



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
CATHOLIC CHURCH

Selecting a Sponsor (Godparent) for your child's Baptism

Choosing your child's baptismal Sponsor (Godparent) is one of the first decisions you will make as you prepare for your child's Baptism.

But which is it? Sponsor or Godparent? You will see that we use both nearly interchangeably. The Church requires one Sponsor for baptism. It used to be held that having a godmother and godfather would protect the child in the event of the death of their parents. Losing your parents as a child due to disease and war was a lot more common in the past than it is today and children were customarily placed with their godparents after their parents' deaths. This is not the case now. You'll see the responsibilities of a Baptism Sponsor (Godparent) listed below. So, you must choose at least one Sponsor for baptism, but could choose two – more on that later.

Before asking a relative or close friend to assume the role of Sponsor (Godparent) for your child, there are a few important items to understand about what is expected from, and what the Church expects from, a Sponsor (Godparent) for a Catholic Baptism. A solid understanding of their role will help you in making this choice.

A Baptismal Sponsor (Godparent) plays a very important role in your child's spiritual life and should serve as a role model in the Catholic faith. Your child should be able to look to their Sponsor as an example of how Church teaches us to live our Catholic faith. They should support you in your work to teach your child our Catholic faith, and they represent the larger Church community into which your child is being baptized and brought into as a member.

Being a baptismal Sponsor (Godparent) is not only an honor, it is a tremendous responsibility! The Catholic Church provides guidelines to help parents choose the best possible Sponsor (Godparent) for their children.

Responsibilities of a Baptism Sponsor (Godparents)

1. To present the child for Baptism along with the child's parents.
2. To assist the parents in their Christian responsibilities of teaching & living the faith.
3. To represent the community of faith in which the child will be baptized.
4. To renew their own profession of Catholic Christian faith.
5. To help the child, by word and example, lead a Christian life and fulfill the obligations of their baptism.

Who is eligible to be a Sponsor (Godparent)?

One Sponsor (Godparent) must be chosen. If two are chosen, a male and a female must be chosen – godfather and godmother - the Church does not permit two of the same gender.

Each person chosen must meet **ALL** of the following criteria for eligibility:

1. **Must be a least sixteen (16) years of age**

2. Must be a fully initiated Catholic

– must have been baptized, confirmed and received first eucharist in the Catholic Church.

3. Must be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Catholic Church who leads a life of faith necessary to fulfill the responsibility of being a Sponsor (Godparent)

To be in *good standing*, each Sponsor (Godparent) must:

- Be a registered member of a parish in the area where he/she lives.
- Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation
- Support the parish to which they belong both financially and through service to the best of their ability
- If married, be in a valid marriage – married according to the laws and regulations of the Catholic Church – which means married by a Catholic priest/deacon OR obtained official permission for marriage outside the Catholic Church.

Examples of an invalid marriage in the eyes of the Catholic Church would be married by the justice of the peace, or married by another Christian minister or rabbi without proper dispensation from the Catholic Church.

- If single, they may not be cohabiting with someone without the benefit of marriage.

4. May not be the father or the mother of the person to be baptized

Can a person who is a Christian, validly baptized in a recognized Christian faith like Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc, serve as a Sponsor (Godparent)? No, but they could and would serve as a Christian Witness but there must also be a Catholic Sponsor (Godparent). A Christian Witness should understand their role and play an active and important part in supporting parents as they teach their child the Christian way of life. They must also provide either a proof of baptism or letter of active membership from their church pastor.

Can a non-practicing Catholic or former Catholic who has left the faith and joined another faith serve as a Sponsor or Witness? Unfortunately, no, they cannot as they are not following the 'requirements' for members of the Catholic Church.

Sponsor (Godparent) Eligibility Request form

If a member of St. Francis of Assisi, Traverse City –

- Fill out the request form issued by the Parish
- Return it to the Parish for verification of membership and eligibility
- Provide a copy of their Baptismal Certificate

If not a member of St. Francis of Assisi, Traverse City –

- Fill out the request form issued by the Parish
- Take it to the parish in which they are registered for verification of membership and eligibility – must be signed by their pastor
- Have the parish, after verification, affix their parish seal
- Return completed form to the Parish Office well in advance of the date of baptism
- Provide a copy of their Baptismal Certificate

Any questions can be directed to Father Don Geyman, our pastor or Cheryl Lee, our Faith Formation Director. Thank you!