, disciple of Polycarp of Smyrna, *Against Heresies*

—*“Born again” through Baptism; Infant Baptism*—

2:22:4 [Jesus] came to save all through Himself,—all, I say, who through Him are reborn in God—infants, and children, and youths, and old men. Therefore He passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age

—*Necessity of Trinitarian formula; “born again” through Baptism*—

3:17:1 And again, giving the disciples the power of regenerating in God, He said to them: “Go and teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). This He promised through the Prophets, that is in the last days He would pour out upon His servants and handmaids the ability to prophesy (see Jl. 2:28). Therefore He did also descend upon the Son of God made Son of man, becoming accustomed to Him to dwell among the human race, to rest with men, to dwell in the workmanship of God, working the will of the Father in them, and renewing them from their old ways into the newness of Christ.

ca. 190—Irenaeus, *Fragment*

—*“Born again” through Baptism; (Infant Baptism)*—

“And [Naaman] dipped himself,” says [the Scripture] seven times in the Jordan” (2 Kgs. 5:14). It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [it served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we

are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions; being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes, even as the Lord has declared: “Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (John 3:5).

ca. 200—Saint Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor of Children*

—*“Born again” through Baptism*—

1:6:26:1-2 When we are baptized, we are enlightened. Being enlightened, we are adopted as sons. Adopted as sons, we are made perfect. Made perfect, we are become immortal. . . . This work is variously called grace, illumination, perfection, and washing. It is a washing by which we are cleansed of sins; a gift of grace by which the punishments due our sins are remitted; an illumination by which we behold that holy light of salvation—that is, by which we see God clearly; and we call that perfection which leaves nothing lacking.

ca. 204—Saint Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop of Pontus, disciple of Irenaeus, *Commentary on Daniel*

1:16 “And she said to her maids, ‘Bring me oil’ (Dan. 13:17 [Sus. 1:17, LXX]).” Indeed, faith and love prepare oil and cleansing unguents for those who are washed. But what were these unguents if not the commands of the Holy Word? And what the oil, if not the power of the Holy Spirit? It is with these, after the washing [i.e., Baptism], that believers are anointed as with a sweet-smelling oil. All these things were prefigured through the blessed Susanna for our sakes, so that we of the present time who believe in God, might not regard as strange the things which now are done in the Church, and that we might believe that all of them have been set forth in figures by the patriarchs.

ca. 205—Tertullian, *Baptism*

—*“Born again” through Baptism*—

1:1-3 A treatise on our sacrament of water, by which the sins of our earlier blindness are washed away and we are released for eternal life will not be superfluous. . . . Vipers and asps, as is true of serpents in general, are found in dry and waterless places. But we, little fishes are born in water after the manner of our ΙΧΘΥΣ, [Greek for *fish*, an acrostic of “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior,” commonly used in the early Church] Jesus Christ; nor can we be otherwise saved, except by abiding permanently in the water. . . .

12:1 Since it is in fact prescribed that no one can attain salvation without Baptism, especially in view of that declaration of the Lord, who says: "Unless a man shall be born of water, he shall not have life" (John 3:5) ...

—*Necessity of Trinitarian formula*—

13:3 The law of washing has been imposed, and the form has been prescribed: "Go," He says, "teach the nations, washing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). ...

—*Infant Baptism: The efficacy of baptizing infants is affirmed, though the prudence of doing so is questioned*—

18:4-6 According to circumstance and disposition and even age of the individual person, it may be better to delay Baptism; and especially so in the case of little children. Why, indeed, is it necessary—if it be not a case of necessity—that the sponsors too be thrust into danger, when they themselves may fail to fulfill their promises by reason of death, or when they may be disappointed by the growth of an evil disposition? Indeed, the Lord says, "Do not forbid them to come to me" (Matt. 19:14).

