

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
June 2, 2013
Spiritual Ponderings
Special Ministries in the Church

Recently, I have been doing a lot of thinking about all the different ministries I perform as a priest and I found myself realizing that the ministry that I have probably done the worst at is not a ministry I have because I am a priest. It is a ministry that was actually entrusted to me not by mother Church but by friends. This important ministry is that of being a godparent. Having realized that I have not really been the type of Godparent I wanted to be when I said “yes” to this important ministry led me to thinking about ways that I could be a better Godparent for my Goddaughter. I decided for the month of June that I would look at and ponder what it means to be a Godparent and other similar ministries. Today I would like to reflect on that of the ministry of a Confirmation Sponsor. Today we will reflect on what to look for in a Confirmation Sponsor and next week we will offer some suggestions of what a Confirmation sponsor may do.

What should one look for in a Confirmation Sponsor?

Seeing that a Confirmation Sponsor is kind of like a spiritual coach I think it is important to think about getting the best coach possible.

1. When choosing a Sponsor for yourself, it is important to choose a person who is grounded in the fundamentals of the Catholic Faith. It would not make much sense for you to choose a person who has never played baseball before to become your hitting instructor and in much the same way it makes very little sense to choose someone who does not know his or her faith and does not practice is or her faith to be your sponsor.
2. Does the person you are considering be your sponsor attends Sunday Mass every week even when on vacation? Once again you would not choose a person to be your coach if he or she was not going to show up for the games.
3. Does the person you are considering celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis? Part of our faith is admitting our sinfulness and our need for God’s grace. Going to Confession is sometimes a hard thing for us to do but once again you would not want for a coach someone who simply skips the hard physical exercises and so your spiritual coach should be one that does not avoid the hard spiritual things.
4. Make sure your sponsor is a person of prayer. Faith above all is a personal relationship with God. We call communicating with God prayer and so it important that your sponsor be able to teach you the signs of God’s presence much like a third base coach helps relay the manager’s will to the runner through relaying of signs. It is helpful to have a spiritual coach that knows the signs of God’s presence and can teach you how to communicate effectively with him.
5. Make sure your sponsor is proud to be a Catholic. Is he or she willing to show their pride by the way they dress or through praying in public? You would not hire a coach who would not wear the team uniform.
6. Is the person you are considering to be your sponsor a person who does some sort of service work to help those who are less fortunate? By helping those in need your potential sponsor shows him or herself to be a real team player much like the coach who takes the extra time to play catch with a player who needs a little more practice.
7. Can your potential sponsor help you understand the history of the ball game? It would be hard to choose someone as a coach if they did not know who Jackie Robinson, Babe Ruth or Mickey Mantle was. Does your potential sponsor know the history of his or her faith or have some favorite saints?
8. Is your potential sponsor still trying to improve him or herself? It is always important for coaches as well as athletes to continue to learn more and more about the game. Someone truly serious about his or her faith knows that faith is a lifelong process. Is your potential sponsor a fan of his or her faith? Does he or she cherish the opportunities to pray and serve others? Once again you would not want someone to be your coach if they no longer liked the game.
9. Would your potential sponsor take the time to make sure you would succeed? A coach that is too busy too coach is not a coach at all. Make sure to ask you sponsor to take time to meet with you and talk about your faith.

10. Is your potential sponsor someone who will help you know wrong from right and help you live a moral life? You can't play the game of baseball without rules. Is your potential sponsor ready to push you to be your best? If a coach is unwilling to push you to be your best then he or she is not much of a coach. You will never learn to hit better if your coach only throws the ball underhanded to you.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
June 9, 2013
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Special Ministries in the Church

Last week we looked at qualities of a good Confirmation Sponsor so this week, I would like to offer some suggestions of what a Confirmation Sponsor can do with the person he or she is sponsoring. I would like to continue the sports image of a baseball player and his coach.

Suggestions of What One Should Do as A Confirmation Sponsor. This particular list was designed to tell Confirmation candidates what they should do with a Confirmation Sponsor but I think it works both ways.

