

The godparent's role in baptism

The Catholic Spirit | Father Michael Van Sloun | September 26, 2017



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When the time for an infant baptism arrives, it is also the time for the parents to select the godparents. This is a matter of tremendous spiritual importance, and the parents should use a number of spiritual criteria to make their choice.

According to canon law, it is the duty and privilege of Catholic parents to pass on the gift of faith to their newly baptized child, and likewise, it is the duty and privilege of godparents to assist the parents with this all-important task. A person cannot give what he or she does not have. Therefore, the single most important factor is whether the person is an active, practicing Catholic.

To be a godparent, the person must be a fully initiated Catholic, one who is baptized and has received the sacraments of Eucharist and confirmation. In order to be of sufficient maturity and capacity, the godparent must be at least 16 years of age. And very importantly, it should be a person "who leads a life of faith in keeping with the

function to be taken on" or, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, the godparents "must be firm believers."

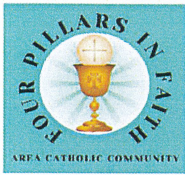
A firm believer is someone who has faith and trust in God, is a disciple of Jesus, is a member of the Church, belongs to a parish, prays regularly, attends Mass, is a frequent recipient of the sacraments, attempts to conform his or her life to the Gospel, is growing in virtue, gives good example and is a loving, generous and caring person. The godparent's faith need not be perfect, but it must be a priority and active.

Next, according to the Catechism, the godparents must be "able and ready to help the newly baptized ... on the road of Christian life." "Able and ready" means someone who is eager to serve, who will joyfully embrace the role and who can be available to have regular contact with the child.

"Help" is offered to facilitate growth in the Catholic faith, and it can be given in a wide variety of ways: to pray with their godchild, pray for their godchild, teach prayers, take their godchild to church, help their godchild prepare for other sacraments, be present for the celebration of future sacraments, possibly serve as the confirmation sponsor, give good example, offer spiritual support and encouragement, do good works with their godchild and extend special kindnesses to their godchild. It is extremely beneficial for godparents to read, explain and reflect upon sacred Scripture with their godchild, particularly the life of Jesus, as well as other characters and events of the Bible. It is also worthwhile to discuss the lives of the saints. A godparent helps the godchild to practice and persevere in the faith.

There are several other considerations. There may be one or two godparents: one male sponsor, the godfather; or one female sponsor, the godmother; or one of each. According to the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, "A sponsor who is married must be married in accord with the laws of the Church." Additionally, canon law states that a baptized person from a different Christian denomination may only serve as a witness and not as a godparent. A parent may not be the godparent of his or her own child, and anyone bound by a canonical penalty may not serve as a godparent.

Father Van Sloun is pastor of St. Bartholomew in Wayzata. This is the fourth column in a series on baptism. Read more of his writing at CatholicHotdish.com.



Four Pillars in Faith Area Catholic Community

Served by Father Timothy Gapinski

Deacon Ken Rosha

St. Louis Bertrand Church
187 1st Street South, PO Box 128
Foreston, MN 56330
320-294-5460

St. Mary's Church
645 3rd Avenue SE
Milaca, MN 56353
320-983-3255

St. Kathryn's Church
318 Hill Avenue
Ogilvie, MN 56358
320-679-1593

St. Mary's Church
210 East Forest Avenue
Mora, MN 55051
320-679-1593

Letter of Good Standing

WITNESS/SPONSOR FOR: _____
(Name of person being baptized)

SPONSOR INFORMATION:

I _____ affirm that:
(Please print first and last name)

- ____ I am at least 16 years of age.
- ____ I am a practicing Catholic registered at a parish.
- ____ I have received the sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation in the Catholic Church.
- ____ I participate in the Mass on Sundays and Holy Days and receive the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation regularly.
- ____ I regularly contribute to the financial needs of my parish.
- ____ If married, I am validly married according to the laws of the Catholic Church. If divorced, I have not remarried outside the Catholic Church.
- ____ I actively strive to live out my commitment to Christ and to the community life of the Church by my loving response to those with whom I come in contact.
- ____ I realized that I assume a great responsibility before God and the Church in becoming a sponsor and will faithfully fulfill the obligations connected with it. I will give support to the person I am sponsoring by my prayers and by the Christian example of my daily life.

By my signature, I attest to be a practicing Catholic who seeks to be admitted as a 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 sponsor.

(Sponsor's Signature)

(Date)

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SPONSOR'S PARISH:

This is to certify that _____
(Sponsor Name)

____ is a registered member of _____
(Name of Parish)

____ is in good standing in this parish and that he/she meets the requirements for being a sponsor.

____ is registered in our parish as an active, practicing Catholic.

(Priest's Signature)

(Date)

St. Mary's and St. Louis Baptism Information Form

Name of Child to be baptized: _____

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: _____

Was child privately baptized? _____ Is the child adopted? _____

Family's Address: _____

We are members of:

_____ St. Mary's

_____ St. Louis

Is this your first child to be baptized in the Catholic Church?

_____ Yes

_____ No

If this is your first child to be baptized, a baptism class will be required.

Parent Information

Father's full name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Roman Catholic? _____

If not Roman Catholic, what is your faith tradition? _____

Phone number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Mother's full name (including maiden): _____

_____ Date of birth: _____

Roman Catholic? _____

If not Roman Catholic, what is your faith tradition? _____

Phone number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Marital Status: Single/Married/Divorced/Separated

If married, anniversary date: _____

Were you married by a Catholic Priest? _____

Date requested for baptism

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

3rd Choice: _____

Catholic Godparents - Must have One Godparent

As per Canon Law, at least one Godparent must be Confirmed, at least 16 years of age and a practicing Catholic. Please fill out the form provided and have it signed by your parish priest.

Godfather's name: _____

Is the Godfather a practicing Catholic? _____

If yes, which parish does he attend? _____

If he is Catholic, but not practicing, he will be a witness to the Baptism.

If he is not Catholic, what is his faith tradition? _____

If he is a Christian, he will be a Christian Witness to the Baptism.

Godmother's name: _____

Is the Godmother a practicing Catholic? _____

If yes, which parish does she attend? _____

If she is Catholic, but not practicing, she will be a witness to the Baptism.

If she is not Catholic, what is her faith tradition? _____

If she is a Christian, she will be a Christian Witness to the Baptism.

Do you give your permission for St. Mary's and St. Louis to include a petition in the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass for your child's Baptism as well as an announcement of congratulations in the bulletin?

_____ Yes

_____ No

