

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Ministries of Sponsor & Godparent

It is a very ancient custom of the Church that adults are not admitted to Baptism without Godparents, members of the Christian community who will assist the candidates at least on the final preparation for Baptism and after Baptism will help them persevere in the faith and in their lives as Christians.

[General Introduction 8 RCIA]

Two important **Ministries** of the RCIA are those of **Sponsor** and **Godparent**.

Sponsors

A **Sponsor** is one who accompanies a catechumen on the journey to initiation at Easter and Baptism (or in the case of a candidate, reception into full communion).

A **Sponsor** is a companion, guide, friend, supporter, confidante. They are a witness to the catechumen's or candidate's *moral character, faith and intention*. [RCIA 10]

Spouses or close family members are discouraged from being Sponsors. They already have a role in the person's faith formation.

A **Sponsor** must be:

- ◆ a fully initiated Catholic (ie one who has been Baptised, Confirmed and received Eucharist)
- ◆ a person of faith and prayer
- ◆ approved by the RCIA team and the parish priest for the role
- ◆ acceptable to the catechumen/candidate

A **Sponsor** should also be:

- ◆ a good listener
- ◆ a good communicator respectful of confidences
- ◆ able to relate well with the catechumen/candidate

- ◆ willing to share their own faith story.
- ◆ A **Sponsor** generally accompanies the catechumen/candidate to catechetical sessions.
- ◆ A **Sponsor** keeps regular contact with the catechumen/candidate and is available to them to talk over problems or doubts.
- ◆ A **Sponsor** is expected to be present at RCIA liturgical celebrations.
- ◆ A **Sponsor** liaises with the RCIA team.

A **Sponsor** does not need to know all the answers (who does?), but helps the catechumen/candidate in their search for truth.

A **Sponsor**, together with other parish members, introduces the catechumen/candidate to other members of the faith community, and to the apostolic works of the Church (eg St Vincent de Paul Society, Caritas, Missions, etc).

A **Sponsor** explains to the catechumen or candidate something of 'what Catholics do' and why – Sign of the Cross, genuflecting, rosary, etc.

A **Sponsor** gives witness to the catechumen/candidate's spiritual growth prior to the Rite of Election.

Sponsors are selected and formed prior to the Rite of Welcome.

GODPARENTS

The Ministry of Godparents is similar to that of Sponsor (and the qualities needed are the same), but where the Sponsor's role is limited, the Godparent's responsibility extends indefinitely.

Sponsors are often chosen as Godparents, but where this is not the case, it is usual for both Sponsors and Godparents to maintain a close relationship with the new Catholic.

The Godparent's role begins with the Rite of election where the catechumen is presented to the Bishop – usually the first Sunday in Lent.

The Godparent helps the catechumen prepare through Lent for initiation at Easter. He/she shows the catechumen how to practise the Gospel in personal and social life, sustain them in moments of hesitancy and anxiety and bears witness [RCIA 11]

The Godparent guides the neophyte's progress in the baptismal life [RCIA 11] and accompanies the new Catholic through Mystagogy (post Easter catechesis).

BENEFITS

The benefits of being a Sponsor or Godparent are huge, both personally and for the parish community.

Being a Sponsor or Godparent give opportunities for growth in understanding of faith and a deepening of spirituality. It is a challenge to re-think one's own faith commitment and relationship with God.

A parish is continually **renewed** by having new **Sponsors** each year.

