

Guidelines for Sponsors of Baptism and Confirmation

It is the responsibility of the pastor or minister of the sacrament to ensure the suitability of sponsors selected for the celebration of Baptism and Confirmation. The following guidelines, drawn from the *Code of Canon Law*, *The Rites of the Catholic Church* (vol. I) and the 1993 *Ecumenical Directory*, will assist in the assessment of suitability.

1. It is important the selection of a sponsor arises from proper motives. A sponsor is not to be selected for superficial reasons, as a kind of reward or, even less, in the hope of bringing the sponsor back to the practice of the faith. Rather a sponsor is to be chosen for their manifest commitment to the Christian life and his or her ability to assist the person in steadily advancing toward Christian perfection.
2. It is highly desirable that a person to be baptized or confirmed have a sponsor, though a sponsor is not required for a valid and licit celebration.
3. In the United States it is traditional to have two sponsors at Baptism, however it is permissible to have only one. A candidate for Confirmation likewise may have one or two sponsors. No more than two sponsors are permitted for either Baptism or Confirmation and the two sponsors must be of the opposite sex.
4. In certain cultures it is traditional to have more than two persons designated as sponsors for Baptism. The minister should consult with the person to be baptized or, in the case of an infant Baptism, the parents and determine which two names, one male and one female, will be inscribed in the baptismal register.
5. It is desirable and fitting to choose as a sponsor for Confirmation one or both of the persons selected for the role of sponsor at Baptism.
6. A sponsor must be at least 16 years old, unless the pastor or minister of the sacrament has granted an exception. There must be a just cause for granting such an exception.
7. A sponsor must be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church, that is they are to have already received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist.
8. A sponsor is to be a practicing Catholic who leads a Christian life in a manner consistent with the role and responsibilities of a sponsor. Persons, for example, who do not regularly participate in the Holy Eucharist or who live in marriages not recognized by the Catholic Church are among those who may be restricted from exercising the role of sponsor.
9. A person bound by a canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared may not serve as a sponsor.
10. Neither the mother nor father, whether natural or adoptive, of the person to be baptized or confirmed is permitted to serve as a sponsor.

11. For a just cause, a suitable member of an Eastern Orthodox Church may serve as a sponsor but only together with a Catholic sponsor. Similarly, a Catholic may serve as a sponsor for a member of an Eastern Orthodox Church. In both cases the duty of providing for the Christian education binds in the first place the godparent who belongs to the Church in which the person is baptized and/or confirmed.
12. A baptized non-Catholic may not serve as a sponsor but may be permitted to stand as a Christian witness together with a Catholic sponsor. A Catholic may serve as a Christian witness for a person being baptized in a non-Catholic ecclesial community but not as a sponsor. The name of the Christian witness is not recorded in the baptismal register.
13. An unbaptized person may serve neither as a sponsor nor as a Christian witness.
14. If a sponsor cannot be present another person may be appointed to serve as a proxy. It is for the sponsor to appoint the proxy, preferably in writing or in the presence of two witnesses so that it is clear who is the sponsor and who is the proxy. The name of both the sponsor and the proxy should be entered in the sacramental register.
15. A priest or deacon may be a sponsor. If the priest or deacon is also the minister of Baptism, he should appoint a proxy to stand in his place at the ritual. If a priest is the sponsor of a person to be confirmed he should concelebrate the Mass. If he is the celebrant of Confirmation he should appoint a proxy to stand in his place.