News
Spirituality



NCR news editor Joshua McElwee; Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, director of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana; and Jesuit Fr. Bruce Morrill, Edward A. Malloy Chair of Roman Catholic Studies at Vanderbilt University (NCR screenshot/YouTube)



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Catholics in Arizona were shocked earlier this month when they learned their baptisms might now be considered invalid, because a priest in the diocese had been slightly modifying the traditional formula for the baptismal rite.

NCR news editor Joshua McElwee hosts a conversation about the controversy with two theologians: Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, director of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, and Jesuit Fr. Bruce Morrill, Edward A. Malloy Chair of Roman Catholic Studies at Vanderbilt University.

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More background reading:

- Phoenix Bishop Thomas Olmsted said baptisms performed by Fr. Andres Arango during years of ministry in the diocese are invalid, and the priest resigned as pastor of a local parish. According to a 2020 instruction from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the baptisms were invalid because the priest said "We baptize" instead of "I baptize."
- In a similar case in Michigan in 2020, Fr. Matthew Hood was re-baptized, given other sacraments and swiftly ordained again to the priesthood within days because his own initial baptism was found invalid. But the Archdiocese of Detroit still hasn't heard from hundreds of people whose rites were previously performed by Hood and are now considered invalid, despite outreach efforts and publicity.
- The Vatican's decision in August 2020 to clarify the formula that should be used in the Catholic rite of baptism attracted unusual interest after it caused something of a theological head-scratcher.