

Dear Godparent,

In recent years, new parents have expressed a call for help in making godparents a more important part of their new child's life. They want to go beyond the traditional selection process of choosing a godparent from each side of the family or choosing a relative that has previously not been a godparent. They have expressed the need for guidelines not only on the legal requirements for being a godparent but also suggestions on expectations and activities for being a good godparent. The following are some guidelines and suggestions.

### **THE BASICS**

God parenting is a unique and privileged relationship between two Christians. The role of the godparent is to make room in their own life to help their godchild grow up in relations to God. It is a relationship, and therefore to thrive, it requires the ingredients of any good relationship—time and contact. This does not mean that the godparent will automatically become the child's guardian should something happen to the parents. God parenting has no legal relationship to guardianship. However, there are many ways a godparent can foster this special relationship with their godchild.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

One godparent, male or female is sufficient. Traditionally parents select two, one male and one female. There may be more than two godparents.

At least one godparent must be fully initiated in the Catholic community, i.e. must have received Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

Godparent should be mature enough to assume this relationship and responsibilities.

### **GODPARENTING SUGGESTIONS**

- Godparents may take pictures at the baptism and start a photo album for their godchild. This can be added to over the years as various other sacraments and special events are celebrated by the godchild. The book can be given to the godchild at a later age.
- Through mail or in person, build an on-going relationship with the godchild. Regular visits, taking the child over night, bringing the child to the godparent's church, spending special time with the godchild would be part of this relationship.
- Godparents giving gifts to their godchild. These gifts could be a bible, tapes, spiritual books, and music that have Christian messages or bible stories. These will help supplement efforts by the parents.
- Pray for the godchild. The godparents should let the godchild know that they are regularly included in the godparent's prayers.
- Sharing godparent thoughts and values with their godchild. This could be through reading stories, drawing, watching TV together, board games or other opportunities where godparents can share their values and thoughts with their godchild.
- Keeping the church year. A godparent can share special times together around an Advent wreath or Advent calendar in preparation for Christmas, building a godchild's nativity set by giving a new piece each year at the Christmas season, planting seeds and bulbs to celebrate the Lenten season, dye Easter eggs together to celebrate Easter.
- Godparents can serve a special function by being there for their godchild during times of crisis. There may be a death in the family, a divorce or separation; or a family move. God parents can help the godchild sort out their feelings during this time of crisis.
- Listen to their godchild and let the relationship between the godparent and godchild teach the godparent about their own relationship to God.
- Godparents become a model of Christian living for their godchild through their own activity in parish life and liturgy.
- There are as many ways of being a good godparent as there are people willing to give it a try. Let those things most natural to the godparent flow in this relationship.