Let them come (cf. Matt. 19:14; Luke 18:16), then, while they grow up, while they learn, while they are taught to whom to come; let them become Christians when they will have been able to know Christ! Why does the innocent age hasten to the remission of sins? ... Anyone who understands the seriousness of Baptism will fear its reception more than its deferral. Sound faith is secure of salvation!

ca. 210—Tertullian, *The Resurrection of the Dead*

8:2-3 No soul whatever is able to obtain salvation unless it has believed while it was in the flesh. Indeed, the flesh is the hinge of salvation. In that regard, when the soul is deputed to something by God, it is the flesh which makes it able to carry out the commission which God has given it. The flesh, then, is washed [in Baptism], so that the soul may be made clean. The flesh is anointed [in Confirmation], so that the soul may be dedicated to holiness. The flesh is signed [in Confirmation], so that the soul may be fortified. The flesh is shaded by the imposition of hands [in Confirmation], so that the soul may be illuminated by the Spirit. The flesh feeds on the Body and Blood of Christ [in Holy Communion], so that the soul too may feed on God. They cannot, then, be separated in their reward, when they are united in their works.

ca. 215—Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition*

21 At dawn a prayer shall be offered over the water. Where there is no scarcity of water the stream shall flow through the baptismal font or pour into it from above; but if water is scarce, whether as a constant condition or on occasion, then use whatever water is available.

—*Infant Baptism*—

... Baptise first the children; and if they can speak for themselves, let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them. ...

—*"Born again" through Baptism*—

22 The Bishop [in Confirmation], imposing his hand on them, shall make an invocation, saying:

"O Lord God, who made them worthy of the remission of sins through the Holy Spirit's washing unto rebirth, send into them your grace so that they may serve you according to your will: for there is glory to you, the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church, both now and through the ages. Amen."

217—Hippolytus, *Discourse on the Holy Theophany*

—*"Born again" through Baptism*—

8 The Father of immortality sent the immortal Son and Word into the world, who came to man in order to wash him with water and the Spirit; and He, begetting us again to incorruption of soul and body, breathed into us the breath (spirit) of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply. If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the laver he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead. Wherefore I preach to this effect. Come, all ye kindreds of the nations, to the immortality of the baptism.

ca. 235—Novatian, anti-pope, *The Trinity*

—*"Born again" through Baptism*—

29 It is [the Holy Spirit] that effects with water a second birth. He is a kind of seed of divine regeneration and the consecrator of heavenly birth, the pledge of a promised inheritance (Eph. 1:14), and, as it were, a kind of surety of bond of eternal salvation. It is He that can make of us a temple of God (1 Cor. 3:17), and can complete us as His house; He that can accost the divine ears for us with unutterable groaning (Rom. 8:26), fulfilling the duties of

advocate and performing the functions of defense; He, that is an inhabitant given to our bodies, and a worker of holiness.

ca. 245—Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*

—*“Born again” through Baptism; Infant Baptism—*

8:3 Every soul that is born into flesh is soiled by the filth of wickedness and sin. ... [I]n the Church Baptism is given for the remission of sins; and, according to the usage of the Church, Baptism is given even to infants. If there were nothing in infants which required a remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness [i.e., original sin], the grace of Baptism would seem superfluous.

ca. 245—Origen, *Homilies on Numbers*

—*“Born again” through Baptism—*

7:2 Formerly there was Baptism in an obscure way, in the cloud and in the sea; now, however, in full view, there is regeneration in water and in the Holy Spirit.

ca. 245—Origen, *Homilies on Romans*

—*Necessity of Trinitarian formula—*

5:8-9 Perhaps you may inquire even into this: why, when the Lord Himself told His disciples that they should baptize all peoples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), does this Apostle employ the name of Christ alone in Baptism, saying, “We who have been baptized in Christ” (Rom. 6:3); for indeed, legitimate Baptism is had only in the name of the Trinity.

—*Infant Baptism; “born again” through Baptism—*

The Church received from the Apostles the tradition of giving Baptism even to infants. For the Apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of the divine mysteries, knew that there is in everyone the innate stains of [original] sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit.

248—Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*

—*“Born again” through Baptism—*

Treatises 12:3:Test. 25 That unless a man have been baptized and born again, he cannot attain unto the kingdom of God.

In the Gospel according to John: “Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. For that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5-6). Also in the same place: “Unless ye eat the flesh

of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye shall not have life in you” (John 6:53).

