

The godparent's role in baptism

The Catholic Spirit | Father Michael Van Sloun | September 26, 2017



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When the time for an infant baptism arrives, it is also the time for the parents to select the godparents. This is a matter of tremendous spiritual importance, and the parents should use a number of spiritual criteria to make their choice.

According to canon law, it is the duty and privilege of Catholic parents to pass on the gift of faith to their newly baptized child, and likewise, it is the duty and privilege of godparents to assist the parents with this all-important task. A person cannot give what he or she does not have. Therefore, the single most important factor is whether the person is an active, practicing Catholic.

To be a godparent, the person must be a fully initiated Catholic, one who is baptized and has received the sacraments of Eucharist and confirmation. In order to be of sufficient maturity and capacity, the godparent must be at least 16 years of age. And very importantly, it should be a person "who leads a life of faith in keeping with the

function to be taken on” or, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, the godparents “must be firm believers.”

A firm believer is someone who has faith and trust in God, is a disciple of Jesus, is a member of the Church, belongs to a parish, prays regularly, attends Mass, is a frequent recipient of the sacraments, attempts to conform his or her life to the Gospel, is growing in virtue, gives good example and is a loving, generous and caring person. The godparent’s faith need not be perfect, but it must be a priority and active.

Next, according to the Catechism, the godparents must be “able and ready to help the newly baptized ... on the road of Christian life.” “Able and ready” means someone who is eager to serve, who will joyfully embrace the role and who can be available to have regular contact with the child.

“Help” is offered to facilitate growth in the Catholic faith, and it can be given in a wide variety of ways: to pray with their godchild, pray for their godchild, teach prayers, take their godchild to church, help their godchild prepare for other sacraments, be present for the celebration of future sacraments, possibly serve as the confirmation sponsor, give good example, offer spiritual support and encouragement, do good works with their godchild and extend special kindnesses to their godchild. It is extremely beneficial for godparents to read, explain and reflect upon sacred Scripture with their godchild, particularly the life of Jesus, as well as other characters and events of the Bible. It is also worthwhile to discuss the lives of the saints. A godparent helps the godchild to practice and persevere in the faith.

There are several other considerations. There may be one or two godparents: one male sponsor, the godfather; or one female sponsor, the godmother; or one of each. According to the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, “A sponsor who is married must be married in accord with the laws of the Church.” Additionally, canon law states that a baptized person from a different Christian denomination may only serve as a witness and not as a godparent. A parent may not be the godparent of his or her own child, and anyone bound by a canonical penalty may not serve as a godparent.

Father Van Sloun is pastor of St. Bartholomew in Wayzata. This is the fourth column in a series on baptism. [Read more of his writing at CatholicHotdish.com](http://CatholicHotdish.com).

St. Mary's and St. Louis Baptism Information Form

Name of Child to be baptized: _____
Date of birth: _____
Place of birth: _____
Was child privately baptized? _____ Is the child adopted? _____
Family's Address: _____

We are members of:

_____ St. Mary's

_____ St. Louis

Parent Information

Father's full name: _____
Date of birth: _____
Roman Catholic? _____
If not Roman Catholic, what is your faith tradition? _____
Phone number: _____
E-mail address: _____
Mother's full name (including maiden): _____
Date of birth: _____

Roman Catholic? _____
If not Roman Catholic, what is your faith tradition? _____
Phone number: _____
E-mail address: _____
Marital Status: Single/Married/Divorced/Separated
If married, anniversary date: _____
Were you married by a Catholic Priest? _____

Is this your first child to be baptized in the Catholic Church?

_____ Yes

_____ No

If this is your first child to be baptized, a baptism class will be required.

Date requested for baptism

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

3rd Choice: _____

Stole Fee paid to the church is \$25.00.

If you would like to give Father or Deacon a monetary gift, it would be in addition to the \$25.00 Stole Fee.

Catholic Godparents - Must have One Godparent

As per Canon Law, at least one Godparent must be Confirmed, at least 16 years of age and a practicing Catholic. Please fill out the form provided and have it signed by your parish priest.

Godfather's name: _____
Is the Godfather a practicing Catholic? _____
If yes, which parish does he attend? _____

If he is Catholic, but not practicing, he will be a witness to the Baptism.

If he is not Catholic, what is his faith tradition? _____
If he is a Christian, he will be a Christian Witness to the Baptism.

Godmother's name: _____
Is the Godmother a practicing Catholic? _____
If yes, which parish does she attend? _____

If she is Catholic, but not practicing, she will be a witness to the Baptism.

If she is not Catholic, what is her faith tradition? _____
If she is a Christian, she will be a Christian Witness to the Baptism.

Do you give your permission for St. Mary's and St. Louis to include a petition in the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass for your child's Baptism as well as an announcement of congratulations in the bulletin?

_____ Yes

_____ No



St. Mary's Church
Milaca, Minnesota



Foreston, Minnesota

Godparent Form

To be completed, signed and returned prior to the Baptism.

Date _____

Godparent's Name

Is a registered member of the Catholic Church of

at

and is faithful in his/her practice of the faith.

Pastor, signed