

CHAPTER IV. SPONSORS

- 1/ be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
 - 2/ have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;
 - 3/ be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;
 - 4/ not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
 - 5/ not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.
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- §2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.

Some Questions and Answers:

Can a Catholic ever be a "Christian Witness?"

No. The Catholic must meet all the requirements for Catholics, even if the other godparent is Catholic. For example, the parents have, with difficulty, decided on one sponsor who is Catholic and meets all the requirements. The second sponsor is "hard to find," and may be a Catholic who never was confirmed, or someone who has left the Church. In these cases, the Catholic cannot stand as the "Christian witness," i.e., someone who has left the Church cannot sponsor a person into the Church. A Catholic who has left the Church is still considered as a Catholic under the penalty of excommunication. (Such a person is no longer bound by the canonical form of marriage, however.)

Can a Catholic be a Christian witness at a non-Catholic baptism?

Yes. Just as a baptized non-Catholic can be a witness with a Catholic at a Catholic baptism, a Catholic can be a witness with a baptized non-Catholic at a non-Catholic baptism.

Can an unbaptized person be a godparent?

No. Because the sponsor or Christian witness renews the promises made at their own baptism, an unbaptized person cannot be permitted to be the godparent.

Can a priest or deacon be a sponsor?

Yes. The former legislation requiring permission from the ordinary because of spiritual relationship is abrogated.

Can a priest or deacon be the officiant and the sponsor?

Yes. When the priest or deacon is the officiant and the sponsor, he designates a proxy for the godparent during the rite of baptism.

Can the godparents be changed at a later date?

No. Although other changes can be authorized for the baptismal register, this one is not permitted in the Diocese of Las Cruces (somewhat analogous to changing the best man and maid of honor in the marriage register).

Can there be a proxy for the godparent?

Yes. Proxies for the godparents are acceptable when the sponsors cannot be physically present on the day of the baptism. The name of the designated sponsor is entered in the register. The name of the proxy is entered under the name of the sponsor with the remark proxy.

Can a catechumen be a sponsor?

No. Those who are unbaptized may not sponsor a person into the Catholic Church.