

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM:
VALIDITY OF INFUSION (POURING) OR PARTIAL IMMERSION
IN THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS
(80-255 CE)

Syria

And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.
e. (Didache [Syrian Liturgical Manual], Unknown Editor, c. 80-140 CE).

Rome (Italy)

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 on a constant condition or on occasion, then use whatever water is available. (The Apostolic Tradition 21:16, Hippolytus?) c. 215 CE)

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As he seemed about to die, he received baptism in the bed where he lay, by pouring. (Letter to Fabius of Antioch [A.D. 251]; Pope Cornelius I, cited in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 6:4311).

Carthage (Africa)

Not that I deny that the divine benefit--the putting away of sins, I mean--is in every way sure to such as are on the point of entering the (baptismal) water; but what we have to labor for is, that it may be granted us to attain that blessing. For who will grant to you, a man of so faithless repentance, one single sprinkling of any water whatever? (On Repentance 6, Tertullian, 198 CE)

With so great simplicity, without pomp, without any considerable novelty of preparation, and finally, without cost, a man is baptized [dipped] in

water, and amid the utterance of some few words, is sprinkled, and then rises again, not much (or not at all) the cleaner

...

And accordingly it makes no difference whether a man be washed in a sea or a pool, a stream or a fount, a lake or a trough... All waters, therefore, in virtue of the pristine privilege of their origin, do, after invocation of God, attain the sacramental power of sanctification; for the Spirit immediately supervenes from the heavens, and rests over the waters, sanctifying them from Himself; and being thus sanctified, they imbibe at the same time the power of sanctifying. (On Baptism 2, 4; Tertullian, presbyter, 203 CE)

...

You have asked also, dearest son, what I thought about those who obtain the grace of God while they are weakened by illness - whether or not they are to be reckoned as legitimate Christians who have not been bathed with the saving water, but have had it poured over them. On this point, my shyness and modesty prejudices no one, so as to prevent any from feeling what he thinks right and from doing what he feels is right. As far as my limited understanding conceives it, I think that the divine benefits can in no way be weakened or mutilated, nor can anything less take place in that case, where that which is drawn from the divine gifts is accepted with full and entire faith both on the part of the giver and the receiver. For in the sacrament of salvation the contagion of sins is not in such wise washed away, as the filth of the skin and of the body is washed away in the carnal and ordinary washing... In the saving sacraments, when necessity compels and when God bestows his pardon, divine benefits are bestowed fully upon believers, nor ought anyone be disturbed because the sick are poured upon or sprinkled when they receive the Lord's grace, when Holy Scripture speaks by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, and says,

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put within you.” (Ez. 35:25-26)

Also in Numbers:

“And the man that shall be unclean until the evening shall be purified on the third day, and on the seventh day shall be clean: but if he shall not be purified on the third day, on the seventh day he shall not be clean. And that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of sprinkling hath not been sprinkled upon him.” (Num. 19: 8, 12, 13)

And again:

“And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: thou shall sprinkle them with the water of purification.” (Num 8:5-7)

And again:

“The water of sprinkling is a purification.” (Num. 19:9)

Whence it appears that the sprinkling also of water prevails equally with the washing of salvation; and that when this is done in the Church, where the faith both of receiver and giver is sound, all things hold and may be consummated and perfected by the majesty of the Lord and by the truth of faith.

...And therefore, as far as it is allowed me by faith to conceive and to think, this is my opinion, that any one should be esteemed a legitimate Christian, who by the law and right of faith shall have obtained the grace of God in the Church. Or if any one think that those have gained nothing by having only been sprinkled with the saving water, but that they are still empty and void, let them not be deceived, so as if they escape the evil of their sickness, and get well, they should seek to be baptized. But if they cannot be baptized who have already been sanctified by ecclesiastical baptism, why are they offended in respect of their faith and the mercy of the Lord? Or have they obtained indeed the divine favour, but in a shorter and more limited measure of the divine gift and of the Holy Spirit, so as indeed to be esteemed Christians, but yet not to be counted equal with others? (Letter to a Certain Magnus [Letter 75] 69:12 Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, leader of the North African churches 254 CE).