251—Pope Saint Cornelius, 21st Bishop of Rome, *Letter to Fabius of Antioch*

—*Pouring (Infant Baptism)—*

6:43:14-15 As [Novatian] seemed about to die, he received Baptism in the bed where he lay, by pouring—if, indeed, such a man [i.e., a schismatic] can be said to have received it at all. And when he recovered from his illness he did not receive the other things which, in accord with the law of the Church, it is necessary to have; nor was he sealed by the bishop. And since this was not done, how could he have the Holy Spirit?

252—Cyprian and his colleagues in council, *Letter to Fidius*

—*Infant Baptism: The opinion that infants must wait till the eighth day after birth to be baptized is condemned; “born again” through Baptism—*

64 [59]:2, 5 As to what pertains to the case of infants: you said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, ... In our council [i.e., the Council of Carthage] it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judged that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born. ...

If, in the case of the worst sinners and those who formerly sinned much against God, when afterwards they believe, the remission of their sins is granted and no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back, who, having but recently been born, has done no sin, except that, born of the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of that old death [i.e., original sin] from his first being born. For this very reason does he [the infant] approach more easily to receive the remission of sins: because the sins forgiven him are not his own but those of another.

ca. 255—Cyprian, *Letter to Jubaianus, A Bishop in Mauretania*

—*Necessity of Trinitarian formula; “born again” through Baptism—*

73:18 After the Resurrection, when the Lord sent the Apostles to the nations, He commanded them to baptize the gentiles in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. How then do some say that though a gentile be baptized beyond the pale and outside the Church, yes, even against the Church, never mind how or of whom, so long

as it be done in the name of Jesus Christ, the remission of sins can follow—when Christ Himself commands the nations to be baptized in the full and united Trinity?

256—Seventh Council of Carthage, presided over by Cyprian, *Prooemium*

—*“Born again” through Baptism—*

And in the Gospel our Lord Jesus Christ spoke with His divine voice, saying, “Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). This is the Spirit which from the beginning was borne over the waters; for neither can the Spirit operate without the water, nor the water without the Spirit.

300—Council of Elvira, *Canons*

—*Pouring (Infant Baptism)—*

48 It is determined that the custom is to be abrogated by which those who are being baptized drop coins in the shell [i.e., seashell from which the baptismal water was poured], lest the priest seem to be distributing for a price what he has received gratis.

ca. 300—Florentius, *Epitaph for Apronianus*

—*Found in Christian cemetery in Rome; Infant Baptism; “born again” through Baptism—*

Florentius set up this inscription for his well-deserving son Apronianus, who lived one year, nine months and five days. Since he was truly beloved by his grandmother and she saw that he was destined for death, she asked of the church that he should depart from this life a believer.

—313. *The Edict of Milan: Legalization of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire*

314—First Council of Arles, *Canons*

—*Necessity of Trinitarian formula—*

8 It is determined that if someone come to the Church from heresy, let them ask him his creed; and if they see that he has been baptized in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, only is the hand to be imposed upon him [in Confirmation], so that he may receive the Holy Spirit. But if, upon being interrogated, he does not respond with this Trinity, he is to be baptized.

ca. 350—Saint Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, Doctor of the Church, *Catechetical Lectures*

—*Baptism of fire—*

3:10 If any man does not receive Baptism, he does not have salvation. The only exception is the martyrs, who even without water, will receive the kingdom. ... For the Savior calls martyrdom a Baptism, saying: “Can you drink

the cup which I drink, and be baptized with the Baptism with which I am to be baptized?” (Mark 10:38) ...

3:12 Bearing your sins, you go down into the water; but the calling down of grace seals your soul and does not permit that you afterwards be swallowed up by the fearsome dragon. You go down dead in your sins, and you come up made alive in righteousness.

