

# THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. PATRICK BAPTISM GUIDELINES

## 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 pray 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 REQUIREMENTS OF THE GODPARENT

1. One Catholic godparent, male or female, is sufficient but there may be two, one of each gender. No one can have more than two godparents for one child, nor can anyone have two godparents of the same gender.
2. Godparents must be appointed by the parents of the child being Baptized and must be one who is willing to provide spiritual guidance to the child. They may not be the mother or father of the person to be baptized.
3. Godparents must be age 16 or older unless the parish priest considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made.
4. Godparents must be fully initiated Catholics (one who has celebrated Baptism, Eucharistic, Confirmation and practices their faith) and not labored under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared. 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.
5. Godparents who are not members of St. Patrick's Cathedral must obtain a “sponsor certificate” from his/her parish indicating he/she is a Catholic in good standing. The certificate should be mailed to the Cathedral office two weeks prior to the Baptism.
6. While it is ideal that the parents select two Catholic Godparents, the Church only requires that there be one Godparent. A baptized non-Catholic may serve as a “witness” to the ceremony, as long as a Catholic Godparent is present. The non-Catholic should be an active and participating member of his/her Christian community. 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.
7. 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.

# **GODPARENT ELIGIBILITY FORM**

## **MEMBERS OF SAINT PATRICK CATHEDRAL**

One of the many benefits of being a Catholic is the opportunity to be a Sacramental sponsor. The function of the sponsor is: a) together with the celebrant who baptizes or confirms, to represent the Church in receiving the person into the communion of the Church; and b) to assist the person in Christian initiation. Given the functions and role a sponsor exercises, a non-Catholic Christian cannot be admitted as a sponsor; however, he or she can be a witness. A non-Christian cannot serve in this latter capacity, but is welcome to be present at the ceremony. In accord with Canon 874 of the Code of Canon Law, the Church can admit a person to the role of sponsor if,

- He or she is not less than sixteen years of age.
- He or she is a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the blessed Eucharist and lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken.
- He or she is not either the father or the mother of the person.

Note that the Catholic seeking to be admitted as a sponsor “lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken.” This phraseology means that the candidate for sponsor sincerely believes and strives to put into practice the Word of God as taught by the Catholic Church; regularly takes part in the Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; and if married, was married in accordance with the requirements of the Catholic Church. Consequently those Catholics who are not actively affiliated with a worshiping community, who are invalidly married, as for example, before a Justice of the Peace, or without proper dispensation, before a minister of a Protestant church or before a rabbi, who are divorced and invalidly remarried, and who have not received confirmation and the blessed Eucharist; do not qualify to be admitted as a sponsor.

### **CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR ST. PATRICK CATHEDRAL MEMBERS**

The Cathedral of Saint Patrick is happy to provide active, participating members of the parish with certificates of eligibility if the following conditions are met:

- Individuals must be registered at the Cathedral for at least three months prior to seeking a certificate. If the individual is newly registered at the Cathedral, a letter from the individual’s former pastor stating they are a Catholic in good standing may be required in order to provide a certificate.
- The individual should be involved in the life of the parish via participation in a parish ministry.
- Individuals must attend weekly Mass at the Cathedral on either Saturday evening or Sunday morning. Since the Cathedral’s weekly Mass attendance envelopes is the primary way the parish determines if parishioners are regularly attending Mass, parishioners should always place a Mass attendance envelope in the collection basket when they attend a weekend Mass – regardless of whether one makes a contribution at that Mass or if one contributes electronically. To ensure your Mass attendance is counted, please make certain to check the “I attended Mass” box on the attendance envelope.

### **CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE FOR ST. PATRICK MEMBERS**

1. Complete the Certificate of Eligibility form and take to parish office for review and priest signature.
2. Upon review, the Cathedral will mail the certificate to the parish listed on the eligibility form. If the sponsor does not meet the above criteria, a letter will be sent to the sponsor regarding the reason(s) for ineligibility.

*\*\* If the Godparent is a member at another Catholic Church, they must contact their parish to receive a certificate of eligibility \*\**

# **GODPARENT ELIGIBILITY FORM**

## **NON-MEMBERS OF SAINT PATRICK CATHEDRAL**

One of the many benefits of being a Catholic is the opportunity to be a Sacramental sponsor. The function of the sponsor is: a) together with the celebrant who baptizes or confirms, to represent the Church in receiving the person into the communion of the Church; and b) to assist the person in Christian initiation. Given the functions and role a sponsor exercises, a non-Catholic Christian cannot be admitted as a sponsor; however, he or she can be a witness. A non-Christian cannot serve in this latter capacity, but is welcome to be present at the ceremony. In accord with Canon 874 of the Code of Canon Law, the Church can admit a person to the role of sponsor if,

- He or she is not less than sixteen years of age.
- He or she is a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the blessed Eucharist and lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken.
- He or she is not either the father or the mother of the person.

Note that the Catholic seeking to be admitted as a sponsor “lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken.” This phraseology means that the candidate for sponsor sincerely believes and strives to put into practice the Word of God as taught by the Catholic Church; regularly takes part in the Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; and if married, was married in accordance with the requirements of the Catholic Church. Consequently those Catholics who are not actively affiliated with a worshiping community, who are invalidly married, as for example, before a Justice of the Peace, or without proper dispensation, before a minister of a Protestant church or before a rabbi, who are divorced and invalidly remarried, and who have not received confirmation and the blessed Eucharist; do not qualify to be admitted as a sponsor.

