

GODPARENT GUIDELINES

THE ROLE OF THE GODPARENT

The principal responsibility of a godparent is to give witness to the Catholic faith by his/her words and actions. The role is, together with the parents, to present the child for baptism, and to help him/her to live a christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully to fulfill the duties inherent in baptism. When called upon to profess the Catholic faith on behalf of the infant, the godparent must believe in what he/she is professing.

Is the godparent expected to be someone who attends church every Sunday? Yes. After all, you are asking this person to assist you in bringing up your child in the Catholic faith. The Church reasonably expects parents and godparents to help the child “lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism.” Baptism depends on the faith of the Church, expressed by parents and godparents. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that they live what they say they believe.

After the baptism, the godparent's role really begins, and not just in the sense of sending presents at birthdays and Christmas! Ideally, a godparent will continue to pray for their godchild; keep in touch with them and their family; give a present or a card at the baptism anniversary and each sacramental milestone in the life of the godchild; lead the child by their example towards a christian way of life; be supportive of the godchild's parents in their role as christian parents and primary educators of their child.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GODPARENT

1. One Catholic godparent, male or female, is sufficient but there may be two, one of each sex. No one can have more than two godparents for one child, nor can anyone have two godparents of the same sex.
2. Godparents must be appointed by the parents of the child being baptized and must be one who is willing to provide spiritual guidance to the child. They may not be the mother or father of the person to be baptized.
3. Godparents must be age 16 or older unless the parish priest considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made.
4. Godparents must be fully initiated Catholics (one who has received baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist).

5. Godparents must practice their faith. They must not be under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared. If the person you are considering as a godparent is married, they must be married according to the laws and practices of the Catholic Church. If they are not married, they cannot be cohabitating [living together without marriage]. Catholics who are divorced and remarried must have an annulment.

6. Godparents who are not members of the parish must obtain a “Godparent/Sponsor Affirmation of Faith and Morals” form from the parish office and have their home parish indicate he/she is a Catholic in good standing. The certificate should be mailed to the office four weeks prior to the baptism.

7. While it is ideal that the parents select two Catholic godparents, the Church only requires that there be one godparent. A baptized non-Catholic may serve as a “witness” to the ceremony, as long as a Catholic godparent is present. The non-Catholic should be an active and participating member of his/her Christian community. To be clear, a non-Catholic witness is not the same as a godparent. A non-baptized person (i.e. a Jewish or Muslim person), cannot serve as a witness because of the duties of a godparent to assist the parents of the child in passing on the christian faith.

8. In a situation where an appointed Catholic godparent is unable to attend the baptism ceremony, a Catholic proxy can be appointed to stand in at the ceremony. The Catholic proxy must meet all the same requirements as the Catholic godparent.