1. The first thing you should do with your candidate is to talk to your sponsor about your faith life and how you can grow in your faith. Imagine you and your sponsor are setting up a training routine so that you can grow in your faith.
2. The second thing you should do is practice your faith together from time to time. Go to Mass together, pray together, and talk about your faith. As a baseball player gets better by playing catch with someone so practicing your faith with someone helps you grow also.
3. Celebrate your faith together. Talk about your God given talents and how you can best use them for the good of the Church and the world. A ball player must always hone his or her skills & cheer others on.
4. Repent together. We all know that we make mistakes and so talking with your sponsor about your sins and how you can avoid them in the future is a good idea. Think of it as watching game film with your coach in order to improve.
5. Learn together. Take some time to learn about the Church and all it teaches. A good athlete never stops learning. He or she, with his or her coach, takes the time to learn more about the game.
6. Support one another. Being a Catholic is not an easy choice. Sometimes it means being rejected by others and sometimes it means doing without. Catholics therefore need to support each other.
7. Encourage one another. No one is perfect and so we need people to encourage us to keep trying even if we swing and miss. In much the same way we need to encourage others including our sponsor.
8. Tour different churches and shrines with your sponsor. It might be a good idea if you and your sponsor took the time to explore different churches and shrines. Just as taking in a ballgame at a different stadium can help you grow in your appreciation of the game so can visiting different churches and shrines and talking about your experience.
9. Celebrate your milestones with your sponsor. Go out with your sponsor on the day of your baptism or on another special day significant to your faith development. Think of you and your coach celebrating your call up to the majors or your first hit.
10. Perform some sort of service project together. A big part of what it means to be a Catholic is answering Jesus' call to serve the less fortunate. Choose a service activity to do together like working at a soup kitchen or helping some elderly person with their yard for example. Your relationship with your sponsor will grow to be like that of a pitcher and catcher and you will be more likely to go to your sponsor with questions of faith.

11. Take the time to go the extra mile especially after you are confirmed and meet with your sponsor either weekly or once a month to talk about your faith. You will be like the player who always signs up for extra batting practice and you will show others how serious you take your faith.

12. Finally take the time to talk to your sponsor about how to avoid sin because just as a fielder wants to avoid errors while playing defense we too want to avoid sin because it separates us from God.

Prayer for those about to be Confirmed

Heavenly Father, who through the teaching of your Son Jesus Christ did prepare your disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Please make ready, I pray the hearts and minds of all those who will receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Holy Orders especially N._____. May their minds and hearts be strengthened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and may they ever be assured of the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling in them. We ask this through Christ our Lord Amen

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

June 16, 2013

Spiritual Ponderings

Special Ministries in the Church

For today's special ministry, I would like to look at the special ministry in the Church of that of Godparent. As I mentioned earlier this month, I feel extremely blest to be a godparent but at the same time that I have not really been a good one and partly because I did not really know what a Godparent does once the ceremony is over. After doing some research here is what I found.

What is the Role of a Godparent?

Let us take a moment to explore the role of Godparents. The mission of the Godparents is that they are to be faithful role models for children who are not their own. Since a child is being welcomed into the Catholic faith the Church requires that at least one godparent be a Catholic who has received the Sacrament of Confirmation. A person who accepts the role of a Catholic Godparent without being Catholic is called a "Christian Witness."

A Godparent therefore should be a Catholic who has not only received the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation but in addition they should be living a life that is consistent with the Catholic faith that your child is to be baptized in. A Godparent should be someone who is comfortable with their Catholic Identity and willing to support parents in raising the child up in the Catholic faith. The following are some things to consider in choosing Godparents.

Christian Responsibilities of a Godparent

1. Pray for your godchild regularly
2. Set an example of Christian living (including going to Mass every Sunday)
3. Help him/her to grow in the faith of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
4. Give every encouragement to follow Christ and fight against evil

Questions to ask yourself before agreeing to be a Godparent

1. Are your views on religion, spirituality and morality similar to the child's parents? If they are, all well and good. If not, this need not be an obstacle: the parents may have chosen you because your views are different. But make sure the parents know your views and are happy with them before you decide to accept. There is a surprising number of fantastic Godparents out there who are non-Christian but still bring up their Godchildren within the spirit of the Christian values.
2. Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents? Being a Godparent involves developing a relationship with the child and helping the parents in his/her spiritual upbringing. There are many

different ways of carrying out your duties as Godparent, but one of the most important things to do is to build a relationship with your Godchild. Make time to see your godchild as regularly as you can. Try to give him or her one-to-one attention: find out what makes them tick, what makes them happy or sad. Spending time with your godchild can be very rewarding (for you both). Do you have an interest in the child's well-being?

