



The Role of the Godparent

What is the godparent's role?

When selecting a godparent for their child, parents often desire to honor a close family member or friend who is connected to the child's life. However, the Church understands that being a godparent is a big responsibility, not just an honorary title. Along with joining the parents in presenting the child for baptism, *the godparent's fundamental role is to help the child grow in and live out his or her Catholic faith.* In other words, the godparent serves as an example of how a Catholic should live his or her faith, and the godparent takes responsibility for the spiritual growth and formation of the baptized person. The godparent represents the Catholic Church and the faith community into which the person is being baptized.

Who is eligible to be a godparent?

Parents may choose to have either one or two Catholic godparents for their child; if selecting two godparents, one must be male and the other female. To be a godparent, one must meet the following conditions:

- Is 16 years of age or older
- Has received all three Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation) in the Catholic Church
- Is currently practicing his or her Catholic faith (active members of a Catholic parish, attending Mass regularly, etc.)
- If married or, if living together, is validly married in the Catholic Church

Are godparents the same as legal guardians?

No, godparents along with the parents help encourage the spiritual life of a child. They are not obligated to take custody of the child in the absence of the parents. A godparent also cannot be the mother or father of the child to be baptized.

Can a non-Catholic be a godparent?

For the reasons mentioned above, it is not possible for a non-Catholic to fulfill the role of the godparent. Since the Catholic godparent serves as an example of lived faith and represents the Catholic community, it is also not possible for former Catholics who have joined other Christian communities or who no longer practice their Catholic faith to serve as godparents.

Can others participate in the ceremony if they are not godparents?

Once a Catholic godparent is selected, a baptized non-Catholic of the opposite sex may be chosen to participate in the ceremony as a "Christian witness." A Christian witness is someone who has been validly baptized and is currently practicing his or her Christian faith and living an upright moral life.

Does the godparent have to be present for the baptism?

No. If it is not possible for the selected godparent to be present on the day of the baptism, he or she may be represented at the ceremony by proxy.

More questions? Please reach out to the Pastoral Associate!

