



Understanding the Role of

Godparent

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5 Ways to Be an Effective Godparent

There are many ways to exercise this important role. It's about support, encouragement, and helping parents to ensure that the child is prepared to live and share his or her faith throughout life. [12] Below you'll find a few ways baptismal sponsors can serve to foster the Catholic faith of their godchildren.

1. Embrace your own Catholic faith. Parents have the greatest impact on their children's faith, but other faith-filled adults have a significant impact as well.[13] Godparents provide reinforcement and credibility to the faith that children receive in their home and parish community simply by a sincere and joyful Catholic example.[14]

2. Pray for them. Prayer is vital to Catholic life, and we believe that intercessory prayer – prayer on behalf of another – is of great spiritual benefit.[15] Even when godparents and godchildren are separated by significant distances, godparents can exercise their role by regularly praying for their godchildren.

3. Remember their dates of baptism. Pope Francis has repeatedly encouraged us to celebrate our dates of baptism as we would a birthday. Through Baptism we receive new life in Christ; it's like a spiritual birthday! Set reminders to make a phone call, visit, or send a card to help godchildren and their parents honor these special days.

4. Celebrate other milestone moments. Making time to celebrate with your godchildren at graduations, birthdays, family parties, etc. shows that you care and are interested in all aspects of their lives as well as in their spiritual development. Your relationship with them and their trust and confidence in you will be nurtured and grow.

5. Share age-appropriate faith content. As children grow, so do their capacities to engage with and actively learn about the faith. Be attentive to their thoughts and questions about Catholicism, ready to address those questions with suitable recommendations for prayer, devotion, and study.



[12] IB, no.29.

[13] Christian Smith, "Keeping the Faith," <https://bit.ly/3uHkZuG>

[14] IB, no.33.

[15] CCC, 2634-2636



"You, parents and godparents
... This is your task throughout
your lifetime: to protect the
Christian identity of your
children. It is a daily
commitment..."

-Pope Francis, bit.ly/3diFgDd

Congratulations, you're considering the role of godparent! It's a clear and simple role, but that doesn't mean it isn't important! Being a baptismal sponsor - a "godparent" - is a great responsibility. So at this exciting time, as you think about extending or accepting an invitation to serve as one, here are some things that will be helpful for you to understand.

The responsibility of a godparent

- Godparents' primary responsibility is to assist the child's parents in preparing him or her to embrace the faith and to lead a Catholic life,[1] a responsibility that develops along with the godchild; it's to be a supportive faith presence throughout the child's life.
- Godparents know the meaning of baptism and the joys and expectations it bears on the life of the baptized.[2]
- They may assist in the naming of the child so that he or she receives a Christian name, or is not given a name "foreign to Christian sensibility." [3]
- It is fitting, though not required, that a godparent later serve as sponsor for the child at the Sacrament of Confirmation.[4]
- At Baptism, godparents, with the parents, profess the Catholic faith for the child, representing the Church and the local faith community into which the child is received.[5]

[1] CIC, 872; Order of Baptism of Children (OBC), no. 8

[2] Code of Canon Law (CIC), no. 851.1

[3] CIC, 855; See also Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), no 2165

[4] CIC, 893.2; CCC 1311

[5] OBC, 8, 9; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Baptism" (IB), no. 14

Guidelines about godparents and who can serve

- There may be one or two. If there are two, one must be male and one female.[6]
- Godparents are chosen by parents or guardians, or by the child's pastor in their absence.[7]
- Persons at least 16 years of age may be eligible.[8]
- They are fully initiated Catholics (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist), actively living the faith.[9]
- They cannot be parents of the child to be baptized [10]
- Regarding non-Catholics, persons of another faith tradition and non-Catholic Christians may not serve as godparents. If one godparent is Catholic, a non-Catholic Christian may be present as a "witness" at the baptism,[11] though this cannot be likened to the role of godparent.

[6] CIC, 873; OBC, 10

[7] CIC, 874.1.1; OBC, 10

[8] CIC, 874.2; OBC, Christian Initiation: Gen. Intro., 10

[9] CIC, 874.3; OBC, Christian Initiation: Gen. Intro., 10

[10] CIC, 874.5; OBC, 10

[11] CIC, 874.1.2; OBC, 10