3. If you really cannot tolerate children maybe you should say so now rather than agreeing and then disappointing later. But bear in mind that many Godparents find they only really begin to establish a relationship with their Godchild when he/she reaches teenage or beyond.

Suggestions

1. Take time to get to know your Godchild
2. Make sure to give them a religious gift at Christmas and Easter
3. Write them a card or take them out to lunch on their baptism anniversary
4. Remind them that you are there to help them grow in their faith
5. As they get older challenge them to grow in their faith. Maybe you could do a joint service project together.
6. Pray for them every day
7. Talk to them about the Sunday readings
8. Help them to become aware of God in nature and other people
9. Teach them different prayers
10. Support their parents in their efforts to teach the faith.

Prayer for Those Who Are To Be Baptized

Lord God, our heavenly Father, we thank you for your great goodness in calling us to know you and to put our trust in you. Please bless us and our children as prepare for their baptisms. Increase our knowledge of you and strengthen our faith in you. Give your Holy Spirit to our children so that they may reject Satan and all his empty promises and choose you who are LOVE. May we rejoice always in the fact that Baptism removes Original Sin and opens the Gates of Heaven to us and to our love ones. May we celebrate always in the knowledge that through Baptism we are made Your Sons and Daughters. May we always remember that through Baptism we have died with Christ and have risen to new life. May we always trust that nothing will separate us from the love of your Son. May we all be heirs to everlasting salvation. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, now and forever. Amen.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

June 23, 2013

Spiritual Ponderings

Special Ministries in the Church

We have been spending the month of June reflecting on different ministries in the Church such as Confirmation sponsor and godparents. Today I would like to focus on two positions which may or may not be consider ministries in the Church. I would like to think that if these two roles were performed correctly, they could be seen as a ministry. These two roles are best man and maid/matron of honor.

In an Article in the July 2011 edition of The Priest titled "Why Go On A Honey Moon? ... And Other Fascinating Wedding Customs" Victor Parachin explains the origins of the role of best man and maid of honor. He explains: **"Why does a bride have bridesmaids? Evil spirits are to blame, again. In ancient times, a bride chose her bridesmaids to be look-alikes. The job of each bridesmaid was to resemble, as closely as possible, the bride. This strategy was designed to confuse evil spirits who, overcome with jealousy, would try to ruin the bride's happiness. Based on that view, ancients believed if the bride surrounded herself with look-alikes, the demons would be confused and unable to pick out the bride."** Victor goes on and gives another possible reason: **"Another explanation for bridesmaids comes from Roman times. Because Roman civil law called for a marriage to have 10 witnesses, the custom of bridesmaids and groomsmen emerged. In addition, bridesmaids and groomsmen could be called upon to defend a betrothed couple from attack. It was not unusual for a rival suitor and his companions to show up at a wedding to carry off the bride."**

In both scenarios it is important to realize that the best-man, maid of honor and the rest of the wedding party was there to protect the groom and bride from evil. Sadly though it seems that the role of the best man and maid of honor is to lead the groom and bride into “one last” evening of debauchery. This is definitely how the role is played out on television and movies. If the best man and maid of honor were to be true friends of the groom and bride they would help bride and groom to save themselves so that the bride and groom could give themselves to each other in the Sacrament of Marriage without any pre-marital sexual baggage. If you are given the honor of being the best man or the maid of honor, I would like to propose the following ten things that you can do to treat your honored position as a ministry.

10 Things Maids of Honor and Best Men can do to

1. Pray for the couple to be. We all know that married life is not easy and so asking God to help your friends as they prepare for marriage is easily the most important thing you can do.
2. Do not lead them into temptation. While society likes to pretend that what happens before the marriage has no effect on the marriage especially at events like bachelor and bachelorette parties, we know in reality that is not true. It is important therefore to always encourage everyone to look at the opposite sex as people and not objects. I suggest camping trips or sporting events as great party ideas
3. Remind them that that they should be “free” to enter into this marriage which means that they should not be looking for the other person to “complete them.” God calls two independent people into marriage not two dependent people who will enable each other.
4. Help them with the details of the wedding but remind them above all that the wedding does not have to be perfect for them to have a good and happy marriage.
5. Encourage them to forgive wrong doings not only of their future spouse but of family members. The practice of forgiving others now will help them forgive their spouses later.
6. Help them to trust in God’s plan for them. As they plan for the wedding they can get caught up with planning their lives and leave no room for what God may want of them.
7. Offer them a true friend. Let them know that they can come to you and talk to you about anything because you want what is best for them.
8. Help them keep things in the proper perspective and remind them of how participating in the liturgy is more important than the photographs.
9. Encourage others to pray for them.
10. Be with them past the wedding day.

