



OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Role of Godparent at Baptism

It is the ancient custom of the Catholic Church that a child coming for Baptism has a godparent who represents the entire faith community of the Catholic Church. Does it make any difference who is asked to be a godparent? Yes, it does! People often want to ask their best friends or favorite relative to act as godparents for their children; they usually do this as a way of honoring someone. Of course, we all would like to honor those who are dear to us, but the Baptism of a child may not be the right time to do so.

The role of a godparent is not simply a ceremonial title or social role. A godparent should be thought of as the child's spiritual companion on the journey towards mature faith. Accepting the invitation to be a godparent implies your own commitment to practice your faith and to give daily example to adult Catholic Christian living in our modern world.

Many people ask: "What does the Church require of a godparent?" or "Will the Church allow me to be a godparent?" A better question might be, "Can I honestly allow myself to be a godparent?" In other words, when you are invited to be a godparent, you must first ask yourself if your own personal integrity allows you to stand at the altar to make a public profession of faith and to affirm that you practice your faith in your daily life.

In the same way that you would not perform heart surgery on someone's child if you were not a heart surgeon, you should also not accept the role of godparent if you do not regularly pray with the community at Sunday mass or practice your faith and show commitment to Christian values.

Godparents do not need to be saints. We all need to rely upon the mercy of God for our sins and faults. Yet the role of godparent does call for an individual who practices the sacramental life of the Church, and "lives a life in harmony with the faith." If you are an actively practicing Catholic at this point in your life, you would make a great godparent at Baptism!

If you have stopped participating in Mass and rarely receive the sacraments, I invite you to let this invitation be a real opportunity to grow in the Holy Spirit and in your own faith commitment. You could arrange to meet with a priest or deacon, or perhaps with a trusted family member or friend who does practice the faith, to talk about the state of your faith life as an adult. If you cannot bring yourself to a renewed practice of the faith, then by all means be honest enough to politely decline the invitation to be a godparent at this time. None of this is to suggest that you are not a good and upright person. There will surely be other ways you can help this child in his or her life.

If the parish can assist you in your discernment of your own readiness to accept the responsibilities of being a godparent, please call the rectory at 563-359-0345. May the Lord guide you in deciding whether or not you can honestly complete and sign the affirmations listed on the *Godparent Eligibility Certificate* attached to this letter.

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