

PREPARING FOR BAPTISM



INFORMATION FOR GODPARENTS

So you've been asked to
be a godparent.

Congratulations!



This probably makes you feel great, but you may be wondering what it involves. There will be things for you to do and say in Church at the celebration of Baptism, and more for you to do as the years go by. This little leaflet hopes to explain some of these to help you in taking on this important role with enthusiasm.

WHAT IS A GODPARENT?

Being a godparent is one of the least understood jobs in the life of the Church. There are many reasons why someone is chosen as a godparent: sometimes it is to honour family connections or friendship; sometimes parents look for responsible people “just-in-case”. It is not often that people have a clear sense of what a godparent should “do” for the child, other than standing with them by the font on the day of baptism. But Godparents have a vital role to play, both in the celebration of Baptism and (more importantly) in all the years that follow.

Sign and Example

The only qualification needed for being a godparent or Christian witness is that you are a baptised (christened) adult and believe in Jesus Christ – putting that belief into action in the way you live your life. This is because your first and most important role is to be a sign or witness to the child: perhaps a better word is **example**. Your life is to show the child what it is to be someone who follows Jesus – to be a good example for them.

For this reason, being invited to stand as a godparent should invite you to look at your own lifestyle and habits – will the child see an inspiring example in you? You may want to talk to the priest or minister of your own Church about this – Catholics should certainly consider celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) as a preparation for being a godparent.

A Catholic godparent will also be expected to give a very specific example of membership of the Catholic Church. If you do not take part much in the life of the Church in your own parish, you may have to give this some thought, since you will be promising to help the parents introduce their child to that way of life.

You will also take an interest in the child’s spiritual development. As a godparent, it is very suitable for you to give gifts which help a child’s praying as they grow up, you establish a very special relationship with the child: remember that your job spec – “godparent” includes the word “God”!

Helper and Supporter

As a godparent, you promise to help the parents of the child. This help will take many forms – it is about support, encouragement, friendship and more – it may even include the “just in case” scenario mentioned earlier. You will have to be someone who plans to be close to the parents and the child for many years to come. Ask yourself how far you would be prepared to go to help and support this family. Talk with the parents about what their expectations of you are.

Friend and Companion

Being a godparent is a job for life, which will change as the years go by. At the beginning, the emphasis will be on supporting the parents of the child. But as he or she grows older, your role will change: you should become more available to the child - becoming known as a friend they can trust, can take problems to, where they can always find a listening ear. Promising to be a godparent isn't just about a baby by the font: it is also about your godson or goddaughter's first day at school, their teenage angst, finding a job, getting married and so on...

WHAT DO WE DO IN CHURCH?

In the celebration of Baptism your role is very straightforward. You will stand and sit next to the parents, as a sign that you are supporting and helping them even now.

In the Baptism Service, you will stand with the parents to make the "**Baptismal Promises**" - good, loud confident responses are better than apologetic mumbles! The whole text of these promises is printed below:

THE BAPTISMAL PROMISES

Priest: Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

Parents and Godparents: *I do.*

Priest: Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

Parents and Godparents: *I do.*

Priest: Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

Parents and Godparents: *I do.*

Priest: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

Parents and Godparents: *I do.*

Priest: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

Parents and Godparents: *I do.*

Priest: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

Parents and Godparents: *I do.*



Other than this, all you have to do in the ceremony is listen and take part. Your real work comes later...

WHAT DO WE DO AFTER BAPTISM?

Once the ceremony is ended, your work begins! There are a lot of ideas for things to do after Baptism.

As a godparent, you should help to mark important events in the child's life such as birthdays and the anniversary of their baptism— normally this is with a small gift. When the time comes for **Confirmation and First Communion**, you should be around to support the parents in all the preparations and celebrations. It would be wonderful to mark other milestones—such as transitions to and from schools, recovery after illnesses, achievements and so on.

It is always worth remembering that as a **godparent** you have a responsibility to represent God and the Church to your godson or goddaughter—this may help you decide on the type of gifts you can give to them as they grow. You should be on hand to introduce children to prayers, to Sunday Mass, to talking about God—all according to the age and ability of the child.

Good luck! May God bless you for the responsibility you take on, and help you to fulfil it throughout the years to come.



GUARDIAN ANGELS PARISH
Capuchin Franciscan Friars