



Guidelines for Being or Choosing a Godparent

Whether you are looking for a Catholic godparent for your child, or you have been asked to be a godparent for someone else's child, it is important to know exactly what being a godparent means. First we will cover what is expected of a godparent, and then we will cover who can be a godparent.

Responsibilities of a Catholic Godparent

1. Godparents make a profession of faith for the person to be baptized if necessary.

The first responsibility of a Catholic godparent is to profess the faith in the name of the person to be baptized. This is generally the case with a child who is to be baptized, but could also be done if the person is an adult with a disability that prevents them from professing the faith themselves. Under normal circumstances, adult converts to Catholicism will profess the faith themselves. The priest will guide you through the profession of faith, asking you specific questions, to which you will reply in the affirmative. Many people think their responsibilities as a godparent end there, but they are wrong, as you will see.

2. Godparents provide spiritual guardianship for the baptized person throughout their lives

The most serious responsibility a godparent has is to make sure that the baptized person is given proper instruction in the faith, particularly when the parents neglect this duty or are otherwise unable to do so. If 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.

3. Godparents must provide a living example of the Catholic faith

The third important task of a Catholic godparent is 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 provide inspiration to the baptized person, not only teaching by words, but by the witness of their lives. They should follow the commands of the Church, believe its teachings, and strive to build it up.

Who can be a Catholic godparent?

The requirements for being a Catholic godparent are that the individual:

1. Must be baptized, confirmed and have received the Eucharist
2. Must be at least 16 years old - or there must be an exception made for a just reason
3. Must physically hold or touch the person to be baptized – **they must be present at the baptism**
4. Must not be a parent (natural or adoptive) or a spouse of the person to be baptized
5. Must be practicing Catholic,
6. "Must live a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken". This including regular mass celebration, living in accordance with their marital state, and agreement with the Church teachings.
7. Must be familiar with the faith in order to catechize the baptized person and ensure their spiritual wellbeing.
8. Must intend to fulfill the role of the godparent
9. Must intend to stay in regular contact with the baptized person throughout their lives

A non-Catholic person can be chosen for a "witness", but there must be at least 1 Catholic godparent as well.

It is not a requirement of the godparents to physically adopt the baptized person if the parents die, though that is sometimes also asked of the godparents. Such a commitment should be discussed thoroughly and specifically if it is to be asked of the godparents.

Godparents are not merely gift-givers. Giving gifts may be done at the will of the godparents, but it is not a requirement of the role. Choosing godparents should be done based on their spiritual maturity and not their financial situation.

Godparents can be confirmation sponsors for their godchildren. This is encouraged strongly, but it is not a strict requirement. If a godparent has fallen out of a child's life, then a separate confirmation sponsor should be chosen.