



St. Joseph Catholic Church
Petersburg, Virginia

Sponsor/Godparent FAQ

A GUIDEBOOK FOR SPONSORS AND GODPARENTS

REVISED 29 JULY 2026

Welcome to Sponsorship and Godparenting!

We're excited to walk with you on this journey of faith at Saint Joseph Catholic Church. As you prepare to guide a soul through their own Catholic faith journey, you'll grow spiritually, learn more about your Catholic faith, and experience fellowship, service, and joy.

What Is Sponsoring/Godparenting?

Godparents - "For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized - child or adult on the road of Christian life." - The Catechism (CCC 1255)

Sponsors - "Insofar as possible, there is to be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed; the sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament." - Canon 892

FAQs

1. What is required of me?

Requirements

In order to be a sponsor or Godparent, according to Church law a person must:

1. Be at least 16 years old (A pastor may grant an exception to the age requirement for a just cause)
2. Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist
3. Not be bound by a canonical penalty
4. Be leading a life of faith befitting the role to be undertaken (for example, regularly attending Sunday Mass; if married, be in a marriage recognized by the Catholic Church)
5. Not be a parent of the confirmand or person receiving Baptism/Confirmation.

2. What are the expectations/commitments?

This is a very unique and personal discovery. At a minimum you are standing with the person receiving their Sacraments and committing to accompany them in the Sacrament and on their faith journey. The rest is entirely unique because each relationship and journey in faith is unique. So, the best answer can be found in building relationship and determining together what you want it to look and feel like. The role of a sponsor/godparent is an honor and responsibility and can look very different for each situation so prayerfully consider and discern how the Lord will use this commitment to lead you, the person you are sponsoring and their family closer to Him.

Hebrews 10: 24-25 ²⁴ And let us consider how to spur one another to love and good works. ²⁵ Do not neglect to attend your assemblies, as some do, but rather encourage one another, especially since you can see the Day^[a] approaching.

3. Do I really have to sign an attestation form?

Yes. The Diocese of Richmond requires every godparent or sponsor to sign the **Godparent & Sponsor Attestation Form**. This signature is your personal testimony that you meet the Church's canonical requirements and that you are willing to accept this role.

4. Does a priest have to sign my form too?

Yes, **your own pastor or his delegate** must sign to *witness your signature*, not to verify your Catholic status.

5. What does “canonical penalty” mean?

A canonical penalty is a serious Church censure (e.g., excommunication) applied for grave offenses.

6. Can a stepparent serve as a godparent or sponsor?

No. The Church distinguishes between the role of parent and godparent.

“A stepparent may not serve as a godparent or sponsor.”

7. What's the difference between a godparent and a sponsor?

A **godparent** accompanies someone receiving Baptism; a **sponsor** accompanies someone already baptized who is receiving Confirmation. Both must meet the same eligibility requirements.

8. What if I'm missing a sacrament (like Confirmation)?

You will need to complete your own initiation first. We can help you! You should not serve as a sponsor until your Christian initiation has been completed.

9. What if my marriage isn't recognized by the Church?

An irregular marriage is an obstacle, but not a permanent barrier. Step 1 is to schedule a meeting with Father and we will assist you in what is needed to complete your marriage Sacrament. Once this is completed and you meet all the requirements you may then qualify as a sponsor.

10. How can I be restored to full eligibility if I'm currently not qualified?

Start with:

- a. Renewing Mass attendance-start attending every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation at a minimum
- b. Meet with Father to begin preparation to receiving missing Sacraments (Church recognized Marriage, Confirmation, etc.)
- c. Seek the Lord's Mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Resources:

[Attestation Form](#)

[OCIA FAQ](#)

[The Catechism](#)

[The Catholic Canon](#)