



### ***Being a Sponsor or Godparent***

In the early Church when people were usually baptized as adults, a Christian from the community would appear before the bishop to attest to the candidate's worthiness to become a Christian. Later the Church designated exemplary persons to accompany the newcomer on his or her journey to a full Christian life.

When baptizing infants became the norm, sponsors (or "Godparents") presented the children for Baptism and recited the Creed on behalf of the child, and thus was born a special spiritual relationship with the child. In the Baptism of children, the godparent is joined spiritually to the immediate family of the one being baptized and the godparent also represents the larger family of the Church. The Rite of Baptism makes clear that the parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. Godparents promise to assist the parents in helping the child grow in his or her faith life.

Each child is to be given at least one Catholic godparent. The parents may choose two godparents, in which case one must be a man, and the other a woman. In addition to the required Catholic godparent, the child's parents may choose a member of another Christian church as the second godparent, technically known as a Christian witness. During the celebration of Baptism, this witness stands with the Catholic godparent and responds as a sponsor of the child.

The Catholic godparent must be at least 16 years old and have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and, if applicable, married in the Church. He or she must be an active member of his or her Catholic parish and that parish must provide a letter or certificate attesting to the person's eligibility to be a godparent for Baptism. It is the responsibility of the godparent "to show the [child] how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, and to be for the [child] a bearer of Christian witness." (*Rite of Christian Initiation*)