



Being a Sponsor or Godparent

In the early Church, when only adults were admitted to the faith through Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist; a Christian member would appear before the bishop and the community to attest publically to the candidate's worthiness to become a Christian. Later, the Church designated exemplary persons to accompany the newcomer on his or her journey to a full Christian life.

When baptizing infants became the norm, Sponsors (or "Godparents") presented the children and recited the Creed on behalf of the child, thus was born a special spiritual relationship with the child.

In baptism of children, the Godparent should be present to be added spiritually to the immediate family of the one to be baptized and to represent the larger family of the Church. One is reminded in the ritual that the parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. Godparents become joined spiritually to the family of the baptized and they represent the fuller and larger faith. Therefore, they promise to help the baptized infant grow in his or her faith life.

Each child is to be given at least one Roman Catholic Godparent. The parents may choose two Godparents, in which case they must choose one of each gender.

Once the required Roman Catholic Godparent has been selected, the parents may also choose a member of a Christian denomination of the opposite gender as a Christian Witness. Although technically the Christian Witness is not a Godparent, during the baptismal ceremony they stand and respond with the Godparents as a sponsor of the child.

One godparent must be at least 16 years of age, and have been Baptized, Confirmed and received Eucharist. The Godparent must participate regularly in Sunday Mass and give witness to his or her faith in Jesus Christ by receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist regularly. If married, the marriage must be recognized by the Church. The Godparent must live out his or her commitment to Christ and the community life of the Church, be an active member of his or her Roman Catholic Parish, and lovingly respond to those with whom he or she comes in contact with daily.

A Godparent or Sponsor, therefore, is expected to model the faith by a faith-filled life. He or she, as the Church document *Rite of Christian Initiation* says, is "to show the [child] how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life and to be for the [child] a bearer of Christian witness and a guardian over growth in baptismal life." This, fidelity to Church worship and a desire to live the moral life are qualifications for sponsorship.