

## **Is it true that water baptism puts a mark on your soul where God marks you as his own and belonging to his Church?**

*It's God that Makes you a Member?*

The Church may say that baptism makes you a member of the Church. Strictly speaking, baptism doesn't do that. It is God's choice that does that. In other words, baptism is nothing in itself. It is only that God has decreed that he will give you grace and make you a member of the Church should you validly undergo baptism that is important. Suppose a king decrees that you will only get into his charity banquet if you have a ticket. It is not the ticket that really gets you in but the king's will. See the point?

To say God chooses the baptised implies that he does not choose the unbaptised. They are rejected. The Church will retort, "They are not rejected for God will accept them if they are baptised!" That is like saying, "We do not employ black people. We do not reject them because maybe in their next reincarnation they will become white".

### THE MARK - THE BAPTISMAL CHARACTER

The authoritative Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma by Ott says,

"As the baptismal character which effects incorporation in the Church is indestructible, the baptised person, in spite of his ceasing to be a member of the Church, cannot cut himself off so completely from the Church, that every bond with the Church is dissolved. The obligations arising from the reception of Baptism remain, even when the use of the rights connected with it are withdrawn by way of punishment. Thus the Church claims jurisdiction over baptised persons who are separated from her."

Valid baptism is supposed to leave a mark on your soul to show that you have been baptised and because of the mark you will never need your baptism to be repeated. It obligates you to restore your membership if you lose it. The Church cannot be one Church if every heretic or schismatic who appears in her midst is a real Catholic. The creed says, "I believe in one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church."

The Bible does not mention the alleged mark. The Roman Catholic Church claims to be infallible. In the following infallible decrees it speaks of the mark.

Three of the sacraments, namely baptism, confirmation and orders, imprint indelibly on the soul a character, that is a kind of stamp which distinguishes it from the rest. Hence they are not repeated in the same person. The other four, however, do not imprint a character and can be repeated. (Council of Florence, 1439).

If any one shall say that in three sacraments, viz. Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, there is not a character impressed upon the soul, that is a certain spiritual and ineffaceable mark [signum] whence these sacraments cannot be iterated, let him be anathema (Concil. Trid. Sess. ult., can. vii).

The decrees merely say a mark concerned about unrepeatability is conferred. That is all. There is nothing about Catholics necessarily being permanent Catholics.

The mark must be metaphorical for the soul can't literally bear a mark. The Church says the soul is non-physical and has no parts. This is Church dogma. Therefore putting two and two together the mark is a metaphor for God considering a person validly baptised once and for all.

The baptism cannot be repeated. You are in God's book as baptised - ie having gone through the ceremony validly. The mark comes with the graces or supernatural healing effects of baptism but does not cause them. It is God that gives the healing and the spiritual benefits of baptism and you don't need a mark to get them.

Even if you have received a true baptism the mark has nothing to do with activating the supernatural effects. The effects is a separate issue. The Church believes you can be validly married but if you are full of sin you will not activate the sacramental powers of marriage. It must be the same with baptism. The important thing about the baptism is the supernatural life transforming power given to those who are baptised. This power can be received and rejected over and over again. It is like you are continually baptising yourself over and over again but without the water. The physical outer baptism is not to be repeated but the inner baptism is repeatable.

Now, the Church claims to teach that body and soul make up the complete person. That is why God raises body and soul from the dead. The body has no mark signifying baptism. Through baptism into the Catholic Church a visible Church, an organisation can be set up. It is bizarre that no mark is put by God on the body. What use is a mark nobody can see?

There is only one baptism in the eyes of the Church and that is Catholic baptism. Even if a Protestant is validly baptised, it is because he got a Catholic baptism though everybody meant it to be a non-Catholic one.

The Church says it has no authority to repeat a baptism known to be valid. That is why when Presbyterians or Methodists become Catholics, they will not be baptised if they were baptised before in their Churches.

The Church believes that people who are baptised properly but who were not raised in the Catholic Church need to be received into the Church. Membership of the Catholic Church is declared to be conferred by baptism in the Catholic Church or by the Church receiving a person who was baptised a Protestant and also raised a Protestant into its fold. Ideas such as once a Catholic always a Catholic insults those who have a recognised baptism but who were not baptised Catholics and who need to be received into the Church. They are received into the Church as if they were outside of it. They become Catholics, despite their Protestant baptism being considered to have been valid, by being accepted into the Church in a formal ceremony after an appropriate period of religious instruction and preparation. If baptism is really enough to make one a Catholic then it would follow that instead of being received into the Catholic Church, Protestants need only say they believe in Catholicism and start attending Catholic sacraments and stop attending Protestant Churches. Receiving into the Church would be replaced by a welcome back ceremony if the Church sincerely believed that baptism puts you into the Catholic Church. The Church says it believes that valid baptism always puts one into the Catholic Church and the receiving ceremony denies this.

## WHAT DOES THE MARK DO?

The Church says that baptism marks you forever as belonging to Jesus Christ. This denies that unbaptised people belong to Jesus. It accuses those who belong but who refuse to belong of being evil whether they realise it is evil or not.

A mark can't make you belong to anybody. To say it can is insulting. All the mark can be is that a person was baptised. All the grace of baptism and all the rights can be renounced and lost. Then the mark would show only that the baptismal grace and rights can be restored but not that the person really belongs to Jesus or the Church.

To belong to God by baptism means you belong to him and should become a member. There is another way it means you are his. If it takes away your sin it makes you belong to him in a stronger way than that. To belong to God by baptism this way means that if you are clean from sin you are his. The angels then belong to God because they are clean though they have not been baptised. The only difference between you and the angel is how you got the holiness. The holiness cannot mark you as belonging to God forever. It can only mark you as belonging to God as long as you obey.

If baptism marks you as belonging to the Church, that does not mean you are a member of the Church. Belonging only means that you have a duty to be a member not that you are a member. Those who are not baptised then do not belong to God or the Church - they are rejected. They are treated differently though it is not their fault. The Church teaches that those Catholics who commit mortal sin are like branches broken off the vine but hanging by a tiny sliver. So the degree you are a member is reduced by the degree you sin. The apostate is the branch that has fallen off and will stay fallen off until he or she is restored by faith and repentance.