

# Guidelines for Choosing Sponsors (Godparents) for the Sacrament of Baptism

*From the Canonical Laws of the Catholic Church*

Canon 872: In so far as it is possible, a person being baptized is to be assigned a sponsor. In the case of an adult baptism, the sponsor's role is to assist the person in Christian Initiation. In the case of an infant baptism, the role is, together with the parents to present the child for baptism, and to help him/her to live a Christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully fulfill the duties inherent in baptism.

Canon 873: One sponsor, male or female, is sufficient; but there may be two, one of each sex.

*Note: Simply put, this means there cannot be "two godmothers" or "two godfathers"; if there are two, one must be male and the other female.*

Canon 874:

Paragraph 1 - To be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must:

#1- Be appointed by the candidate for baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the pastor or the minister of baptism. To be appointed, the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it.

#2- Be no less than 16 year of age, unless the pastor or the minister of the sacrament considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made.

*Note: Exceptions made for a just reason involve age only, not the completion of Christian Initiation. No exception is made if the proposed sponsor is **not confirmed** and receiving Holy Communion at least once per year during the Easter Season (it is a precept of the Church to complete the Easter Duty).*

#3- Be a Catholic who has received Holy Communion and has received the Sacrament of Confirmation and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken.

*Note: This means that a sponsor must have completed their Christian Initiation (First Communion and Confirmation) and they must be actively living their faith in harmony with the Catholic Church so they can provide a good example for the child to be baptized. In order to prove that this requirement is met, sponsors are required to submit a sponsor certificate from the parish in which they are an active member, signed by that parish priest. If no sponsor certificate is obtained, that individual cannot be a godparent. In today's world, it can be very difficult to find a good person to be a sponsor/godparent. If you are in this position, simply let one of the priests know and they will be able to suggest some people from the parish community to choose from. It is a common misconception that godparents would take over the care of the child if something should happen to the parents. This is NOT the case - not by church law nor by state law. Parents would have to make arrangements through legal documents if they wanted the godparents to have custody of their children.*