GUIDELINES FOR SPONSORS FOR BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION

The following guidelines are meant to assist the priest or deacon in assessing suitability for the role of sponsor (godparent) at Baptism or at Confirmation. These guidelines are based on the requirements for sponsors as delineated in canons 872 - 874 of the Code of Canon Law.

1. A person who is to be baptized or confirmed is to have a sponsor. While it has become a tradition to have two sponsors at Baptism, having only one sponsor is acceptable. No more than two sponsors are permitted, however, and the two sponsors may not be of the same sex.

2. A sponsor must have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the pastor or minister of the sacrament grants an exception for a lower age, provided there is a just cause.

3. A Catholic who has not already received the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist may not be a sponsor. Such a Catholic is to be encouraged to complete Christian Initiation at an appropriate time.

4. A priest or deacon may be a sponsor at Baptism provided he is not the minister of the sacrament. If a priest is to be a sponsor at Confirmation, it is understood that he will concelebrate the Mass. A member of an institute of consecrated life or of a society of apostolic life may be a sponsor.

5. A Catholic who has defected from the Catholic Church may not be a sponsor. A nonpracticing Catholic may be admitted as a sponsor only if the pastor or minister of the sacrament can determine that the person is in the process of returning to the regular practice of the faith.

6. With the permission of the archbishop, obtained through the Chancery Office, a substitute sponsor may be added to the sacramental register when, for example, the original sponsor has died or has left the Church by a formal act; however, the name of the original sponsor is not to be removed.

7. A suitable member of an Eastern Orthodox Church may be admitted as a sponsor, but only together with a Catholic sponsor, for a just cause, and as long as there is provision for the Catholic education of the person to be baptized. Similarly, a Catholic is not forbidden to be a sponsor in an Eastern Orthodox Church, if he or she is so invited.

8. A baptized non-Catholic may be admitted as a Christian witness at Baptism, but only together with a Catholic sponsor. Similarly, a Catholic may act as a Christian witness for a person being baptized in another ecclesial communion, but not as a sponsor.

9. A person who has defected from the Catholic Church may not be a Christian witness, nor may a non-baptized person serve in this capacity.

10. A parent is not to be the sponsor for his or her child. An adoptive parent is to be discouraged from exercising this function.