

Choosing Godparents – Important Role Models of your Child’s Faith

The practice of two Godparents for an infant’s baptism goes back to the time when Church law and civil law were one and the same in Europe. If anything happened to the parents, the custody and well-being of the child became the responsibility of the Godparents.

Today, being a Godparent has no legal implications. It is a spiritual matter. A Godparent must be a practicing Catholic, who attends Mass every week and has received all sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation. A non-Catholic Christian cannot be a Godparent but can be a Christian Witness. This distinction recognizes the difference between faith and religion. A Christian can be a witness because of his/her relationship to God (faith), but the Catholic is a mentor in the practice of the religion.

In any event, it is vital that parents give serious consideration to the people they choose to be the child’s Godparent. That choice should be based on practice of faith, solid moral character and ability to give good example. Too often the choice is left to whose turn it is in the family or to friends that parents wish to honor or acknowledge in some way. Your choice of Godparents is the first lesson of faith you teach your child. Make it count!

Godparents’ Eligibility

The following are the guidelines for parents when choosing a Godparent for their child:

- You may have one or two Godparents (baptized Catholics).
- If there are two, one must be male and the other female (Canon Law).
- If you are having two Godparents, both need a “letter of eligibility.”
- Godparents must be practicing Catholics who attend Mass every week and have received the three Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation (Canon Law).
- If married, the marriage must have been celebrated in the Catholic Church or with proper dispensation.
- Godparents must be 16 years old or older (Canon Law).
- Parents cannot be Godparents to their own children.
- A Christian non-Catholic, who has been baptized, may be designated a Christian Witness. (A Catholic cannot be a Christian Witness).
- A non-baptized person cannot be a Godparent or a Christian Witness.