

clearly stated in the Council of Trent about the sacrament of regeneration and about the sacrament of penance. . .”

“It is not always necessary that this desire be explicit as it is with catechumens. When a man is invincibly ignorant, God also accepts an *implicit desire*, so called because it is contained in the good disposition of soul by which a man wants his will to be conformed to God’s will. . .”

“It must not be imagined that any desire whatsoever of entering the Church is sufficient for a man to be saved. It is necessary that the desire by which a man is related to the Church be informed with perfect charity. And an *implicit desire* cannot have its effect unless a man had supernatural faith: ‘For he who comes to God must believe that God exists and is a rewarder to those who seek him’ (*Heb. 11:6*). The Council of Trent says: ‘Faith is the beginning of a man’s salvation, the foundation and source of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and to be counted as his sons.’”

## 1. Council of Trent 1545-1563

*Canons on the Sacraments in General*: - (Canon 4):

“If anyone shall say that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary for salvation, but are superfluous, and that although all are not necessary for every individual, without them **or without the desire of them** (*sine eis aut eorum voto*), through faith alone men obtain from God the grace of justification; let him be anathema.”

*Decree on Justification*: - (Session 6, Chapter 4):

“In these words a description of the justification of a sinner is given as being a translation from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam to the state of grace and of the ‘adoption of the sons’ (Rom. 8:15) of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Savior and this translation after the promulgation of the Gospel cannot be effected **except through the laver of regeneration or a desire for it**, (*sine lavacro regenerationis aut eius voto*) as it is written: “Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter in the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

# Baptism of Desire and of Blood

*From the teachings of the Popes,  
the Council of Trent,  
the 1917 Code of Canon Law,  
the Roman Martyrology,  
the Fathers, Doctors  
and Theologians  
of the Church*

2. St. Alphonsus Liguori  
1691 - 1787

*Moral Theology*: - (Bk. 6):

“But **baptism of desire** is perfect conversion to God by contrition or love of God above all things accompanied by an **explicit or implicit desire for true Baptism of water**, the place of which it takes as to the remission of guilt, but not as to the impression of the [baptismal] character or as to the removal of all debt of punishment. It is called “of wind” [“flaminis”] because it takes place by the impulse of the Holy Ghost who is called a wind [“flamen”]. Now it is *de fide* that men are also saved by Baptism of desire, by virtue of the Canon “*Apostolicam De Presbytero Non Baptizato*” and the Council of Trent, Session 6, Chapter 4 where it is said that no one can be saved “without the laver of regeneration or the desire for it.”

23. Letter of the Holy Office approved by  
Pope Pius XII, July 28, 1949

“We are bound to believe by divine and Catholic faith what is contained in the written word of God or in tradition, and is proposed by the Church as a divinely revealed object of belief either in a solemn decree, or in her ordinary, universal teaching.

The infallible dictum which teaches us that outside the Church there is no salvation, is among the truths that the Church has always taught and will always teach.

“But this dogma is to be understood as the Church itself understands it. For our Savior did not leave it to private judgment to explain what is contained in the deposit of faith, but to the doctrinal authority of the Church. . .”

“Of those helps to salvation that are ordered to the last end only by divine decree, not by intrinsic necessity, God, in his infinite mercy, willed that such effects of those helps as are necessary to salvation can, in certain circumstances, be obtained when the helps are used only in *desire* or *longing*. We see this

6. St. Augustine

*City of God:*

"I do not hesitate to place the Catholic catechumen, who is burning with the love of God, before the baptized heretic . . . The centurion Cornelius, before Baptism, was better than Simon [Magus], who had been baptized. **For Cornelius, even before Baptism, was filled with the Holy Ghost, while Simon, after Baptism, was puffed up with an unclean spirit.**" (De Bapt. C. Donat., IV, 21)

"Baptism is administered invisibly to one whom not contempt of religion but death excludes." (Denzinger 388)

7. St. Thomas Aquinas

*Article 1, Part III, Q 68:*

"I answer that, the sacrament of Baptism may be wanting to someone in two ways. First, both in reality and in desire; as is the case with those who neither are baptized, nor wished to be baptized: which clearly indicates contempt of the sacrament, in regard to those who have

17. Fr. H. Noldin, S.J. - Fr. A. Schmit, S.J.

*Summa theologiae moralis* (Vol. III de Sacramentis); Bk 2 *Quaestio prima* - 1921:

**Baptism of spirit (flaminis) is perfect charity or contrition, in which the desire in fact to receive the sacrament of Baptism is included;** perfect charity and perfect contrition however have the power to confer sanctifying grace.

