



Memo

Date: 20 November 2009

To: All Priests and Deacons

From: Fr. Theodore Book, Director, Office of Divine Worship

Re: Qualifications for Baptismal Sponsors

We have recently received a number of requests for information regarding the qualifications of individuals to serve as sponsors (Godparents) in the celebration of Baptism. As there seems to be considerable confusion on this matter, I wanted to write to clarify the norms found in Canons 872-874.

Outside of emergency situations, it is necessary that an individual being baptized have at least one sponsor. This sponsor must be a fully initiated Catholic who is living in communion with the Church. This excludes those living in invalid marriages. The sponsor must be at least 16 years of age, unless the minister concludes that there is a just reason for an exception to the age requirement.

If there are two sponsors, one must be male, and one female. A non-Catholic of either gender can stand as a Christian witness to a baptism along with a Catholic sponsor.

The only requirement that the law places on the parents of a child presented for infant baptism is that at least one of them consent to the baptism and that there be a realistic hope that the child be brought up as Catholic. There is no requirement that the parents be living in a sacramental marriage. While pre-baptismal catechesis is an opportunity to invite parents in an irregular situation into deeper communion with the Church, baptism cannot be denied on the basis of the parents' marital status or lack of parish registration.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions on the sacrament of Baptism or on any other liturgical matter.

Office of Divine Worship

680 West Peachtree Street, N.W. ■ Atlanta, Georgia 30308-1984
(404) 751-2398 ■ Fax (404) 885-7286 ■ www.archatl.com