375—Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea, Doctor of the Church, *The Holy Spirit*

—*Necessity of Trinitarian formula—*

12:28 Let no one be misled by the fact that the Apostle frequently omits the name of the Father and of the Holy Spirit when mentioning baptism; nor let anyone suppose that the invocation of the Names is a matter of indifference. “Those of you,” he says, “who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27); and again, “Those of you who have been baptized in Christ have been baptized in His death” (Rom. 6:3). The naming of Christ, you see, is the confession of the whole; it bespeaks the God who anoints, the Son who is anointed, and the Spirit who is the anointing. ... If, then, in baptism the separation of the Spirit from the Father and the Son is perilous to the one baptizing and useless to the one receiving, how can it be safe for us to separate the Spirit from the Father and the Son? ... We believe in a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit; so too, then, are we baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

381—Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishop of Constantinople, Doctor of the Church, *Oration on Holy Baptism*

—*Infant Baptism—*

40:17 Do you have an infant child? Allow sin no opportunity; rather, let the infant be sanctified from childhood. From his most tender age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the seal because of the weakness of nature? O what a pusillanimous mother, and of how little faith! ... Give your child the Trinity, that great and noble Protector. ...

40:28 “Well enough,” some will say, “for those who ask for Baptism; but what do you have to say about those who are still children, and aware neither of loss nor of grace? Shall we baptize them too?”

Certainly, if there is any pressing danger. Better that they be sanctified unaware, than they depart unsealed and uninitiated.

385—Pope Saint Siricius, 38th Bishop of Rome,***Letter to Bishop Himerius of Tarragona***

—*Infant Baptism; “born again” through Baptism—*

We also desire that babes who for their youth are not yet able to speak and persons in any extremity who need the sacred wave of baptism should be succored with all speed, lest we risk the destruction of our own souls by denying the font of salvation to those who seek it. ...

If anyone threatened with shipwreck, or the attack of enemies, or the uncertainties of a siege, or anyone put in a hopeless condition due to some bodily sickness, also for what in his faith is his only help [baptism], let him receive at the very moment of his request the reward of the regeneration he begs for. Enough of past mistakes!

ca. 388—Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Doctor of the Church, *Penance*

—*“Born again” through Baptism—*

2:2:12 Things that are impossible with men are possible with God. God is able, whenever He wills, to forgive us our sins, even those we think cannot be forgiven. Thus it is possible for God to give us what to us seems impossible to obtain. Now, it seemed impossible that sin should be washed away in water. ... But what was impossible was made possible by God, who gave us so great a grace.

388—Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, Doctor of the Church, *Baptismal Catechesis*

—*Infant Baptism; “born again” through Baptism—*

3:2:8 You see how many are the benefits of Baptism, and some think its heavenly grace consists only in the remission of sins; but we have enumerated ten honors [it bestows]. For this reason we baptize even infants, though they are not defiled by [personal] sin: so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness, adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be His members (Augustine, *Against Julian* 1:6:21).

ca. 410—Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, Doctor of the Church, *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*

—*Infant Baptism—*

10:23:39 The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic. The age

of infancy also has a great weight of witness; for it was the infant age that first merited to pour out its blood for Christ (see Matt. 2:16).

415—Saint Jerome, Doctor of the Church,***Dialogue Against the Pelagians***

—*“Born again” through Baptism—*

3:1 This much you must know, that Baptism forgives past sins, but it does not safeguard future justice, which is preserved by labor and industry and diligence, and depends always and above all on the mercy of God.

419—Augustine, *The City of God*

—*Baptism of fire—*

13:7 For whatever unbaptized persons die confessing Christ, this confession is of the same efficacy for the remission of sins as if they were washed in the sacred font of baptism. For He who said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5), made also an exception in their favour, in that other sentence where He no less absolutely said, “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven;” (Matt. 10:32) and in another place, “Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it” (Matt. 16:25).

452—Saint Patrick, first Bishop of Ireland,***A Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus***

4 And if this wicked deed [i.e., the murder of Christians], so horrible, so unutterable, had to happen, thanks be to God, as men, believing and baptized, you have left this world behind for paradise.

ca. 460—Pope Saint Leo the Great, 45th Bishop of Rome, *Fourth Sermon on the Nativity of Christ*

—*“Born again” through Baptism—*

6 [R]emain firm in that Faith, which you have professed before many witnesses, and in which you were reborn through water and the Holy Ghost.

ca. 525—Saint Fulgence, Bishop of Ruspe,***The Rule of Faith***

—*Baptism of fire—*

43 From that time at which our Savior said, “If anyone is not reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven” (John 3:5), no one can, without the Sacrament of Baptism, except those who, in the Catholic Church, without baptism pour out their blood for Christ, receive the kingdom of heaven and eternal life. Anyone who receives the Sacrament of Baptism, whether in the Catholic

Church or in a heretical or schismatic one, receives the whole Sacrament; but salvation, which is the strength of the Sacrament, he will not have, if he has had that Sacrament outside the Catholic Church. He must, therefore, return to the Church, not so that he might receive again the Sacrament of Baptism, which no one dare repeat in any baptized person, but so that he may receive eternal life in Catholic society, for the obtaining of which no one is suited who, even with the Sacrament of Baptism, remains estranged from the Catholic Church.

