

Faith in 5 – Adults Being a Catholic Godparent



1. The role of a godparent or sponsor is an important one in the Catholic Church. Its origin dates back to the early Church - those seeking baptism required a sponsor to accompany them to the bishop. The Latin word for this person willing to vouch for the



intended and take on the responsibility to supervise them in the faith is *susceptor*, which closely relates to the word sponsor. When infant baptism gained acceptance in the 2nd century, it became necessary for an adult to speak the confession of faith for the child and promise to guide the child in the faith. At the time, it was common for the natural parents to be the sponsors. In 813, the Church prohibited this practice ([Source](#)).

In cooperation with the parents, godparents share responsibility to raise and teach the child the faith. Godparents not only accept this duty, but they do so as a member of the Catholic Church. Ideally, the godparents' level of involvement with the child is sustained throughout the child's life, to help guide and protect their spiritual growth with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

2. The choice of godparents is usually made by the parents for infant Baptism, and for the sacrament of Confirmation, the child may have some say. There is a misconception that a godparent would act as a guardian in the event of the death of the parents. Godparents help the child stay close to Christ but are not necessarily appointed guardians.

While some parents may be pressured or tempted to choose a close relative or friend as godparent, thoughtful and prayerful consideration should be made on these important qualities:

-Living the faith: Does this person believe in the teachings of the Catholic Church? Do they abide by the precepts of the Church and the Ten Commandments? Do they have a strong prayer life, participate in the sacraments and attend Mass regularly?

-Character: Is this person emotionally and spiritually mature? Are they easy to get along with? Is this person close enough that you could share concerns, thoughts or hopes for the child? Would you allow them to correct your child or you in spiritual matters? Do they have a positive and generous spirit? Does this person exhibit a life of good moral standards?

-Time commitment: Is this person able to help raise and instruct the child in the faith? Can this person communicate or interact with your child comfortably? Does their life schedule allow them to make time to get to know or spend time with the child? Is this person willing to learn more about the Catholic faith in order to foster a strong spiritual life in the child?

3. **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) Although people of some cultures may choose multiple godparents, only two names can actually be entered in the Baptismal Register. (CIC, can. 873)

-If there are two Catholic godparents, one must be male and the other female. In 2015, The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ruled that transgender Catholics cannot become godparents ([Source](#)). The Vatican states that since the transgender status is not in line with the Church's teaching, this would result in an "objective lack of requirements necessary for ecclesial responsibility".

-A baptized and believing Christian from a separate 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 class in order to better understand their role as godparents. If they are from another parish, a letter of recommendation from their pastor is required.

4. Sponsors who take part in the Sacrament of Confirmation pledge to offer support and guidance for the person making this sacrament. This includes guiding them into adulthood, giving them the skills needed to face the challenges in life; helping to deepen and strengthen their faith in God and the Church.
5. **To be good godparent at its very core requires love of Jesus, the Church and the child.** *The following tips are not meant to groom one into becoming the perfect godparent, but to help one understand the responsibilities and obligations of this important role. Parents may find these tips helpful to them also.*

-The most important responsibility is to pray for the child. Before you can speak to the child about God, speak to God about the child. ([Source](#)) A significant way to establish your relationship and love for the child is to bless them! [How to here](#). Tracing the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of a child is a good start. If the child is older, a simple note, text or email, "God bless you" still demonstrates your love for them, and a reminder they are in God's hands for protection and grace. [For further study](#) on blessing the child.

-Take an active part in the child's life. Get to know them on a personal level, learn about their hobbies and interests in life. Celebrate and remember them on important events. Connect with the child and the parents frequently - it is not the quantity of time that counts, but the quality.

-Role model the faith every chance you get! Pray, participate actively in the liturgy and volunteer at church. Gently guide the child where you are able. In spiritual matters regarding the Catholic faith, admonish the parents if you see something untoward.

-Be joyful about your faith, in word and deed! Talk about God and the importance of Him in your life. Share with the child the good things God has done so that they learn to see God in everything. Follow up by asking the child what God has done for them. Support the child when they are going through emotional or challenging times and encourage them to lean on God for guidance.

-Ensure your circle of friends include other role-model Catholics and even priests! Your activities and conversations should be centered on what is good, pure and holy. This will help you relate to the child on a spiritual level. When they can see the importance of faith and faith-filled people in your life, they will want the same in their life also.

-Pray with the child. Take the child to Mass with you; if you are comfortable, make opportunities where you can pray together. Volunteer to take them to confession. Ask the child questions about their spiritual journey – what they learned in catechism, or what they saw at Mass. Help the child learn the basic Catholic prayers. Introduce them to the saints. Help them appreciate what it means to be Catholic.

-Find opportunities to grow the faith - When the child exhibits a level of emotional/spiritual maturity, ask the parents and child if there is an interest in helping with the liturgy in some way. For example, as an altar server, or greeter. Some parishes allow young children aged 10 or older, with adult supervision, to help with the collection. See if there are opportunities for the child to help volunteer alongside you at a church activity, for example, at the annual church bazaar.

-Know your faith. If you are not sure about certain aspects of the Catholic faith, take the time to learn it. There are resources available online, classes or catechists and priests at your local parish. Be available for questions about the faith for the parents and child!

6. For both parents and godparents: [Quick prayers for your children and godchildren](#)

Parents and godparents,
this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly.
This child of yours has been enlightened by Christ.
He (she) is to walk always as a child of the light.
May he (she) keep the flame of faith alive in his (her) heart.
When the Lord comes, may he (she) go out to meet Him
with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.

—Excerpt from the Blessing and Invocation of God
Rite of Baptism, new translation of the Roman Missal

This is a free resource! For more information, visit www.acatholicmomslife.com