

What About Godparents?

Every parent dreams of seeing their young child grow to become someone of good character – a solid citizen and a productive member of society. Your Church has similar hopes for your child. Your Church dreams of seeing your child grow in faith and character to become a mature Christian living a faith-filled life in Christ. To that end, the Church supports you in your role as Christian parents and looks to the godparents you choose for your child to support you, as well.

The most serious responsibility a godparent has is to make sure that the baptized person receives proper instruction in the faith, particularly when the parents neglect this duty or are otherwise unable to do so. Should the parents die or become unable to teach their child the faith, it is the responsibility of the godparent to ensure that the child learns and loves the faith. Godparents are given a big task in fulfilling this duty, so they should be carefully chosen to make sure they can and will comply with this duty.

Godparents also are called upon to provide a living example of the Catholic faith to the baptized person. In addition to knowing the faith, they must live the faith. Their example should prompt the baptized person to think, “I want to live my life like they do.” Godparents do this not only teaching with words, but through the witness of their lives. They should follow the commands of the Church, believe its teachings, and strive to build it up.

So, godparenting is not an honorary role. It is serious stuff – with serious implications for your child’s future! This is why Church law establishes some specific qualifications for anyone who wishes to be a godparent. That is, a godparent:

- Must be at least 16 years old.
- Must have been baptized, confirmed and have received the Eucharist.
- Must not be a parent (natural or adoptive) or a spouse of the person to be baptized.
- Must be a practicing Catholic, so no heretics, schismatics, “fallen-away Catholics”, or persons who have been excommunicated.
- “Must live a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken”. This includes: regular mass attendance; if married, they must be living in a valid Catholic Church marriage; if not married, they cannot be living in a co-habiting relationship; and they must be in agreement with the Church’s teachings.
- Must be familiar with the faith in order to catechize the baptized person and ensure their spiritual growth and well-being.
- Must intend to fulfill the role of the godparent and to stay in regular contact with the baptized person throughout their lives.

As you consider asking family members or friends to be your child’s godparent, use the questions on the back of this page to help you determine if they meet the Church’s requirements.

The Question And Your Response.	
		YES	NO
1.	Is the person at least 16 years old?	Proceed to #2.	Unfortunately, this person cannot be a godparent until they are of age.
2.	Is the person a parent or spouse of the person to be baptized?	He or she cannot be godparent to the person to be baptized. You must choose someone else.	So far, so good. Proceed to #3.
3.	Has the person been baptized, confirmed in the Catholic faith, and received Eucharist?	Good! Proceed to #4.	Unfortunately, he or she cannot be a godparent until they have received all of these sacraments.
4.	Is the person a practicing Catholic?	Good! Proceed to #5.	That's unfortunate. Catholics whose personal beliefs are in conflict with Church teaching or who have turned away from the Church (perhaps even to the point of attending a non-Catholic church) cannot be godparents until they have fully reconciled with the Catholic faith.
5.	Is the person attending mass regularly?	Good! Proceed to #6.	That's unfortunate. It is important that the godparent provide the example of regular worship at mass. This person might be able to be a godparent once they resume regular mass attendance.
6.	Is the person unmarried?	Proceed to #7.	Proceed to #8.
7.	Is this unmarried person living in a co-habiting relationship?	That's unfortunate. The Church teaches that sex outside of marriage is a sin. As such, co-habitation must not be endorsed through the example of the godparent. This person might be able to be a godparent once the co-habitation ceases.	Good! Proceed to #9.
8.	Has this person's marriage been blessed ("validated") by the Church? If they were married in a Catholic church, by a Catholic priest, the answer is yes.	Wonderful! Proceed to #9.	That's unfortunate. Catholics are expected to have their marriages blessed (validated) by the Church. It certainly may be possible for this person to have their marriage blessed by the Church (they should meet with a priest to start the process), but they cannot be a godparent until their marriage has been blessed by the Church.
9.	Does this person agree that accepting the role of godparent obligates them to stay in contact with the baptized for the rest of his or her life?	Great! This person should qualify to be a godparent. <u>However, they must seek a Sponsor Form from their pastor to confirm this.</u>	That's unfortunate. Being a godparent requires a life-long commitment to provide spiritual support and encouragement for the person to be baptized. After some reflection, perhaps they will see this and agree.