18. Fr. Arthur Vermeersch, S.J.

*Theologiae Moralibus* (Vol III, Tractatus II) - 1948:

**The Baptism of spirit (flaminis) is an act of perfect charity or contrition, in so far as it contains at least a tacit desire of the Sacrament.** Therefore it can be had only in adults. It does not imprint a character; . . . but it takes away all mortal sin together with the sentence of eternal penalty, according to: "He who loves me, is loved by my Father." (John 14:21)

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the Church and in the confession of the name of Christ, was **freed from original sin and attained the joy of the heavenly fatherland.** Read (brother) in the eighth book of Augustine's *City of God* where among other things it is written, **"Baptism is ministered invisibly to one whom not contempt of religion but death excludes."** Read again the book also of the blessed Ambrose concerning the death of Valentinian where he says the same thing. **Therefore, to questions concerning the dead, you should hold the opinions of the learned Fathers, and in your church you should join in prayers and you should have sacrifices offered to God for the priest mentioned.** (Denzinger 388)

*Debitum pastoralis officii*, August 28, 1206:

You have, to be sure, intimated that a certain Jew, when at the point of death, since he lived only among Jews, immersed himself in water while saying: "I baptize myself in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen."

We respond that, since there should be a distinction between the one baptizing and the one baptized, as is clearly gathered from the

21. Fr. Aloysia Sabetti, S.J. - Fr. Timotheo Barrett, S.J.

*Compendium Theologiae Moralibus*; Tractatus XII De Baptismo (Chap. 1) - 1926:

Baptism, the gate and foundation of the Sacraments in fact or at least in desire, is necessary for all unto salvation . . .

**From the Baptism of water, which is called of river (Baptismus fluminis), is from Baptism of the Spirit (Baptismus flaminis) and Baptism of Blood, by which Baptism properly speaking can be supplied, if this be impossible.** The first one is a full conversion to God through perfect contrition or charity, in so far as it contains an either explicit or at least implicit will to receive Baptism of water . . . Baptism of Spirit (flaminis) and Baptism of blood are called Baptism of desire (in voto).

### 19. Fr. Ludovico Billot, S.J.

*De Ecclesiae Sacramentis* (Vol. I); Quaestio LXVI; Thesis XXIV - 1931:

**Baptism of spirit (flaminis), which is also called of repentance or of desire is nothing else than an act of charity or perfect contrition including a desire of the Sacrament,** according to what has been said above, namely that, the heart of everyone is moved by the Holy Ghost to believe, and to love God, and to be sorry for his sins.

### 20. Fr. Eduardus Genicot, S.J.

*Theologiae Moralis Institutiones* (Vol II); Tractatus XII - 1902:

Baptism of the Spirit (flaminis) consists in an act of perfect charity or contrition, with which there is always an infusion of sanctifying grace connected . . .

**Both are called "of desire" (in voto) . . . ; perfect charity, because it has always connected the desire, at least the implicit one of receiving this sacrament, absolutely necessary for salvation."**

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### 22. Roman Martyrology

*January 23* - At Rome, *St. Emerentiana*, Virgin and Martyr, who was stoned by the heathen **while still a catechumen**, when she was praying at the tomb of St. Agnes, whose foster-sister she was.

*April 12* - At Braga, in Portugal, *St. Victor*, Martyr, who, **while still a catechumen**, refused to worship an idol, and confessed Christ Jesus with great constancy; and so after many torments, **he merited to be baptized in his own blood**, his head being cut off.