### **CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY**

Catholic Godparent’s will need to provide a certificate of eligibility from the pastor of the Catholic parish where the Godparent is a registered, active member. The certificate of eligibility needs to confirm that the Godparent is a Catholic in good standing and eligible to be a Godparent.

The certificate of eligibility should state the date of the baptism. The certificate should be mailed to:

The Cathedral of Saint Patrick  
Attn: Baptism Coordinator  
1621 Dilworth Road East  
Charlotte, NC 28203





# DIOCESE of CHARLOTTE

1123 SOUTH CHURCH STREET • CHARLOTTE, NC 28203-4003 • (704) 370-6299

## Godparent/Sponsor Affirmation of Faith and Morals

### I. Some Basic Church Norms Concerning Godparents/Sponsors

It is the very ancient custom of the Church that at the celebration of the **sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation**, a godparent/sponsor is present. The function of the godparent/sponsor is: a) together with the celebrant who baptizes or confirms, to represent the Church in receiving the person into the communion of the Church; and b) to support the person in living the Catholic Christian life.

In accord with **Canon 874 of the Code of Canon Law**, the Church can admit a person to the role of godparent/sponsor if: a) he or she is more than sixteen years of age; b) is a baptized Catholic who has been Confirmed, has already received the Blessed Eucharist, and lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken; and c) is neither the father or the mother of the person.

Given the functions and role a godparent/sponsor exercises, a non-Catholic Christian cannot be admitted as a godparent/sponsor; however, he or she can serve as a Christian witness at baptism, provided that there is a Catholic godparent (c. 874 2). A baptized Catholic who is sacramentally or canonically ineligible to serve as a godparent may not serve as a Christian witness. These include those who subsequently renounced the faith in favor of another church community or entity. Those unbaptized and those whose Baptism is not recognized by the Catholic Church may not serve in the role of Christian witness but are welcome to be present at the ceremony.

Note that the Catholic seeking to be admitted as a godparent/sponsor “lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken.” This means that the candidate for godparent/sponsor: a) sincerely believes and strives to put into practice the Word of God as taught by the Catholic Church; b) prayerfully assists at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; and c) if married, was married in accordance with the requirements of the Catholic Church. One godparent/sponsor is required. Two godparents/sponsors may be appointed provided one is male and the other female.

### II. Individual Criteria for Admittance as a Godparent/Sponsor

**A sponsor must be fully initiated into the Catholic faith.** When and where did you receive the three Sacraments of Initiation? (Fill in below.) If unsure, a Certificate of Baptism can be requested from your church of baptism and will list the sacraments listed below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Church of Baptism**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**City, State**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date of Baptism**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Church of First Communion**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**City, State**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date of First Communion**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Church of Confirmation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**City, State**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date of Confirmation**

*Remember, a godparent/sponsor must be 16 or older — [ ] Check here if you are at least 16 years old.*

**A sponsor must be canonically free to carry out this office of godparent/sponsor.** This means that Catholics in an invalid marriage (not married according to the laws of the Church) and those cohabitating (living together without marriage) cannot serve as a godparent/sponsor. If you are married, please complete the following questions.

**Place of Marriage** (church/other): \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

**Marriage performed by:**

Priest       Deacon       Minister       Judge       Justice of the Peace       Not married

**A sponsor must know the fundamental truths of the Faith and be a practicing Catholic** who attends Mass on Sundays and receives the sacraments of Holy Communion and Reconciliation regularly. Based on these guidelines, are you in good standing with the Catholic Church?       YES       NO

**Sponsor's Church Attendance:**

Weekly       Monthly      Religion: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occasionally       Seldom       Never

**If you do not attend Mass weekly**, please attach a separate letter explaining the situation.

Name of church you presently attend: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**A sponsor must NOT be** the father, mother, step-parent, or custodial guardian of the one to be baptized/confirmed. What is your relationship to the candidate? \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Affirmation of the Prospective Godparent/Sponsor**

If therefore, you seek to be admitted as a godparent/sponsor, and are convinced that you qualify in accordance with the conditions listed above, kindly make the following **solemn affirmation** before God:

I, (print) \_\_\_\_\_, a practicing Catholic seeking to be admitted as a godparent/sponsor, solemnly affirm that I fulfill the requirements of the Catholic Church for this role as presented above. I **intend**, with the grace of God, to continue the practice of my Catholic faith, and I will, to the best of my ability, carry out the obligations of my role as godparent/sponsor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Ceremony

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Baptism/Confirmation Candidate (circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parish, City, and State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Godparent/Sponsor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Today's Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Godparent's/Sponsor's email address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Godparent/Sponsor's phone number

***This section is to be filled in by the godparent's/sponsor's parish church where they participate.***

I hereby certify that \_\_\_\_\_ is a registered member or lives within the boundaries of this parish; is a practicing Catholic in good standing; and is eligible to serve as

godparent for Baptism.  
 sponsor for Confirmation.

Name of Parish: \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Church Seal