

GUIDELINES FOR SUITABILITY OF SPONSORSHIP

The following guidelines are meant to assist parents in assessing suitability for the role of sponsor(godparent) at Baptism or at Confirmation. These guidelines are based on the requirements for sponsors as delineated in canons 872 - 874 of the Code of Canon Law.

1. A person who is to be baptized or confirmed needs a sponsor. While it has become a tradition to have two sponsors at Baptism, having only one sponsor is acceptable. No more than two sponsors are permitted, however, and the two sponsors may not be of the same sex.
2. A sponsor must be at least sixteen years old, unless the pastor grants an exception for a lower age, provided there is a just cause.
3. A Catholic who has not received the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist may not be a sponsor. We encourage that person to complete Christian Initiation at an appropriate time.
4. A Catholic who has left the Catholic Church cannot be a sponsor. A non-practicing Catholic may be admitted as a sponsor only if the pastor determines that the person is in the process of returning to the regular practice of the faith. A Catholic who does not attend, does not participate in the life and support of the Church is considered non-practicing, and cannot be a sponsor. Individuals should be ACTIVE, registered members of the parish before seeking sponsorship documentation.
5. A suitable member of an Eastern Orthodox Church may be admitted as a sponsor, but only together with a Catholic sponsor, for a just cause, and as long as there is provision for the Catholic education of the person to be baptized. Similarly, a Catholic is not forbidden to be a sponsor in an Eastern Orthodox Church, if he or she is so invited.
6. A baptized non-Catholic may be admitted as a Christian witness at Baptism, but only together with a Catholic sponsor. Similarly, a Catholic may act as a Christian witness for a person being baptized in another ecclesial communion, but not as a sponsor.
7. A person who has left the Catholic Church cannot stand as a Christian witness at a Catholic baptism, nor can a non-baptized person serve in this capacity.
8. A parent is not to be the sponsor for his or her child. An adoptive parent is to be discouraged from exercising this function.
9. If a sponsor is married, the Catholic Church must recognize the marriage. If you are a Catholic married without the blessing of the Church, you cannot serve as a sponsor.

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