

# What are the requirements for godparents?

## Parents

Canon 872 and 874 of the code of Canon Law lists these requirements for valid and lawful sponsorship in Baptism. Canon 873 states one sponsor, male or female, is sufficient; but there may be two, one of each sex.

The sponsor's role is to assist the person in Christian initiation. In the case of an infant baptism, the role is, together with the parents, to present the child for baptism and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptized.

A Godparent must submit a *letter of eligibility* from his/her pastor attesting that he/she meets the following requirements:

1. Must be mature enough to undertake this responsibility.
2. Must have received the 3 sacraments of initiation, namely Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
3. Must be 16 years of age or older.
4. Must know the fundamental truths of the Faith and be a practicing Catholic who goes to Mass on Sundays, receives the sacraments regularly, and sees to the religious instruction of his/her family.
5. Must be a member of the Catholic Church, canonically free to carry out this office. (This would indicate that Catholics publicly living in an invalid marriage or those living together without marriage are excluded from being lawful sponsors.)
6. Must not be the father or mother of the one baptized.

We hope that parents choose godparents who will take an active role in the faith formation of their child.

- The church requires at least one godparent who is a practicing, confirmed Catholic age 16 or older. That godparent's name is entered into the parish record book as the "official" godparent or sponsor for baptism.
- If you choose more than two godparents, one or two may have their names entered into the book as "official" godparents, and the others can be "honorary" godparents. You don't have to tell them which is which.
- If you choose two godparents of the same sex, one can be the "official" godparent for the record book, and the other can be the "honorary" one. (Just as above, you don't have to tell anyone which is which except us.)
- Baptized non-Catholic Christians may not be "official" godparents for the record book, but they may be Christian witnesses for your child.

- People who are not baptized Christians cannot be sponsors for baptism, since they themselves are not baptized. However, you may certainly invite non-Christian friends or relatives to attend the celebration and to have a special place in your child's life, sharing with your child their own faith traditions.

## Godparents by Proxy

If the godparent cannot be present in person, he/she may appoint another person to represent him/her. This is usually done by letter which would contain a statement of acceptance of the responsibilities by the sponsor and the appointment by name of the proxy. Requirements for the proxy are the same as those listed above for a godparent.

## Christian Witness

A baptized person who belongs to a non-catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the baptism. A letter of recommendation from his/her pastor should be obtained.

## Oriental (Orthodox)

According to the Directory of Ecumenism, for a just cause, it is permissible that a member of a separated Oriental (Orthodox) Church act as a sponsor, together with a Catholic godparent so long as there is a provision for the Catholic education of the person being baptized, and it is clear that the godparent is a suitable one. A letter of recommendation from his/her pastor should be obtained.