

The Role of Godparents
*“There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
One God and Father of all.”*
Ephesians 4:5-6

To be chosen as a godparent is a special honor. You, above all others, have been entrusted with the responsibility to participate in this child’s Christian life and education.

This privilege offers you the opportunity to develop a mutually enriching spiritual relationship – one that will last throughout this life and beyond.

There are many ways you can nurture this spiritual relationship and become a special friend to your godchild. Among them are:

- Celebrate the anniversary of this holy day of Baptism each year with a visit, a call, or a card.
- As your godchild grows, listen to and share in the struggles and triumphs of living a Christian life, and keep yourself informed on Christian doctrine and values, to be able to answer questions as they arise.
- Encourage a consistent life of faith through special cards, letters, or gifts which celebrate holy events...Christmas, Easter...and personal growth events...graduation, first job, engagement. (Gift suggestions: a bible, spiritual book, rosary, religious jewelry, gift certificate for religious goods/books, retreat opportunity.)
- Participate in, or send assurance of prayer, as your godchild receives the other sacraments, particularly First Communion and Confirmation, which complete initiation into the Church community.
- Be supportive of your godchild’s parents in their role as the primary religious educators of their child.
- And most importantly, become a model of Christian living for your godchild, through daily prayer, virtue and active participation in parish life and liturgy.

By living a Christian life in partnership with your godchild, both of you will experience the great joy of sharing a life of faith.

Congratulations, and may God bless you!

Sponsor/Godparent Requirements

Because of the great responsibilities of a godparent, the Catholic Church has some minimum requirements it asks of all godparents to fulfill in order to serve in this role. These are set forth in the Code of Canon Law:

SPONSORS/GODPARENTS

Can. 872 Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.

Can. 873 There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

Can. 874 §1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

- 1/ be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
- 2/ have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;
- 3/ be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;
- 4/ not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- 5/ not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

§2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.

REGARDING THE QUESTIONS:

1. **RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION:** A godparent must be a Roman Catholic because the godparent is an official representative of the Catholic Church. Christians of other denominations whose baptism is recognized as valid in the Catholic Church may serve as a Christian Witness for the baptism of a Catholic. Non-Christians may not serve as a godparent or Christian Witness.
2. **MINIMUM AGE:** A godparent must generally be 16 by the date of the baptism. (Exceptions by the pastor may be made within reason.)
3. **SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION:** A godparent is a baptized Catholic who has received Holy Eucharist and Confirmation in the Catholic Church.
4. **FREEDOM TO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENTS:** The godparent is a practicing Catholic who is free to receive Holy Communion when he or she attends Mass.
5. **MARITAL STATUS:** A Catholic godparent who is married must be in a marriage that is recognized by the Catholic Church. Those in a first marriage must have been married either a) in a Catholic Church ceremony or b) in a church/synagogue ceremony with the permission of the Catholic Church. Catholics in second marriages must have had their first marriage annulled and their second marriage recognized or convalidated by the Catholic Church. Catholics presently in civil or common law marriages are not eligible to serve as a god-parent.
6. **UNMARRIED STATUS:** If unmarried, a godparent must be living a life consistent with a single person as defined by the Catholic Church. Anyone cohabitating with another person, e.g. living in a romantic relationship, or as a couple, is ineligible to serve.