

## **SELECTING SPONSORS (GODPARENTS) FOR YOUR CHILD'S BAPTISM**

As you begin to prepare for your child's Baptism, one of your first decisions will be the selection of Sponsors (Godparents). Prior to inviting a relative or close friend to assume the role of Sponsor it is important for you to understand what our Church teaches. Choosing Sponsors can be a sensitive issue but a greater understanding of the role of a Sponsor may help you in this matter. Sponsors play a very important role in your child's spiritual life and should serve as role models of the faith. Your child should be able to look to their Sponsors as an example of how the Church teaches us to live our Catholic faith. They should support you in your work to teach your child our Catholic faith. Additionally, in their role as Sponsor, they represent the larger Church community. As you see, being a Sponsor is not only an honor, it is a tremendous responsibility. The Church provides guidelines to help parents choose the best possible Sponsors for their children.

### **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEING A SPONSOR**

1. To present the child for baptism along with the parents
2. To assist the parents in their Christian responsibilities
3. To represent the community of faith in which the baptism is celebrated
4. To renew their own profession of the Christian faith
5. To help the child, by word and example, lead a Christian life and fulfill the obligations of baptism

### **SPONSOR ELIGIBILITY**

**Usually, there are two sponsors, a male (godfather) and a female (godmother); however, the Church does permit to have just one.**

1. There may be no more than two Sponsors.
2. If two Sponsors are chosen, they may not be of the same gender.

**Each Sponsor for baptism must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:**

1. Be at least sixteen (16) years of age.
2. Be a fully initiated Catholic (must have received all three sacraments of initiation - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist).
3. Be a practicing Catholic and a Catholic in good standing who leads a life of faith necessary to fulfill the responsibility of being a Sponsor. Each sponsor must:
  - a) Be a registered member of a parish in the area where he or she lives.
  - b) Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
  - c) Support the parish both financially and through service to the best of their ability.
  - d) If married, must be in a valid marriage - married according to the laws and regulations of the Catholic Church, which means that they were married by a Catholic priest or obtained an official permission for getting married outside of the Catholic Church.  
(PLEASE NOTE: Those Catholics who are invalidly married, as for example, before a justice of the peace, without proper dispensation before a minister of a Protestant church or before a rabbi, or those Catholics who are divorced and invalidly remarried do not qualify as a Sponsor at baptism even though they might fulfill other requirements listed above.)
  - e) If single, may not be cohabiting with someone without the benefit of marriage.
4. May not be the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.

## SPONSOR CERTIFICATE

- A Sponsor Certificate is a letter or a form of eligibility issued by the pastor that certifies that the person requesting a sponsor certificate is a registered member of the parish and is qualified to serve as a Sponsor according to sponsor eligibility guidelines.
- All sponsors must verify their eligibility to serve as a Sponsor.

### **If intended Sponsor is registered at St. Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church**

He or she must call St. Mary Parish Office at 724-548-7649 as soon as possible to verify his or her parish membership and Sponsor eligibility.

### **If intended Sponsor lives outside of our parish boundaries**

He or she must obtain a Sponsor Certificate from the parish in which he or she is registered and participates. To obtain the form, one must contact their parish office and request the Sponsor Certificate for baptism. Please advise Sponsors to make this request as soon as possible, at least 1 month in advance of the baptism, to allow a sufficient time to process the request.

- All Sponsor Certificates are due in the parish office the Monday prior to the baptism. The forms may be mailed to St. Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 101 West High Street, Kittanning, PA 16201 or may be dropped off at the Parish Center located at 348 North Water Street, Kittanning.

## CHRISTIAN WITNESS

If only one Catholic Sponsor is chosen, a Christian of other denomination (i.e. Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc.) may be chosen to be a witness to your child's baptism technically known as "Christian Witness", though most parents still commonly think of him or her and refer to him or her as "a Godparent".

- A baptized non-Catholic Christian may serve as a Christian Witness (witness to the baptism), but there must also be a Catholic Godparent. The baptismal certificate will denote (C.W.) – "Christian Witness".
- Christian Witness should understand the role and play an active and important part in supporting parents as they teach their child the Christian way of life.
- **Please note:** A non-practicing Catholic or a former Catholic who left the Catholic Faith and converted to another faith may not serve as a Christian Witness.
- A Christian Witness must provide either a proof of baptism or a letter from the Pastor of his or her church stating he or she is an active member of the church. Either form is due in the parish office the Monday prior to the baptism. It may be mailed to St. Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 101 West High Street, Kittanning, PA 16201 or dropped off at the Parish Center located at 348 North Water Street, Kittanning.