

# The Cathedral of Saint Patrick

## THE ROLE OF THE GODPARENT

The principal responsibility of a godparent is to give witness to the Catholic faith by his/her words and actions. 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 and faithfully to fulfill the duties inherent in baptism. When called upon to profess the Catholic faith on behalf of the infant, the godparent must believe in what he/she is professing.

Is the godparent expected to be someone who attends church every Sunday? It makes sense if they do. After all, you are asking this person to assist you in bringing up your child in the Catholic faith. The church reasonably expects parents and godparents to help the child "lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism." Baptism depends on the faith of the Church, expressed by parents and godparents. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that they live what they say they believe.

After the baptism, the godparent's role really begins, and not just in the sense of sending presents at birthdays and Christmas! Ideally, a godparent will continue to prayer for their godchild; keep in touch with them and their family; give a present or a card at the baptism anniversary and each sacramental milestone in the life of the godchild; lead the child by their example towards a Christian way of life; be supportive of the godchild's parents in their role as Christian parents and primary educators of their child.



### THE HISTORY OF GODPARENTS

Godparents are a tradition in the Sacrament of Baptism that goes back as far as the early days of the Catholic Church. In those days, conversions came in two ways. In the first instance, whole families were received into the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism after they had been instructed and prepared by a friend or someone appointed by the Church. In the second instance, individuals were instructed and prepared by a friend or someone appointed by the Church.

During those days, the first four centuries, the Catholic Church was under intense persecution by the Roman Empire. To avoid persecution and the infiltration of pagans into the Church, every person who was received into the Church was required to have a sponsor. This sponsor performed two roles. First of all, he protected the Church by authenticating the sincerity of the convert. Secondly, as a catechist, he supported the person as a candidate into the Church.

During the first centuries, emphasis was placed on the baptism of adults. That all changed when the Council of Trent, (1545 - 1563) affirmed that Adam's disobedience not only transfused physical death to the individuals, but also, that all were born afflicted with a sin that is the "death of the soul." "Because of this certainty of faith, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin." (C.C.C. # 403; Council of Trent: DS 1514)

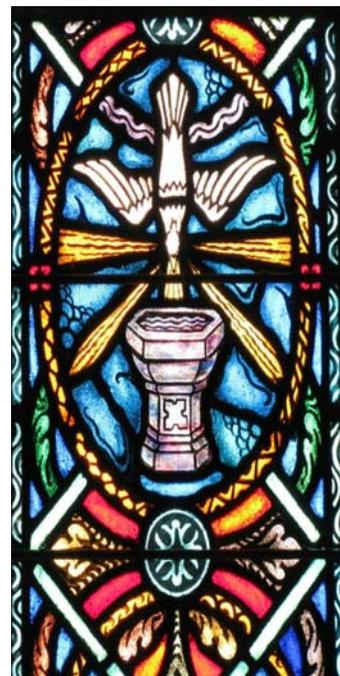
In harmony with this new Decree and in consideration of the inability of an infant to speak for himself or herself, more than ever, it became necessary to appoint a godparent who would make the Profession of Faith in the child's name. This same person would also be responsible for instructing the child in the faith, as if adopted by the Christian parents to protect the faith of their child.

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## QUALIFICATIONS FOR BAPTISM SPONSORS

Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.

- There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.
- To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:
  - 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;
  - 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;
  - 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;
  - not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
  - not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.
  - 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.



If the person you are considering as a Catholic sponsor/Godparent is not married according to the laws and practices of the Catholic Church, or is cohabitating [living together without marriage], you will need to consider someone else. Catholics who are divorced and remarried, and whose previous marriage has not been annulled by a Decree of Invalidity are considered members of the Church living in an irregular (or invalid) marriage and as such, are not eligible to be a Godparent.

The Catholic sponsor/Godparent must be an active, registered member of a Catholic Parish. For those who are not parishioners of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Godparent must obtain a "sponsor certificate" from his/her parish indicating that he/she is a Catholic in good standing. The certificate should be mailed to the Parish Office two weeks prior to the Baptism.

A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community can be a witness of the baptism but only together with a Catholic Godparent. A non-baptized person (i.e. a Jewish or Muslim person), cannot serve as a witness because the duties of a godparent to assist the parents of the child in passing on the Christian faith.

In a situation where an appointed Catholic Godparent is unable to attend the Baptism ceremony, a Catholic proxy can be appointed to stand in at the ceremony. The Catholic proxy must meet all the same requirements as the Catholic Godparent. Ordinarily the appointment of the proxy should be made by the Godparent in writing or before two witness... the real Godparent must give a mandate directly or indirectly (through the agency of others but with his or her consent) to the proxy.

**The Cathedral of Saint Patrick**  
**BAPTISM REGISTRATION FORM**

**FAMILY INFORMATION**

**NAME OF CHILD TO BE BAPTIZED:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**FATHER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Religion of Father: \_\_\_\_\_

**MOTHER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last) (Maiden)

Religion of Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT'S WEDDING DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CATHOLIC PARISH WHERE YOU ARE REGISTERED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

**WAS CHILD BAPTIZED PRIVATELY?** \_\_\_\_\_ **WAS CHILD ADOPTED?** \_\_\_\_\_

**SPONSOR INFORMATION**

**GODPARENT:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

PARISH WHERE REGISTERED: \_\_\_\_\_

**GODPARENT:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

PARISH WHERE REGISTERED: \_\_\_\_\_

**CHRISTIAN WITNESS:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

PARISH WHERE MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROXY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

PARISH WHERE REGISTERED: \_\_\_\_\_

It is sufficient to have just one Catholic Godparent but there may be two, one male and one female. The Godparent must be a Catholic in good standing who has been confirmed & is 16 or older. A Catholic who is not in good standing cannot be a Godparent or a Christian Witness. The Catholic parish where the person is registered will need to provide a statement that the sponsor is eligible. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community can be a witness of the baptism but only together with a Catholic Godparent. If the Catholic Godparent is unable to attend the Baptism, a Catholic proxy can stand in at the ceremony. The Catholic proxy must meet all the same requirements as the Catholic Godparent.

**BAPTISM CLASS DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE OF BAPTISM:** \_\_\_\_\_