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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** ALL PRIESTS AND DEACONS

**FROM:** ARCHBISHOP WILTON D. GREGORY 

**SUBJECT:** INVALID BAPTISMAL FORMULAS

**DATE:** 4/14/2008

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You may be aware of the recent ruling from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on certain English language baptismal formulas. In response to a question on the validity of the formulas, "I baptize you in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier," or "I baptize you in the name of the Creator, and of the Liberator, and of the Sustainer," the Congregation ruled that such formulas are invalid, and that anyone who had been baptized with such a formula needs to be baptized "in forma absoluta" - that is to say, not conditionally.

In the course of your ministry, you may come across individuals who have been baptized invalidly in such a manner. In this case, it will be necessary to baptize them according to the proper rites of the Church. For children under the age of seven, the *Rite of Baptism for Children* should be used. In the case of individuals whose baptism is invalid, the reception of the other sacraments is also invalid. Therefore, for individuals who have already attempted the reception of the sacrament of confirmation, it will be necessary for them to receive both the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of confirmation according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in Exceptional Circumstances* (numbers 331-369 of the RCIA.) Any priest may celebrate the sacrament of confirmation in this case, in virtue of Canon 883, section 2. Children who have not yet attempted confirmation should receive only the sacrament of baptism, and should receive confirmation in the ordinary course of Christian initiation as it is conventionally celebrated in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Because these ceremonies are taking the place of prior, invalid, celebrations of the sacrament, the individuals should not be required to undergo any prior period of catechesis, nor should they be celebrated with any external solemnity. The reception of these sacraments should be noted in the baptismal registry as a notation to the original entry that was made for their invalid reception.

Individuals who were invalidly baptized and have subsequently married in the Catholic Church will usually need to receive a *sanatio in radice* or a convalidation of their marriage. The priest or deacon working with the couple should contact the Metropolitan Tribunal regarding a request for a *sanatio*. Please contact my office directly in the case of any individual who was invalidly baptized, but who later attempted to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Unless there is evidence that one of the invalid formulas was used, a baptism should be presumed to be valid. In case of serious doubt, the individual may be conditionally rebaptized.

In cases where it is known that a priest or deacon habitually made use of an invalid formula, it will be necessary to contact all of the individuals baptized by that priest or deacon. Please contact my office regarding the procedures to follow in notifying individuals who may have received the sacrament of Baptism invalidly.