

Godparents:

Helping Parents Fulfill Their
Duty as Christian Mothers
and Fathers



SS. John and Paul Parish
Washington, Michigan

The Role

At the beginning of the celebration of the sacrament of baptism the church asks the godparents this question: *“Are you ready to help these parents in their duty as Christian mothers and fathers?”*

This question captures the heart of the role of being a godparent (or sponsor) for a child in the sacrament of baptism. While the popular perception is often that being a godparent is merely an honorary role given to close family friends, the Church intends that this important relationship have a more substantial reality. It is not a legal arrangement about who would raise a child, if something happens to the parents. Rather, it is a choice of who will witness to the child throughout his/her life about the importance of faith and involvement in the Catholic faith community.

The godparents accept a responsibility to fulfill a spiritual role in the life of their godchild; they make a commitment to help the parents raise the child as a follower of Jesus Christ. With the parents they will make every effort to form the child in believing what is true and doing what is right, so that, when as an adult the child needs to choose for themselves how they will live their life, they will have examples of the godparent’s faith and commitment to guide them.

The Requirements

The following are the requirements for being a godparent in the Catholic Church. They are not locally determined but they are common Catholic practice throughout the world. They are intended to assure that godparents are themselves living the life that they are committing themselves to share with their godchild.

One should be a fully initiated Catholic (having received Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) and faithfully living a Christian life.

Only one godparent is necessary, although two godparents (of different genders) are permitted and is the usual choice.

The minimum age is set by the law of the Church as 16.

A baptized person who is active in another Christian church may be a witness to baptism together with a Catholic godparent.

In light of the above, we expect godparents (and witnesses) who are members of churches other than SS. John and Paul to obtain a letter from their church stating that they belong to that church and are active in it. If a godparent is not active in a church, then they can use this occasion as an opportunity to get connected, or parents might have to re-think who is to be a godparent.

The Responsibilities

The following are some of the many ways a godparent can nurture this spiritual relationship and become a special friend to their godchild.

- Celebrate the anniversary of this holy day of baptism each year with a visit, a call, or a card.
- As your godchild grows, listen to and share in the struggles and triumphs of living a Christian life, and keep yourself informed with a growing understanding of your faith so that you are able to give good counsel as the opportunities arise.
- Encourage a consistent life of faith through special cards, letters or gifts which celebrate events from the history of salvation (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost) and a godchild's personal history (graduation, first job, engagement ..)
- Participate in, or send assurance of prayer, as your godchild receives the other sacraments, particularly First Communion and Confirmation, which completes his or her initiation into the family of the Church.
- Be supportive of the parents in their role as the primary religious teachers of their child.
- And, most importantly, become a model of Christian living for your godchild, through daily prayer, virtue and active participation in parish life and liturgy.