529—Second Council of Orange, *Canons*

—*“Born again” through Baptism—*

4 If anyone maintains that God awaits our will to be cleansed from sin, but does not confess that even our will to be cleansed comes to us through the infusion and working of the Holy Spirit, he resists the Holy Spirit himself who says through Solomon, “The will is prepared by the Lord” (Prov. 8:35), and the salutary word of the Apostle, “It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish” (Phil. 2:13) ...

8 If anyone maintains that some are able to come to the grace of baptism by mercy but others through free will, which has been manifestly corrupted in all those who have been born after the transgression of the first man, it is proof that he has no place in the true faith. ... The Lord himself shows how contradictory this is by declaring that no one is able to come to him “except the Father draw him” (John 6:44), as he also says to Peter, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 16:17), and as the Apostle says, “No man can say, the Lord Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12:3) ...

10 The succor of God is to be ever sought by the regenerate [i.e., baptized] and converted also, so that they may be able to come to a successful end or persevere in good works. ...

Conclusion According to the Catholic faith we must also believe that after grace has been received through baptism, all baptized persons have the ability and responsibility, if they desire to labor faithfully, to perform with the aid and cooperation of Christ what is of essential importance in regard to the salvation of their soul. ... We also believe and confess to our benefit that in every good work it is not we who take the initiative and are then assisted through the mercy of God, but God himself first inspires in us both faith in him and love for

him without any previous good works of our own that deserve reward, so that we may both faithfully seek the sacrament of baptism, and after baptism be able by his help to do what is pleasing to him.

591—Pope Saint Gregory the Great, 64th Bishop of Rome, Doctor of the Church, *Letter to Leander, Bishop of Seville*

—*Infant Baptism; necessity of Trinitarian formula—*

1:41 But in respect to the triple immersion of Baptism, no truer response can be given than what you have already sensed, that where there is one faith a variation in usage does no harm to Holy Church. ... It cannot be in any way reprehensible to immerse an infant in Baptism either thrice or once, since with three immersions the Trinity of persons may be signified, and in one, the singleness of their Divinity. Yet, inasmuch as it has until now been the custom of heretics to baptize infants with a triple immersion, I am of the opinion that this should not be done among you, lest, while the heretics divide the immersions, they should divide also the Divinity, and while they continue to do as they are accustomed to do, they should boast of having got the priority of our custom.

601—Gregory the Great, *Letter to Bishop Quiricus and Other Catholic Bishops of Georgia [Asiatic Iberia]*

—*Necessity of Trinitarian formula; “born again” through Baptism—*

11:52 We have learned from the ancient institution of the Fathers that those who, in heresy, are baptized in the name of the Trinity, when they return to the Holy Church, are to be recalled to the bosom of Mother Church either by anointing with chrism, or by the imposition of the hand [i.e., Confirmation], or by a profession of faith alone, ... because the holy Baptism, which they received among heretics, re-engages in them the powers of cleansing at that time when ... they are united to the faith in the bowels of the Holy and Universal Church. But as to those heretics who are baptized not in the name of the Trinity, ... when they come to the Holy Church, they are baptized, because that was not Baptism, which, situated in error, they received not in the name of the Trinity. Nor can this be called a repetition of a Baptism, which, as was stated, was not given in the name of the Trinity.

627-636—Saint Isidore, Bishop of Seville, Doctor of the Church, *Etymologies*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

6:100:19 Chrisma is in Latin called “unctio” and from it Christ receives His name, and man is sanctified after the laver; for as in baptism remission of sins is given, so by anointing the sanctification of the Spirit is conferred. The imposition of hands takes place in order that the Holy Spirit, being called by the blessing, may be invited; for after the bodies have been cleansed and blessed, then does the Paraclete willingly come down from the Father.

