

## SPONSORS - GODPARENTS - REQUIREMENTS

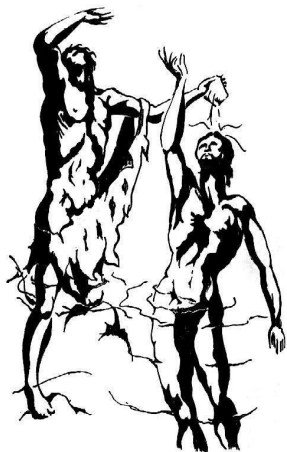
The role of the godparent for Baptism is rooted in the role of the sponsor in the Catechumenate, which originated in the early Church.... Until the Middle Ages, the Sacraments of Initiation — Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation — were administered at the same ceremony. The role of the sponsor then was to attest to the integrity of the person, oftentimes an adult, seeking admission into the Church as well as to assist him/her 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.**



By 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."**

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/her sixteenth birthday.... **He/she must be a Catholic who has received the Sacraments of 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. Also, in the case of an emergency, such as imminent death, no sponsor is needed.

Here we should pause to clarify who qualifies as a Catholic godparent. **A Catholic who does not practice the faith by regularly attending Mass (each week) or who is in an invalid marriage disqualifies himself/herself from being a godparent. Moreover, if a person is Catholic but antagonistic to the faith, i.e. has the attitude "I am a Catholic but..." and would not be a good example and witness to the faith also disqualifies himself/herself. IF A PERSON IS NOT STRIVING TO FULFILL HIS/HER OWN OBLIGATIONS OF BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION, HE/SHE WILL NOT FULFILL THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HELPING ANOTHER TO DO SO.**

**Parents need to find good practicing Catholics for godparents.** Sadly, this task can be very difficult in today's world!

Pastors become frustrated and perturbed each time someone comes by the parish office and wants them to sign a sponsor's certificate and attest that he/she is a practicing Catholic when the pastor does not recognize him/her, they are not registered in the parish and do not attend Mass faithfully. In justice, a pastor cannot meet such a request.

Technically, only Catholics can be godparents or sponsors. **A faithful, practicing Christian of another denomination, whether Orthodox or Protestant, however, may be a "Christian Witness"** to the Baptism along with a practicing Catholic godparent.

**All Catholic godparents/sponsors must be practicing their faith (attending mass weekly).**