

*NOTE TO PARENTS*

Parents need to find good practicing Catholics for godparents. Sadly, this task can be very difficult in today's world. The best place is to look for relatives, even grandparents, who have a blood relationship with the godchild and have kept the faith over the years. Good friends are also appropriate, but sometimes friendships wane, leaving the godchild without an active godparent. Godparents should be faithful individuals who are ready to accept the responsibility of being a part of a godchild's life for the rest of his life.

In all, **godparents serve a special role in the life of the baptized person.** Therefore, the parent or child/adult should choose a godparent not just because of a blood relationship or friendship; rather, godparent should be a trustworthy witness of the faith who will help the person attain salvation.

*ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
Rev. William Saunders*



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CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY

Sacrament

Baptism { }

Godparent

Godparent

The above-named person is of an acceptable age, has received the Sacraments of Initiation, is in good canonical standing, is faithful in attendance at Mass and in the practice of the Catholic Faith.

To the best of my knowledge he/she is worthy to accept the responsibilities of the role of Godparent.

Date:

Pastor's Signature

Name and Address of Church:

(seal)

# The Role of the Godparents



HISTORY  
THE GODPARENT'S ROLE

The role of the godparent for baptism is rooted in the role of the sponsor in the catechumenate, which originated in the early Church. Recall that until the year 313, the Church was under the persecution of the Roman Empire and had to be cautious in conducting its affairs so as to prevent pagan infiltration and persecution. Also, until the Middle Ages, the Sacraments of Initiation — Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation — were administered all at once. The role of the sponsor then was to attest to the integrity of the person, oftentimes an adult, seeking admission into the Church as well as to assist him during the catechumenate in preparing for these sacraments and in living a Christian life. For infants, these sponsors would also make the Profession of Faith in the child's name and accept the responsibility of instructing the child in the faith, especially if the parents failed in this duty. About the year 800 when infant baptism was truly the norm, these sponsors were called "*patrinus*", or "*godfather*". Traditionally, we identify the sponsor of a child for baptism as the godparent — godmother or godfather, but the technical term remains "*sponsor*".

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CODE OF CANON LAW

According to the Code of Canon Law, "Insofar as possible, one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation, or, together with the parents, to present an infant at the baptism, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it" (No. 872). This statement clearly reflects the historical roots of the role of sponsor.

To be a sponsor, a person must be chosen by the person to be baptized, or by the parents or guardians of a child, or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister of the sacrament. The sponsor must not only have the intention of being a sponsor but also meet proper qualifications. The sponsor must have completed his sixteenth year unless the Bishop has established another age for sponsorship, or the pastor or minister judges that a just cause warrants an exception to the rule. He must be a Catholic who has received the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation, and "leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken." Moreover, the sponsor cannot be impeded by some canonical penalty. Ideally, this sponsor at baptism should also be the sponsor for confirmation. Note that the mother and father of the child cannot serve as sponsors. **Also note that these are the same requirements for confirmation sponsors.** (Cf. Code of Canon Law, No. 874.1).

Strictly speaking, a person only needs one sponsor for baptism — male or female, but may have two sponsors, one male and one female. Here the Code of Canon Law wants to eliminate the practice of having numerous sponsors, as has occurred in some cultures (No. 873). Also, in the case of an emergency, such as imminent death, no sponsor is needed.

***A Christian of another denomination, whether Orthodox or Protestant, however, may be a "Christian witness" to the baptism along with the Catholic godparent.***  
(Cf. Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, No. 57).

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH  
OF THE  
GODPARENT

I am a Catholic and I am not the mother or father of the person to be baptized.

I affirm I have attained the age of 16.

I affirm my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and my membership in the Roman Catholic Church.

I affirm that I have completed my sacramental initiation in the Church (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist).

I affirm that I practice my faith on a regular basis.

*If married*, I affirm that my marriage has been celebrated in the Catholic Church or with proper dispensation.

I affirm that I have the qualities necessary to help this \_\_\_\_\_ person in leading a Christian life in harmony with the faith.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Godparent*

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