—636, *Death of Saint Isidore of Seville, end of the patristic period in the West*

739—Pope Saint Gregory III, 90th Bishop of Rome, *Letter to Boniface about the Organization of the Church in Bavaria*

—*Necessity of Trinitarian formula*—

Those who were baptized with a formula expressed in a heathen tongue, provided their Baptism was performed in the name of the Trinity should be confirmed with sacred chrism and the laying-on-of-hands.

—ca. 749, *Death of Saint John Damascene, end of the patristic period in the East*

ca. 803—Alcuin, *Letter to Oduin on Baptism*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

16 Lastly, by the imposition of the high priest’s hands [in Confirmation] he receives the spirit of the sevenfold grace, so that he may be strengthened by the Holy Spirit to preach to others, who in baptism was accorded the gift of life everlasting.

866—Pope Saint Nicholas the Great, 105th Bishop of Rome, *The Responses to the Questions of the Bulgars*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

99:18 [E]very man ... has contracted sin through the fault of another [i.e., original sin], that is, through Adam, from which he needs purgation through the water of baptism, so, when he comes to profess his faith at the wave of rebirth, he chooses another as a certain kind of father [i.e., godfather], namely a spiritual one, by whom, once he has been received, he is instructed, protected with complete protection, and presented again to the rector of the church.

968—Liutprand, Bishop of Cremona, *Report of His Mission to Constantinople*

The race of the Saxons, from the time when it

received the holy baptism and the knowledge of God, has been spotted by no heresy.

ca. 975—Roswitha of Gandersheim, Benedictine nun, earliest known female playwright, *Gallicanus*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

Act IX

TERENTIANUS. Glorious witnesses [i.e., martyrs] of Christ, John and Paul, follow the example and commandment of your Master, and pray for your persecutors. Have compassion on the anguish of a father who fears to lose his child! Have pity on the sufferings of the son! Succour us both, and grant that, purified in the waters of baptism, we may persevere in faith.

—1054, *Start of the Eastern Schism*

1081—Pope Saint Gregory VII, 157th Bishop of Rome, *Letter to the Bishop of Metz*

[W]hat king or emperor is able, by reason of the office he holds, to rescue a Christian from the power of the devil through holy baptism, to number him among the sons of God, and to fortify him with the divine unction [in Confirmation]?

1141-1151—Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Doctor of the Church, *Scivias*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

2: Vis. 4:1 After the illumination of baptism, which rose with the Sun of Justice Who sanctified the world by His own washing, the new Bride of the Lamb [i.e., the Church] was adorned and confirmed in the fire of the ardor of the Holy Spirit for the perfection of her beauty. So also each of the faithful who is regenerated by the Spirit and water should be decorated and confirmed by a bishop’s anointing, so that he will be strengthened in all his members toward achieving beatitude and find himself most perfectly adorned with the full fruits of highest justice.

ca. 1260—Saint Bonaventure, Bishop of Albano, Doctor of the Church, *The Tree of Life*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

9 When the Savior reached the age of thirty, wishing to work out our salvation, he began first to act before he taught (cf. Acts 1:1). And beginning with baptism as the doorway to the sacraments and the foundation of virtues, he wished to be baptized by John, in order to show us an example of perfect justice and to “confer regenerative power on the water by contact with his most pure flesh” (Bede, *Commentary on Luke* 1:3:21).

1377-1378—Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, *The Dialogue*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

75 [*God the Father*.:] Where did [the soul] come to know this honor of being fused into the blood of the Lamb as she was baptized in the power of that blood? In his open side, where she came to know the fire of divine charity. ...

... [The Lamb answered.] “By shedding both blood and water I showed you the holy baptism of water that you receive through the power of my blood. But I was also showing you the baptism of blood, and this in two ways. The first touches those who are baptized in their own blood poured out for me. Though they could not have the other baptism, their own blood has power because of mine. Others are baptized in fire when they lovingly desire baptism but cannot have it. Nor is there any baptism without blood, for blood has been fused with the fire of divine charity, because it was shed for love.” ...

