St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church

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 it 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? It makes sense if they do. 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 HISTORY OF GODPARENTS

Godparents are a tradition in the Sacrament of Baptism that goes back as far as the early days of the Catholic Church. In those days, conversions came in two ways. In the first instance, whole families were received into the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism after they had been instructed and prepared by a friend or someone appointed by the Church. In the second instance, individuals were instructed and prepared by a friend or someone appointed by the Church.

During those days, the first four centuries, the Catholic Church was under intense persecution by the Roman Empire. To avoid persecution and the infiltration of pagans into the Church, every person who was received into the Church was required to have a sponsor. This sponsor performed two roles. First of all, he protected the Church by authenticating the sincerity of the convert. Secondly, as a catechist, he supported the person as a candidate into the Church.

During the first centuries, emphasis was placed on the baptism of adults. That all changed when the Council of Trent, (1545 - 1563) affirmed that Adam's disobedience not only transfused physical death to the individuals, but also, that all were born afflicted with a sin that is the "death of the soul." "Because of this certainty of faith, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin." (C.C.C. # 403; Council of Trent: DS 1514)

In harmony with this new Decree and in consideration of the inability of an infant to speak for himself or herself, more than ever, it became necessary to appoint a godparent who would make the Profession of Faith in the child's name. This same person would also be responsible for instructing the child in the faith, as if adopted by the Christian parents to protect the faith of their child.

TO QUALIFY AS A GODPARENT

The role of the Godparent is to present the child for baptism and to help the child live a Christian life befitting the baptized. The following are the requirements according to Canon Law, paragraphs 872-874.



1. One Catholic godparent, male or female, is sufficient but there may be two, one of each gender. No one can have more than two godparents for one child, nor can anyone have two godparents of the same gender.

2. Godparents must be appointed by the parents of the child being Baptized and must be 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 celebrated Baptism, Eucharistic, Confirmation and practices their faith) and not labored under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared. If the person you are considering as a godparent is not married according to the laws and practices of the Catholic Church, or is cohabitating [living together without marriage], you will need to consider someone else. Catholics who are divorced and remarried, and whose previous marriage has not been annulled by a Decree of Invalidity are considered members of the Church living in an irregular (or invalid) marriage and as such, are not eligible to be a Godparent or Confirmation sponsor.

5. A Godparent must be an active, registered member of a Catholic Parish. If the Godparent is over 18, the person must be registered under their own name at a Catholic Parish. For those who are not parishioners of St. Paul the Apostle Church, the Godparent must obtain a "sponsor certificate" from his/her parish indicating that he/she is a Catholic in good standing. The certificate should be mailed to the Parish Office prior to the Baptism.

6. 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. This restriction ensures that whoever is appointed as godparent, will be able to represent and attest to the beliefs of the Catholic Church, the community of faith in which the child is being baptized.

7. Godparents are not required to be present on the day of the Baptism. A Godparent may be represented by a proxy. If you plan to have a proxy, he/she must be either a baptized Christian and/or a practicing Roman Catholic in good standing.

CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY

CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY IS REQUESTED FOR: BAPTISM_____ CONFIRMATION _____

WITNESS/SPONSOR FOR: _____
(Name of person being baptized or confirmed)

NAME AND ADDRESS OF PARISH: _____
(Parish where Baptism or Confirmation to be held)

SCHEDULED DATE OF CEREMONY: _____

SPONSOR INFORMATION

I _____ affirm that:
(Please print first and last name)

- I am at least 16 years of age.
- I am a practicing Catholic registered at a parish.
- I have received the sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation in the Catholic Church.
- I participate in the Mass on Sundays and Holydays and receive the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation regularly.
- If married, I am validly married according to the laws of the Catholic Church. If divorced, I have not remarried outside the Catholic Church.
- I actively strive to live out my commitment to Christ and to the community life of the Church by my loving response to those with whom I come in contact.
- I realize that I assume a great responsibility before God and the Church in becoming a sponsor and will faithfully fulfill the obligations connected with it. I will give support to the person I am sponsoring by my prayers and by the Christian example of my daily life.

By my signature, I attest to be a practicing Catholic who seeks to be admitted as a sponsor, solemnly affirm that I fulfill the requirements of the Catholic Church for this role as presented above. I intend, with the grace of God, to continue the practice of my Catholic Faith, and I will, to the best of my ability, carry out the obligations of my role as sponsor.

_____ _____
(Sponsor's Signature) *(Date)*

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SPONSOR'S PARISH

This is to certify that _____

_____ is a registered member of the above stated parish.
_____ is in good standing in this parish and that he/she meets the requirements for being a sponsor.
_____ is registered in our parish as an active, practicing Catholic.

Priest Signature _____ Date: _____
Church of _____
Address _____
Phone # _____