

DEAR DEACON BULLETIN INSERT

❖ Dear Deacon Jim,

I was baptized in the hospital and later received a conditional baptism in the church. What is conditional baptism? Why didn't I receive a baptismal certificate?

❖ Response

I will try to answer your questions in a general sense without going into any specific details of what I assume was an emergency baptism in the hospital.

First, in the Catholic faith and practice, baptism is a 'once for all time' sacrament. So, you can only **receive it once and it is effective forever**. No one can ever change that you are a Christian and a member of the Body of Christ once baptism has been validly conferred.

I don't know the circumstances of what transpired at your hospital baptism and cannot address the specific reason(s) if any. However, a **"conditional baptism"** is performed in the event the first baptism was not properly administered. It is called **"conditional"** because a person cannot be baptized twice. If the first baptism was not valid, the **"conditional baptism"** ensures that a properly valid baptism was conferred.

Although baptized in the hospital with water, a Baptismal Ceremony is later on performed in a church. This ceremony provides an opportunity for everyone involved to learn the symbolism of the Sacrament of Baptism, such as the reception of the child, readings, the symbol of water, the prayer of exorcism, the anointing with oil of catechumens and the Holy Chrism oil, the white garment, and receiving the baptismal candle. However, the pouring of water is omitted since it's already happened. If it is put in, then it would only be done conditionally, that is, on the condition that the first time it wasn't done correctly.

Generally, assuming the necessary information was provided, the hospital where the emergency baptism was performed will inform the designated parish and the baptismal date will be recorded in the Church registry when the person was baptized the first time. I am not sure of the circumstances of why you did not receive a baptismal certificate when a conditional baptism in the church was done.

I would suggest that you contact the parish to confirm they have a record of your baptism and date in their Baptismal Registry. Additionally, if you provide the names of at least two (2) witnesses who were present at your first baptism in the hospital, an affidavit may be generated and can serve as your Baptismal Certificate.

Deacon Jim