135 [*God the Father*.:] Constrained not by any justice or virtue of yours but by my own goodness, I clothed you anew in the person of this gentle loving Word, my only-begotten Son. He, by stripping himself of life, clothed you anew in innocence and grace (cf. Gal. 3:27). You receive this innocence and grace in holy baptism by the power of the blood that washes away the stain of original sin in which you were conceived, which you contracted from your father and your mother.

1439—Pope Eugene IV, 207th Bishop of Rome, *Exultate Deo*

—“Born again” through Baptism: necessity of Trinitarian formula—

Holy baptism holds the first place among all the sacraments because it is the door of the spiritual life. By it we are made members of Christ and of his body, the Church. And since through the first man death has come to all men, unless we are reborn of water and of the Holy Spirit, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven as the Truth himself tells us (see John 3:5). The matter of this sacrament is true and natural water. The form is: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

—1517, *Start of the Protestant Revolt*

1564—Council of Trent, 19th ecumenical council, *Creed*

I also acknowledge that there are truly and properly seven sacraments of the New Law, instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, and that they are necessary for the salvation of the

human race, although it is not necessary for each individual to receive them all. I acknowledge that the seven sacraments are: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, and matrimony; and that they confer grace; and that of the seven, baptism, confirmation, and holy orders cannot be repeated without committing a sacrilege. I also accept and acknowledge the Catholic Church in the solemn administration of these sacraments.

1622—Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Doctor of the Church, *Sermon for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

All are born under God’s wrath (Ps. 51:7; Eph. 2:3) because of Original Sin, which makes them enemies of God. But by Baptism they are regenerated and become His children, capable of His grace and of the heritage of eternal life.

ca. 1715—Saint Louis Mary Grignon de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*

—*Infant Baptism*—

8 Since every Christian was a slave of the devil before he received the sacrament, he has, in Baptism, either through his own lips or the voices of his godparents, solemnly renounced Satan and all his works and pomps. He has taken Jesus for his Master and Sovereign Lord. He has become a slave of love, utterly dependent on that Master.

1845—Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*

—*Infant Baptism*; “born again” through Baptism—

1;2:1 It would be natural indeed in any Christian father, in the absence of a rule, to bring his children for baptism; such in this instance would be the practical development of his faith in Christ and love for his offspring; still a development it is,—necessarily required, yet, as far as we know, not provided for his need by direct precept in the Revelation as originally given.

... That they who came in repentance and faith to that Holy Sacrament [of Baptism] received remission of sins, is undoubtedly the doctrine of the Apostles.

1993—Pope Saint John Paul the Great, 264th Bishop of Rome, *Veritatis Splendor*

—“Born again” through Baptism—

21 *Following Christ* is not an outward imitation, since it touches man at the very

depths of his being. Being a follower of Christ means *becoming conformed to him* who became a servant even to giving himself on the Cross (cf. Phil. 2:5-8). Christ dwells by faith in the heart of the believer (cf. Eph. 3:17), and thus the disciple is conformed to the Lord. This is the *effect of grace*, of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

Having become one with Christ, the Christian *becomes a member of his Body, which is the Church* (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13, 27). By the work of the Spirit, Baptism radically configures the faithful to Christ in the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection; it “clothes him” in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:27): “Let us rejoice and give thanks,” exclaims Saint Augustine speaking to the baptized, “for we have become not only Christians, but Christ (...) . Marvel and rejoice: we have become Christ!” (*In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 21, 8). Having died to sin, those who are baptized receive new life (cf. Rom. 6:3-11): alive for God in Christ Jesus, they are called to walk by the Spirit and to manifest the Spirit’s fruits in their lives (cf. Gal. 5:16-25).

2007—Pope Benedict XVI, 265th Bishop of Rome, Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

—“Born again” through Baptism—

A washing of regeneration: Baptism is not only a word, it is not only something spiritual but also implies matter. All the realities of the earth are involved. Baptism does not only concern the soul. Human spirituality invests the totality of the person, body and soul. God’s action in Jesus Christ is an action of universal efficacy. Christ took flesh and this continues in the sacraments in which matter is taken on and becomes part of the divine action.