

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
ABOUT  
THE COMMON AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF BAPTISM  
WITH  
THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS**

**1. Why is this common agreement needed?**

While there continues to be much that divides our churches, we are able to recognize that in our baptisms, we are joined to Christ and that becomes the foundation for our ecumenical dialogue and relationships. In many ways, this common agreement affirms what have been our separate beliefs and practices. It becomes a public statement of our unity in the midst of continuing differences.

**2. Will PCUSA pastors have to change how they celebrate baptism?**

No, we will continue to practice the sacrament of baptism as outlined in our Directory of Worship. There are very helpful recommendations in the *"Pastoral Recommendations: Tangible Expressions of Mutual Recognition of Baptism"* that sessions and pastors may want to implement. We believe these recommendations will enhance not only our ecumenical relationships, but also our own understanding and practice of the Sacrament of Baptism.

**3. In the Presbyterian Church (USA) we invite all baptized persons to share in the Lord's Supper. Does this mean that we can take Holy Communion in one another's churches?**

We are continuing to dialogue on our understandings of the Eucharist. While the PCUSA invites all baptized persons to share in the Lord's Supper, the Roman Catholic Church is not yet able to allow its members to receive the Eucharist in Protestant churches nor generally able to invite persons who are not members of the Roman Catholic Church to receive the Eucharist in Roman Catholic Church. We continue to pray and work for the day we can all share together at the Lord's Table.

**4. What does it mean that written attestations of Baptism, including the liturgical formula used must be provided and why is this important?**

The Book of Order requires that sessions keep a record and register of all baptized members. For purposes of membership, marriage or other pastoral needs, a person may request a letter or certificate of their baptism. This letter or certificate should indicate the congregation and date of baptism. In addition, it should indicate that the Trinitarian formula, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" was used in the baptismal rite.

*(over)*

**5. When will this Common Agreement become effective?**

This agreement is currently before the PC (USA) presbyteries for ratification. It is also in the process of being approved by the full United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is the first time in our forty years of dialogue that we have reached an agreement that will be taken to the full USCCB for approval. It is expected that this agreement will become effective after 2010.

**6. What can I do to help make this Agreement meaningful?**

Review the *Pastoral Recommendations: Tangible Expressions of Mutual Recognition of Baptism* and begin a discussion with your session about your understanding which of these recommendations have already been implemented in your congregation and which recommendations may be considered for implementation.

You may also invite priest(s) and members of a neighboring Roman Catholic parish to join in a study of baptism, using the full dialogue report *These Living Waters* as a resource in this study. Copies of "These Living Waters" may be downloaded from the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) website at <http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=2007>. You may also order copies from the Department of Ecumenical and Agency Relations in the Office of the General Assembly.