

Catholic

UPDATE

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ONE LIGUORI DRIVE
LIGUORI, MO
63057-9999

800-325-9521
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GODPARENTS & SPONSORS

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM TODAY?

Being a godparent or a sponsor means more than just lighting a candle or lending a hand: it's a lifelong commitment to share in a relationship of faith with your godchild or candidate.

WILLIAM F. WEGHER

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Most of us at some point have to choose either a godparent for our children or a sponsor for ourselves, but how do we choose these people? Or you may someday be asked to be a godparent or sponsor. What is expected of a sponsor or godparent today?

In reality, a lot of Catholics are confused over the difference between a godparent and a sponsor. Let's look at the role of godparents first, then examine the purpose of a sponsor, and finally look at what all of this means for your family, parish, or RCIA.

GODPARENTS FOR INFANT BAPTISM

For Parents

Choosing godparents is a decision not to be taken lightly. Above all, a godparent serves a special role for the one to be baptized, whether it be a child or an adult. Godparents are to represent the Christian Catholic community, the Church. They are to assist in the preparation of adult candidates for baptism and to be supportive of them afterward. When it comes to infant baptism, godparents are to assist the child's parents in raising their child in our Catholic faith so that the child may profess and live it as an adult.

What you are looking for are godparents who can truly represent that Christian community. Basically this means you want at least one active and committed Catholic. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "[T]he godfather and godmother...must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized—child or adult—on the road of Christian life" (1255). This is the Church's way of saying that being a godparent is truly a ministry in the Church and not simply an honor.

Church law insists that this person be *at least sixteen years old* (for maturity's sake), *fully initiated* (having received confirmation and Eucharist), *someone other than the legal parents*, and *one who leads a life in harmony with the Church*.

All this may seem like quite a bit, but the purpose is to ensure that the rich and beautiful faith of the Church is passed on to your child in the most loving and authentic way possible.

For Godparents

If you think that the role of parents in choosing godparents is a serious one, so is the role of being a godparent.

Make sure that you have the *time*, the *willingness*, and the *faith* to live out this sacred vocation. These parents are calling you to be something special for their child: to set an example; help teach their child about the Catholic faith; have a lifelong relationship of prayer, faith-sharing, and love. Before accepting this invitation, take some time to pray and reflect on your ability to do this.

You should ask, "Can I share my faith unashamedly? Do I live close enough to really get to know my godchild? Am I an active member of my local Catholic parish?" If you are from another parish, you'll probably be asked for a letter from your home parish attesting to your active faith in the Church. If you're an active Catholic, getting such a letter from your pastor will be easy. If you're not, maybe you need to question your fitness to serve as a godparent at this time.

SPONSORS FOR CONFIRMATION

For Confirmation Candidates

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