

Guidelines for Choosing Godparents

To avoid confusion, disappointment and possible embarrassment, please review the following before asking someone to be a godparent for your child.

Church Law Requires

- At least ONE godparent who:
 - Is a Fully Initiated Catholic i.e. has received all three Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. (One who is not confirmed may not be a godparent)
 - Is at least 16 years of age
 - Is not the parent of the child to be baptized
 - Is living a life in harmony with the faith. If the person is married, she/he must be in a valid marriage recognized by the Catholic Church
 - Must be free from canonical penalty
 - Must obtain a Sponsor Certificate from his/her own parish to verify she/he is qualified to serve as a godparent.
- If TWO godparents are chosen:
 - at least one must be Catholic and meet the above requirements
 - if both are Catholic, both must meet the above requirements
 - with two godparents there is to be one of each gender (cannot have two godparents of the same gender)
 - one of the two may be a Christian Witness along with a qualified Catholic godparent.
 - a godparent who is not able to be present for the ceremony may be represented by a proxy
- To qualify as a Christian Witness:
 - The Witness must have been baptized in the name of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The parish priest can help determine if this is the case.
 - One who is not baptized or baptized in some way other than in the name of the Trinity CANNOT serve as a Christian Witness (e.g. Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Unitarian, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witness, Salvation Army, etc.)
 - A former Catholic (one who was baptized in the Catholic Church but has formally joined and is practicing another faith tradition) CANNOT serve as a Christian Witness

Try to remember, a godparent is not just an honorary role to be bestowed simply because a person might have a close relationship to the child or her/his parents or because you believe that person to be a "good person." The purpose of a godparent is to provide an example of faithful Catholic Christian living who would encourage your child to do the same. This would be a person who would help your child grow in faith if you are unable or neglect to do so. If the person you are thinking of asking does not practice his/her faith or lives contrary to it, has left the faith, or would encourage your child either directly or by example to do the same, it doesn't make sense for that person to be a godparent.