

# What About Godparents?

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## Some guidelines to follow in Infant Baptisms at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

The role of godparent is a very important role, and thus parents must choose their godparents with great care, and those asked to be godparents must examine their own willingness to undertake the important responsibility. The role of the godparent is to help the baptized person lead a Christian life and help them faithfully fulfill the obligations included in baptismal promises.

Because of this important role, a person chosen as a godparent should be one who is able to visibly demonstrate, by their life, the Catholic faith, and how to live the Gospel in their personal lives. In church law, for infant baptisms, there are a few important guidelines that apply to selecting godparents:

1. The godparent must be **designated by the parent/s** of the child to be baptized.
2. Godparents must be at least **16 years old** (a requirement of maturity and understanding of the role undertaken).
3. Godparents must be Catholics who **have received the sacraments of confirmation and First Communion**. These three sacraments—Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation—are the three sacraments of full initiation into the Catholic faith, and so by having received all three sacraments, the godparent is fully practicing their faith by having been fully initiated into the Church. Presumably, the godparent will then have knowledge of the importance of these sacraments in the life of the child and will thus be able to encourage the child to continue to grow in faith and to be fully initiated into the Church.
4. Godparents **must be living a life of faith in keeping with the role** of godparent. Even if one is fully initiated, they cannot fulfill the role of godparent by model and example of their own life of faith if they are not living their faith. For this reason, those who do not **regularly attend Mass, participate in the Eucharist**, or who are **living in marriages not recognized by the Church** may not be qualified to function as godparents. *If you have a particular question or concern about one of these requirements and the ability of someone chosen as godparent to serve in that role, please speak to a member of the clergy (priest or deacon) about that concern to see if it is possible under your circumstances.*
5. **Parents of the child to be baptized cannot** serve as a godparent.
6. A **non-Catholic Christian can serve as a witness** of the baptism, but there **must be at least one godparent who meets the above criteria**. The role of modeling the Catholic faith would then fall solely to the Catholic godparent.

## Number of Godparents

Many times, parents are curious about the number of godparents that they may have. For official church purposes, only one godparent is necessary. *If two godparents are chosen, they should be one male and female.* The preference is for two, in case one is unable to fulfill the role. In situations where other people will fill an important role in the life of the child, they can play a role at the invitation of the parents, and informally called godparents by the family, but only two (one male and one female) can be officially recognized in Church records as godparents.