*August 25* - At Arles in France, another *Blessed Genesius*, who undertook the office copyist, when he refused to transcribe the impious edicts whereby the Christians were ordered to be punished and, casting away his registers, in public he proclaimed himself a Christian, was arrested and beheaded and received the glory of martyrdom, being *baptized in his own blood*.

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words of the Lord, when He says to the Apostles: "Go baptize all nations in the name etc." (cf. Matt. 28:19), the Jew mentioned must be baptized again by another, that it may be shown that he who is baptized is one person, and he who baptizes another . . . **If, however, such a one had died immediately, he would have rushed to his heavenly home without delay because of the faith of the sacrament, although not because of the sacrament of faith.** (Denzinger 413)

### 5. St. Ambrose

"I hear you express grief because he [Valentinian] did not receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Tell me, what else is there in us except the will and petition? **But he had long desired to be initiated . . . and expressed his intention to be baptized . . . Surely, he received [it] because he asked [for it].**

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### 3. 1917 Code of Canon Law

*On Ecclesiastical Burial*: - (Canon 1239. 2)

**"Catechumens who, through no fault of their own, die without Baptism, are to be treated as baptized."**

#### The Sacred Canons

by Rev. John A. Abbo, S.T.L., J.C.D. and  
Rev. Jerome D. Hannan, A.M., LL.B.,  
S.T.D., J.C.D.

*Commentary on the Code*:

"The reason for this rule is that they are justly supposed to have met death **united to Christ through Baptism of Desire.**"

### 4. Pope Innocent III

*Apostolicam*:

To your inquiry we respond thus: We assert without hesitation (on the authority of the holy Fathers Augustine and Ambrose) that **the priest whom you indicated (in your letter) had died without the water of baptism, because he persevered in the faith of Holy Mother**

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### 16. Mgr. J. H. Hervé

*Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Vol. III: chap. IV) - 1931

II. *On those for whom Baptism of water can be supplied:*

**The various baptisms: from the Council of Trent itself and from the things stated, it stands firm that Baptism is necessary, yet in fact or in desire; therefore in an extraordinary case it can be supplied.** Further, according to the Catholic doctrine, there are two things by which the sacrament of Baptism can be supplied, namely an act of perfect charity with the desire of Baptism and the death as martyr. Since these two are a compensation for Baptism of water, they themselves are called Baptism, too, in order that they may be comprehended with it under one as it were generic name; so the act of love with desire for Baptism is called *Baptismus flaminis* (Baptism of the Spirit) and the martyrism (Baptism of Blood).

### 13. Fr. A. Tanquery

*Dogmatic Brevior*; ART. IV, (Section I, II): - 1945

The Baptism of Desire. *Contrition, or perfect charity, with at least an implicit desire for Baptism, supplies in adults the place of the baptism of water as respects the forgiveness of sins.*

This is certain.

Explanation. a) An implicit desire for Baptism, that is, one that is included in a general purpose of keeping all the commandments of God included in a general purpose of keeping all the commandments of God is, as all agree, sufficient in one who is invincibly ignorant of the law of Baptism; likewise, according to the more common opinion, in one who knows the necessity of Baptism.

b) Perfect charity, with a desire for Baptism, forgives original sin and actual sins, and therefore infuses sanctifying grace; but it does not imprint the Baptismal character and does not of itself remit the whole temporal punishment due for sin; whence, when opportunity offers, the obligation remains on one who was sanctified in this manner of receiving the Baptism of water.

the use of the free-will. Consequently those to whom Baptism is wanting thus, cannot obtain salvation: **since neither sacramentally nor mentally are they incorporated in Christ, through whom alone can salvation be obtained.**

"Secondly, the sacrament of Baptism may be wanting to anyone in reality but not in desire: for instance, when a man wishes to be baptized, but by some ill-chance he is forestalled by death before receiving Baptism. And such a man can obtain salvation without being actually baptized, on account of his desire for Baptism, which desire is the outcome of *faith that worketh by charity*, whereby God, Whose power is not tied to visible sacraments, sanctifies man inwardly. Hence Ambrose says of Valentinian, who died while yet a catechumen: '*I lost him whom I was to regenerate: but he did not lose the grace he prayed for.*'"

