

SPONSORS

Canonical Guidelines for Sponsors

Sponsors represent in a personal way the witness and support of the parish community. Sponsors should be mature persons of faith who are highly convinced that their faith makes a difference in their lives. Opportunities for catechesis should be offered to the sponsors in order to assist them in fully understanding their role in the ongoing formation of the candidate. The sponsor should participate with the candidate in his/her preparation, as well as the celebration.

Requirements for Sponsors

Canon 893, §1. To perform the function of sponsor, a person must fulfill the conditions mentioned in canon 874.

§ 2. It is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism.

Canon 874, §1: To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

- 1° be designated by the one to be baptized (confirmed), by the parents or the person who takes their place or, in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
- 2° have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause
- 3° be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on (e.g. if married, marriage must be recognized by the Catholic Church as valid);
- 4° not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- 5° not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized (confirmed).

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Sponsor

The sponsor, representing the witness, support and prayers of the entire Church, acts as a spiritual companion with the candidate. The sponsor should be a mature person of faith capable of meeting regularly with the candidate. The person should be comfortable conversing, praying, questioning or offering insights with the candidate.

It is recommended that a sponsor be chosen by the candidate early in the preparation process. When a candidate's baptismal godparent is available, capable, and willing to perform the role as Confirmation sponsor, "it is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function at Baptism" (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 893). This ministry can be fulfilled by:

- Accompanying the candidate to candidate/sponsor sessions, retreats or liturgical celebrations
- introducing the candidate to the dimension of service in the life of the community, and supporting him/her in some form of service
- reflecting on scripture and other background reading with the candidate
- assisting the candidate in the discernment process to know whether he/she is called at this time to make the Confirmation commitment
- sharing his/her own faith-story with the candidate
- being a "role model" of witness and example to a Catholic Christian lifestyle
- presenting the candidate for the sacramental anointing, attesting to the candidate's willingness and readiness to celebrate the sacrament

Once the youth has been fully initiated, the sponsor's task is one of follow-up, which is as important in many ways as all the efforts during the preparation period. However, it is less structured and informal. The sponsor could:

- inquire periodically with the confirmed person's efforts, challenges and success in living as a more active witness for Christ
- offer suggestions and assistance in helping the newly confirmed to become an active member of the Church community