

# Choosing Godparents

## Congratulations

Congratulations on the birth of your child! This is a very joyful time in the life of your family. Corpus Christi Parish is excited to celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism with you and to support you as you raise your child in the Catholic Faith.

This information will answer many of your questions concerning Church requirements for Godparents. Choosing the right Godparents for your child is a very important decision. For some parents the choice seems obvious; for others it is a struggle. Godparents play a significant role on the day of the baptism. They are asked to enter into a very special relationship with their godchild, promising to support parents in helping their child to grow in faith. This is a lifelong responsibility.

No one knows what kind of person your child will be, but you can help develop that personality by surrounding your child with people you love and admire. Among them will be the godparents.

## The Importance of Godparents

A godparent serves a special role in the baptism. Godparents are to represent the Christian Catholic community, the Church. They promise to assist the child's parents in raising their child in our Catholic faith, so that the child may profess and live it as an adult.

To understand this it helps if we remember a few basic things about Baptism—that it gives a person both a new and special status as a child of God and it makes a person a member of the Body of Christ, the Church. Because of this you should be looking for godparents who can truly represent that Christian community. Basically this means you want at least one active and committed Catholic. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

*"...the godfather and godmother... must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized child or adult—on the road of Christian life" (#1255)*

This is the Church's way of saying that being a godparent is truly a ministry in the Church, and not simply an honor.

## Eligibility in the Church

The Church has some very clear guidelines for godparents:

- They must be designated by the parents and willing to help your child lead a Christian life.
- They must be at least 16 years old and mature enough to understand and undertake this responsibility.
- They must be Catholics who have received the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist

- They must believe all that the Catholic Church believes and teaches, and truly make a serious effort to live a good moral life worthy of imitation.
- If they have children, they must see to their regular religious instruction.
- They must be an actively practicing Catholic, participating in Sunday Mass.
- They must not be bound by any imposed or declared penalty under Church Law and free to carry out this office. (This means that Catholics living in an invalid marriage—not married in a Catholic Church—cannot be a godparent).
- They must be someone besides the child’s parents.
- The Church requires one godparent but you may choose to have two. If you have two, there must be one male and one female.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Parents often have many questions when choosing godparents for their child:

- *Can we choose a Catholic who was not married in the Church to be a godparent?*  
A godparent must “lead a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.” A Catholic who is not married according to the laws and practices of the Church is not in harmony with the faith and cannot be a godparent.
- *Does a godparent need to attend church?*  
It makes sense. Their role is to nourish the faith of the baptized child by being a model of Christian faith and discipleship.
- *Can a non-Catholic be my child’s godparent?*  
Technically they cannot since Church Law states that godparents must have celebrated Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist in the Catholic Church. However, the Church only requires that a child have one godparent. A Baptized non-Catholic can serve as a Christian witness to the Baptism. During the ceremony this witness performs all of the parts that a godparent does and his/her name is entered into the Parish Baptism register.
- *Can the same people serve as godparents for more than one child?*  
Certainly, as long as they meet the requirements and fulfill their responsibilities.
- *Can the godparent come from my family?*  
Yes as long as they are an appropriate choice. Of course they can also come from outside of the family.
- *What if the godparent cannot be at the Baptism?*  
A proxy can stand in for a godparent at the ceremony.