

Requirements to be a Catholic Godparent:

- “Each child may have a godfather and a godmother, the word ‘godparents’ is used in the rite to describe both.” (Rite of Baptism for Children 6)
 - Only one godparent is necessary. The godparent must be a fully initiated Catholic (Baptized, Confirmed, received Eucharist), at least 16 years old, and must be leading a sacramental life in harmony with the church. (Cf. CIC, can. 874) The godparent should be willing to accept the responsibility of assisting the parents in developing the faith life of the child.
 - The godparent may not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized. (Cf. CIC, can. 874) 4. Although people of some cultures sometimes choose multiple godparents, only two names can actually be entered in the Baptismal Register. (CIC, can. 873)
 - A baptized and believing Christian from a separated church or community may act as a Christian witness at the request of the parents, but there must be a Catholic godparent. (Cf. CIC, can. 874.)
 - Godparents should be invited and encouraged to attend Baptismal Preparation in order to better understand their role as godparents. If they are from another parish, a letter of recommendation from their pastor is required.
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Choosing a Godparent:

The day of Baptism is a very special day. Baptism is the first of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church and the gateway into the Christian life. This sacrament is celebrated only once in a person’s life, making it a day to be remembered.

How to choose:

- 1) Prayerfully consider a few things: 1) Does the person truly exemplify the faith, by living according to the teachings of the Catholic Church? 2) Does the person live a life in harmony with the Church? 3) Does the person regularly practice their faith by participation in the sacramental life of the Church?
- 2) Godparents should not be chosen because of family expectations or pressure. The role of the godparent(s) is to be a presence, specifically a spiritual presence, in a child’s life.

The Role of a Godparent in the Child’s Spiritual Life

Godparents are a very special part of the sacrament, as they support and bolster the mission of the parents to bring up their child in the faith and to know God. The Godparents have two primary responsibilities:

- 1) To accept the responsibility to help the parents to raise the child in faith.
- 2) To represent the entire Church

Expectations of a Godparent:

- 1) To be part of the child’s lifelong journey of faith.
- 2) To be a model of faith through the lived example of life in harmony with the Catholic Church.
- 3) To be a good example to the child
- 4) To practice the Catholic faith regularly.

The Role of Sponsors (Godparents) At Baptism (C. 872-874)

1. The sponsors, together with the parents, are present to profess the Church's faith, in which the child is being baptized. Therefore, in order to be appointed sponsor, the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it.
2. In order to carry out his/her proper liturgical function as specified above, the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA n.10; C 874) clearly states that a sponsor should:
 - a. be appointed by the candidate for Baptism, or in the case of infants by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the pastor or minister
 - b. be mature enough to undertake this responsibility, having completed the 16th year (C 874)
 - c. be a Catholic who has received the three sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist; and lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken. An example of not living the life of faith is being in an irregular marriage (*a marriage that is not recognized as valid by the Catholic Church*). Sponsors may be required to produce a sacramental certificate if there is concern that the person does not meet the criteria for being a sponsor.
 - d. not be bound by any canonical penalty (excommunicated or other penalty)
 - e. not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized
3. When, for a just cause, parents wish to have another baptized and believing Christian from a separated Church or community act as a Christian witness, the following guidelines are to be observed:
 - a. Before extending this invitation to a non-Catholic, parents should consult with their parish priest, who will assist them in evaluating the reason for this choice. Except in cases of Orthodox Christians, it is not permissible for a member of another Christian community to act as a sponsor in the liturgical and canonical sense at a Roman Catholic Baptism. (EGD p.5 amended; C 874.2) An Orthodox Christian may serve as a sponsor for baptism in the Catholic Church. But a member of another Christian community may not act as sponsor in the liturgical and canonical sense at a Roman Catholic Baptism.
 - b. Only a baptized member of separated Eastern Churches (Orthodox) may act as sponsor, together with a Catholic sponsor, so long as there is provision for the Catholic education of the person being baptized, and it is clear that the sponsor is a suitable one. In this case, the duty of providing for the Christian education of the baptized person binds in the first place the sponsor who belongs to the Catholic Church.
 - c. With the exception already dealt with above, it is not permissible for a member of any other separated Christian community to act as a sponsor at Baptism in the liturgical and canonical sense. A Christian of another communion can be admitted, with a Catholic sponsor, as a *Christian witness* *of the Baptism. In these cases the responsibility for the Christian education of the candidate belongs of itself to the sponsor who is a member of the Catholic Church.
 - d. It follows from the above that an unbaptized person cannot act as a sponsor or Christian witness in a Catholic Baptism.
 - e. An indication ought to be made in the register as well as when issuing future certificates in cases in which a member of a separated community has acted as a Christian witness and the one acted as a Catholic sponsor.
 - f. A former Catholic or a Catholic in an irregular marriage cannot act as a Christian Witness (Roman Replies, 1988, C. 874)
4. At least one sponsor is required for the celebration of Baptism. At most two are permitted, in which case one must be male and the other female (C 872873). Sponsors are Catholics.
5. When sponsors are represented by proxies, the latter should be Catholic and the sponsors must give explicit indication of their desire to assume the role and responsibilities of sponsors. Sponsors and proxies should be noted in the Baptismal Register.
6. A Roman Catholic cannot fulfill the function of sponsor for a member of another Christian community. However, because of the ties of blood or friendship, a Christian of another communion can be admitted as a Christian witness of the Baptism with a Roman Catholic sponsor. In comparable circumstances, a Roman Catholic may be a Christian witness for a member of another Christian community. Their names should be recorded in the Baptismal book. (EGD p. 5 amended; C 877)

Code of Canon Law:

Can. 851 The celebration of baptism must be prepared properly; consequently:

7. 1/ an adult who intends to receive baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and is to be led insofar as possible through the various stages to sacramental initiation, according to the order of initiation adapted by the conference of bishops and the special norms issued by it;

8. 2/ the parents of an infant to be baptized and those who are to undertake the function of sponsor are to be **instructed properly on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it**. The pastor personally or through others is to take care that the parents are properly instructed through both pastoral advice and common prayer, bringing several families together and, where possible, visiting them.