### 10. Pope Pius IX

*Singulari Quadam*: - 1854

174. "It must, of course, be held as a matter of faith that outside the apostolic Roman Church no one can be saved, that the Church is the only ark of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it will perish in the flood. On the other hand, **it must likewise be held as certain that those who are affected by ignorance of the true religion, if it is invincible ignorance, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.** Now, then, who could presume in himself an ability to set the boundaries of such ignorance, taking into consideration the natural differences of peoples, lands, native talents, and so many other factors? Only when we have been released from the bonds of this body and see God just as He is (*see John 3:2*) shall we really understand how close and beautiful a bond joins Divine mercy with Divine justice."

*Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* - 1863:

**"...We all know that those who are afflicted with invincible ignorance with regard to our holy religion, if they carefully keep the precepts of the natural law that have been**

**8. St. Robert Bellarmine, Doctor of the Church - 1542-1621**

*Liber II, Caput XXX:*

"Boni Cathecumeni sunt de Ecclesia, interna unione tantum, non autem externa." (Good catechumens are of the Church, by internal union only, not however, by external union.)

**9. Pope St. Pius V 1566-1572**

*Ex omnibus afflictionibus:* - October 1, 1567

**Condemned the following erroneous propositions of Michael du Bay:**

- **Perfect and sincere charity**, which is from a "pure heart and good conscience and a faith not feigned" (1 Tim. 1:5) **can be in catechumens** as well as in penitents **without the remission of sins.**

- **That charity which is the fullness of the law is not always connected with the remission of sins.**

- **A catechumen lives justly and rightly and holily**, and observes the commandments of God, and **fulfills the law through charity, which is only received in the laver of Baptism, before the remission of sins has been obtained.**

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**written by God in the hearts of men, if they are prepared to obey God, and if they lead a virtuous and dutiful life, can attain eternal life by the power of divine light and grace."**

**11. Pope Pius XII**

*In His address to the Congress of the Italian Catholic Association of Midwives:* - October 29, 1951

"If what We have said up to now deals with the protection and the care of natural life, it should hold all the more in regard to the supernatural life which the newly born infant receives with Baptism. In the present economy there is no other way of communicating this life to the child who has not yet the use of reason. But, nevertheless, the state of grace at the moment of death is absolutely necessary for salvation. Without it, it is not possible to attain supernatural happiness, the beatific vision of God. **An act of love can suffice for an adult to obtain sanctifying grace and supply for the absence of Baptism; for the unborn child or for the newly born this way is not open. . . . It is, therefore, easy to under-**

**14. Fr. Prummer, O.P.**

*Moral Theology:* - 1949

- "Baptism of Desire which is a perfect act of charity that includes at least implicitly the desire for Baptism by water;"

- "Baptism of Blood which signifies martyrdom endured for Christ prior to the reception of Baptism by water."

- "Regarding the effects of Baptism of Blood and Baptism of Desire . . . both cause sanctifying grace. . . . Baptism of blood usually remits all venial sin and temporal punishment . . ."

**15. Fr. Francis O'Connell**

*Outlines of Moral Theology* - 1953:

- "Baptism of Desire . . . is an act of divine charity or perfect contrition . . ."

- "These means (i.e. Baptism of Blood & Desire) presuppose in the recipient at least the implicit will to receive the sacrament."

" . . . Even if an infant can gain the benefit of the Baptism of Blood if he is put to death by a person actuated by hatred for the Christian faith . . ."

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stand the importance of giving Baptism to the infant completely without the use of reason when it is in serious danger of facing certain death."

**12. Pope Pius XII**

*Mystical Body of Christ:* - June 29, 1943:

"As you know, Venerable Brethren, from the very beginning of Our Pontificate We have committed to the protection and guidance of heaven those who do not belong to the visible organization of the Catholic Church, solemnly declaring that after the example of the Good Shepherd We desire nothing more ardently than that they may have life and have it more abundantly . . . **For even though unsuspectingly they are related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer in desire and resolution, they still remain deprived of so many precious gifts and helps from heaven, which one can only enjoy in the Catholic Church.**"