

Dear Godparents,

Choosing a Godparent is serious business – serving as a Godparent is something that requires thought. Being asked to serve as a Godparent is a great honor, but at the same time, it is a very serious matter. Being chosen to be a Godparent says something very important about how you are perceived and valued by the parents of this child. Before you rush into things, however, pray and think over the obligations that will be placed on you as a Godparent. Are you willing to accept them? Do you have the time? Do you have the faith to live up to this sacred calling? The calling to serve as a Godparent is a sacred calling. You were asked by the parents of this child, but your calling really stems from God. God is the one calling you to serve as a Godparent. Often we think that serving as a Godparent is an honorific role. Once the baptism is over, you go home and return to your business. Sometimes we think that a Godparent is there ‘just in case’ to help fill in for parents in their absence. Neither of these ideas is true.

Godparents are called to serve as a second set of parents for this child. You will stand next to the Baptismal font with this child’s parents and profess your faith and commit yourself to raising this child in our faith. Godparents are to be examples of faith and belief in the life of this child. Godparents are to be models of Christian charity and faithful dedication to Christ and the Church. From the moment of this child’s Baptism, you are set before him or her as an example of faith and pillar of spiritual support and encouragement.

You should reflect and ask yourself: Do I believe in Jesus Christ and His Church? Do I live my faith to the best of my ability? How will I be a part of his or her life? Does my life reflect my faith – namely, am I active in charity; do I faithfully participate in the Mass on Sundays and Holy Days? Am I an active and faithful Catholic who can show my Godchild what it means to love the Lord and live in His Church?

You will have to obtain a letter from your pastor attesting to these facts. If you are an active and faithful Catholic this should be no problem at all. If you anticipate some difficulty, perhaps you should question your ability to honestly serve as a Godparent – a living model of faith for this child.

If you have asked yourself these questions, if you have prayed and reflected on your duties, do not be afraid. The calling to serve as a Godparent is a beautiful and life-building call. The task is important and challenging, but also grace-filled and rewarding.

Here are a few suggestions to help you to be the best Godparent to this child that you can be:

Preparation

Prepare with the parents of this child. Baptism preparation classes are not just for parents – you are truly becoming a second parent to this child! Your willingness to prepare with the parents, to learn with the parents, and to pray with the parents says a great deal about you and your commitment to the faith. If you live farther away, check in your own parish about Baptism preparation and inquire about attending a session there – they should welcome you with open arms.

The Day of the Baptism

The priest or deacon begins the ritual of Baptism by asking the parents and godparents a series of questions: “Parents, you have asked to have your children baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

Godparents, are you ready to help these parents in their duty as Christian mothers and fathers?” By answering “We are” you confirm your role as a model of faith for this child. Even more powerfully, you will assist in placing the white garment on the child as a symbol of their new purity and identity as a child of God. You will assist in lighting their baptismal candle and the priest or deacon will say: “Parents and Godparents, this light has been entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly.” Yours is a role that lasts long after the Baptismal liturgy is over. Your task begins today and lasts a lifetime.

Marking the Baptismal Day

People are pretty good about remembering anniversaries and birthdays, but as a Godparent you are tasked, as well, with remembering the anniversary of this child’s baptism. It is on this date that they were marked as a child of God and set aside for salvation. It is on this date that they can reflect on the great promise of eternal life that is offered to those who are faithful to the Lord. Make a photo album of this day to share with them when they are old enough. Send a card on this date reminding them that you are praying for them. Better yet, get together on this day, take out that baptismal candle and light it saying a prayer that that light might continue to grow brighter in their heart.

Prayer

Keep your Godchild in your prayers. The greatest gift you can give is the knowledge that you are praying for your Godchild and walking with her/him every step of his/her life. Ask your Godchild to accompany you to Mass on some Sundays and Holy Days – time spent with the Lord is never wasted time.

Walk the Way of Faith

When your Godchild is still young introduce him/her to children’s prayers and a children’s copy of the Bible. As she/he grows, older attend First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. It is beautiful custom in some countries to choose your godparent as your

Confirmation sponsor. Maintain your relationship by being present at the major events of your Godchild's life, and be sure to remind him/her of the role God wants to play in each major event. Your prayers and example will help your Godchild to hear the voice of the Lord calling to her/him in life.

As a Godparent you have a duty to accompany this child in good times and in bad. You may be faced with the difficult task of challenging and confronting your Godchild's parents if they begin to slip in their practice of the faith (for example, if they stop attending Mass or begin to be more faithful to their child's sports team than they are to God.) You have the duty of accompanying your Godchild through his/her teenage years. You have the duty to discuss the vocations of marriage, priesthood, and religious life. You have the duty to assist them with the challenge of living a chaste relationship with their girl or boyfriend. None of these duties are easy. They become more instinctive and natural for you as you practice your own faith and draw grace from the sacraments.

If you have been lukewarm in your practice of the faith before now, renew your commitment to God and the Church today. Attend Mass and make sure to introduce yourself to the priest or deacon. Begin contributing to the life of the parish with your time and your resources. If you have not been as committed as you should have, but are committed to doing this, talk to your parish Priest. God is the God of second chances. Perhaps the invitation to be a Godparent is your personal invitation from God to become more faithful to the practice of your faith. God is not looking to exclude you, but to help each one of us realize that God wants us to succeed and that success is offered through the way of life that keeps us grounded in God's love.

Remember above all, being a Godparent is more than standing up for a few minutes at a Baptism liturgy; it is the beginning of a lifetime of faith, inspiration, and care. But don't worry, with God's help, you will be a huge success.