

## BAPTISM AND GODPARENTS

Today, the Universal Church officially closes the Christmas Season with the celebration of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This is a fitting occasion to address the Sacrament of Baptism and a role that is extremely important to that Sacrament; Godparents.

For whatever reason, there seems to be a general misunderstanding even among faithful practicing Catholics about the role of Catholic Godparents. Maybe that is because we priests have not always done a good job of explaining it or maybe sometimes in the past, priests have been lax in making sure that those chosen as Godparents were qualified. Negligence in the past does not give us in the present an excuse to ignore the traditions and laws of the Roman Catholic Church.

If you were present when Bishop Provost installed me as your Pastor in August of 2018, you witnessed me take what is called the Oath of Fidelity. That oath included me vowing to maintain the observance of all ecclesiastical laws, especially those contained in the Code of Canon Law. This oath was made in the presence of the Bishop, of you my parishioners, with my hand on the Book of the Gospels. It concluded with the words, “so help me God, and God’s holy Gospels on which I place my hand”.

For me to ignore that oath and knowingly break the laws of the Church would mean breaking the Second Commandment against taking the Lord’s name in vain and would place my immortal soul in grave danger. Therefore, I have no choice but to abide by the laws of the Church, including those regarding Godparents. These laws are universal. They apply regardless of country or culture. Those laws are clear and I have no authority to dispense from them. They are:

1. There is to be only one male godparent or one female godparent or one of each.
2. Those designated must be at least **16 years of age** and have the capability and intention of carrying out the responsibility of a godparent.
3. Those designated as godparents **must** have received the three Sacraments of Initiation of the Roman Catholic Church, **Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist**, and be living a life consistent with the Catholic Faith and in the state of grace.
4. Those designated as godparents must **be members of the Catholic Church**. At the request of the parents, a **baptized and believing Christian** not belonging to the Catholic Church may act as a Christian witness along with a Catholic godparent.