

Step One: Choosing a Sponsor (Good to read out loud with your Confirmandi)

A person who wants to receive Baptism or Confirmation must have a Sponsor, who is a baptized, confirmed, practicing Catholic. The relationship with the Sponsor is a permanent one. In other words, it is not simply a “ceremonial” or “honorary” role that begins and ends on the day of Baptism or Confirmation. The Sponsor (also called a “Godparent” for Baptism) should be active in helping the person to prepare to receive the Sacraments, and in helping the person to live the Catholic faith and to follow Christ in the years to come. For Confirmation only one Sponsor is chosen. For Baptism there may be either a Godfather and Godmother, or one of each. A baptized Christian, who is not Catholic, may act as a “Christian Witness” only if there is also a Catholic Godparent.

Sometimes people have the idea that Sponsors or Godparents are assigned only to babies, or that they are primarily assigned in order to “replace” the parents if something should happen to the parents. No, it is important for everyone who receives Baptism or Confirmation to have a Sponsor to assist them by prayer, word, and example. And it is important, not only in the extraordinary situations, as when a child is orphaned, but always and in every situation, not only for children, but also for adults. Where a child is being raised in a family that is already Christian, Christian parents are the first and most important teachers of their children in the ways of faith, but Sponsors are also important in assisting in handing on the Faith that comes to us from the Apostles. Adult catechumens also need the help and mentoring of Sponsors.

There are different roles within the Church, the Body of Christ. No one enters the Church in solitude, or unaided, and no one can persevere in the Faith as an isolated individual. For example, no one can baptize himself! We all need the support of other members of the Christian family. We need catechists and priests. We need the college of bishops in union with the Pope, who is the successor of St. Peter as the Bishop of Rome. But in a unique and personal way, the role of Sponsor or Godparent helps to support and encourage the Christian in following and serving Christ.

In some Catholic cultures, the role of Sponsor or Godparent is highly regarded, and there is no need to remind people of its great importance. Unfortunately, in our own culture, many people do not see the relationship as permanent and active. We often meet people who do not remember who their Godparents are, and even Godparents who do not remember who it was that they sponsored for Baptism.

Sometimes a candidate will express dismay or worry because they do not know any close friends or relatives who are Catholic and who can act as Sponsors. In such cases, a priest or catechist, or a fellow candidate, may be of assistance in introducing the candidate to a parishioner who would be willing to be a Sponsor. Quite often, however, the candidate already does know someone who would qualify: perhaps a next-door neighbor, someone who attends the same Mass, or a previous or current catechist. If there is a qualified Sponsor who cannot be present for the ceremony, he may be represented by a Proxy.

Sponsors should be chosen as soon as possible when beginning to prepare for Baptism or Confirmation.

No one lives alone, no one sins alone, no one is saved alone. –Pope Benedict XVI

Questions to Consider in Choosing a Sponsor:

- Who are my Baptismal Godparents? Would they be able to effectively fulfill this role?
- Who has a dynamic prayer life?
- Who has been influential in the growth of my faith? Or who could be?
- Who is not afraid to eloquently defend his or her faith?
- Who is active in his or her parish?
- Who does community service?
- Who celebrates Catholic holidays with a true spirit of faith?
- Who has persevered through sufferings, but has done so with faith and staying close to Christ and His Church?
- Who takes their Catholic faith seriously and appreciates it?
- Who do I feel comfortable asking deep questions about faith and life?
- Who can be my spiritual guide and have a relationship with for the rest of my life?
- Who will take his or her role as Sponsor seriously?

Step Two: Qualifications for a Confirmation Sponsor (To be discussed with the Confirmation Sponsor)

The qualifications for a Confirmation Sponsor are found in the Catholic Church's Code of Canon Law:

- **Canon 892:** Insofar as possible, there is to be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed; the sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament.
- **Canon 893:** To perform the function of sponsor, a person must fulfill the conditions mentioned in Canon 874. It is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in Baptism.
- **Canon 874:** To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

1/ be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;

2/ have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;

3/ be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;

4/ not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;

5/ not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

The Following Persons Are Not Eligible Sponsors:

- Parents (although a parent may stand in as a proxy)
- Persons married outside the Church
- Divorced persons who have remarried outside the Church
- Persons co-habiting without benefit of Catholic marriage
- Persons who neglect the religious education of their children
- High School students who do not attend religious education classes or receive religious instruction through private Catholic education or through a homeschooling program
- Persons who themselves have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Persons who have not completed their sixteenth year
- Individuals who neglect to fulfill their *Easter Duty* (Confession and Communion at least once a year during the Easter season)
- Those who give public scandal in any way
- Persons who habitually miss Sunday Mass

Nota Bene: In the event that the Sponsor cannot attend the Confirmation Ceremony in person, a proxy, explicitly designated by the Sponsor who fulfills the above qualifications, and who can provide the Religious Education Office with a **Sponsor Eligibility Form** may act in place of the Sponsor. If the Confirmation Candidate has a proxy, the Religious Education Office **MUST** be notified in advance and be provided with the necessary paperwork.

Step Three: Understanding the Sponsor's Duties & Responsibilities (To be discussed with the Confirmation Sponsor)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (Par. # 131, on The Role of the Sponsor for Confirmation) offers this advice: "The Sponsor for Confirmation is one who, fittingly, is a spiritual help to the Candidate."

There is no regulation specifying that men be sponsors for boys and women be sponsors for girls. Sponsors take on a life-long commitment to help their candidates fulfill the obligation for this Sacrament. As the Sponsor for a Candidate wishing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, your duties and responsibilities are paramount. Although your role is not the primary role (that is the duty of the parent), you nonetheless, are an important person in the preparation process and for the encouragement of the candidate to persevere in the Faith throughout his or her life.

Requirements:

- The Confirmation Sponsor must fulfill the qualifications found above in Step Two.
- The Confirmation Sponsor must be a practicing Catholic.
- The Confirmation Sponsor must validly receive Communion at the Confirmation Mass.
- The Confirmation Sponsor must take his or her Duties & Responsibilities seriously.
- The Confirmation Sponsor must provide the Religious Education Office with a signed **Sponsor Eligibility Form** from the Sponsor's parish of membership. This form indicates that the sponsor is a registered, participating Catholic who is eligible to act as a sponsor.

A Note to the Sponsor:

Dear Confirmation Sponsor:

Congratulations! You have been chosen to sponsor a young person who is preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation. As a sponsor, you should meet with him/her to guide them to a deeper understanding of the joys and obligations of confirmed Catholics. We realize that distance sometimes makes personal meetings impossible, but I hope that you will be able to correspond or talk regularly on the phone or email your student to accomplish this goal. The important thing is that you find opportunities to deepen your relationship with the Candidate who has chosen you.

- Discuss the importance of prayer and how it affects your faith life.
- Ask what is being discussed in Religion class and what the Candidate thinks about the lesson.
- Invite the Candidate to share with you how he/she has chosen to satisfy the service requirements for Confirmation.
- Enjoy an activity together if possible – go to functions within or outside the parish - meet with others whose lives are examples of true Christian living and join in the service projects with the Candidate if possible.

May you be rewarded and enriched as you work with the Candidate who has selected you as a sponsor!