Prayer for an Engaged Couple

Heavenly Father, we praise You for your wisdom in arranging that man should not be alone but should unite himself to another to form a living cell or unit, bringing forth new members for your kingdom. Bless this couple who have manifested their intention to unite in marriage in the future. Keep them close to You and to one another, deepen their spirit of prayer and love, and lead them to receive the Sacrament of Marriage with joy and happiness. We ask this in the Name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
June 30, 2013
Spiritual Ponderings
Special Ministries in the Church

On this last Sunday of June let us take a closer look at the role of liturgical ministers in the Church and how we can perform these ministries with our whole heart. For the definition of these ministries I will be quoting Cardinal Wuerl’s book *The Mass: The Glory, The Mystery, The Tradition* and those quotes will be in bold. Following each definition I will give three suggestions on how this particular minister could be at his or her best.

Lectors: A lector is someone who may proclaim the first and second reading in the Liturgy of the Word.

3 Tips for Lectors:

1. Come prepared to proclaim and not just read. What I mean by that is that lectors should take the time to read out loud the Scripture Readings and prayers they are to proclaim at a particular liturgy.
2. Come ahead of time and don't just arrive at the last moment. This not only allows you time to pray but also allows those preparing the liturgy to know that you are there and that allows them to pray.
3. Come dressed not to be a distraction but to show the importance of the ministry that you are about to perform.

Cantor: A cantor may lead the congregation in parts of the Mass that are chanted or sung—for example, the Responsorial Psalm.

3 Tips for Cantors:

1. Practice
2. Remember that it is not about how well you sing but how well you lead the congregation in song.
3. Remember that the Responsorial Psalm would be the same song that Jesus sang as He went to synagogue and temple.

Altar Servers/Acolytes: Altar Servers, or acolytes are children, youth, or adults who assist with various parts of the Mass: for example, lighting and carrying candles, bearing a processional cross, bringing the gift of bread and wine to the altar, holding the ritual books, and ringing bells at appropriate times.

3 tips for Altar Servers/Acolytes

1. Arrive early and make sure you are vested appropriately.
2. Remember that it is a privilege to be able to serve at God's altar.
3. Remember that people can see you even when the focus on the Mass is not on you so please sit or stand silently and do not pick your nose.

Extraordinary/Eucharistic Ministers: Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are members of the Church specially trained and authorized, who help the priest distribute the Eucharist, either at Mass or in visits to shut-ins.

3 Tips for Extraordinary Ministers:

1. Take time to ponder the great mystery that you are holding God in your hand.
2. Make eye contact with each individual and clearly pronounce clearly your words.
3. Make sure to use the whole purificator when wiping the chalice

Ushers: Ushers greet worshipers, show them to a seat collect the congregation's contribution at the offertory, keep and orderly queue for Holy Communion, and carry out other tasks as directed by their pastor.

3 Tips of Ushers

1. Smile
2. Say please and thank you
3. Remember that you will be the person they remember the most. If you are polite then everyone is polite at the parish. If you are rude then everyone at the parish is rude.

Choir: The Choir, musicians, and soloists glorify God by performing sacred music, composed specifically for worship.

3 Tips for Choir

1. Remember it is about leading the congregation in song.
2. Practice, Practice, Practice
3. Invite others to join

The following is from the USSCCB website encouraging appropriate dress at Church.

Appropriate Dress For Liturgical Ministers:

Women

- Professional/modest attire
- Dress pants, no jeans or shorts
- No halter or tube tops
- No sleeveless, low-cut or spaghetti straps –it is suggested that a sweater or jacket is worn over sleeveless blouses while ministering the Eucharist

Men

- Collared shirt, jacket or sweater, tie is preferred
- Dress pants, no jeans or shorts
- Closed shoes and socks, no athletic shoes or sandals

ALL

- Please no athletic shoes, flip flops, etc.
- No jeans, shorts or sweat pants
- No sweatshirts, t-shirts or tank-tops

