

The Role of Godparents.

Congratulations you have been chosen to be a godparent. From its very title you can see that this role is connected with "**God**" and therefore belongs primarily to the realm of the spiritual and the holy. It is not a reward for past deeds, and certainly not connected with civil guardianship or future care of the child. Your new role is a sacred responsibility, entrusted to you "**now**" to participate and share in your new godchild's Christian life and education.

What a privilege! Full of potential and yet somewhat daunting! You have been chosen from the countless family members and friends the parents of this child have, to share in this most intimate, sacred and special way their primary parental responsibility of bringing their child up in the Christian faith and "**to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us**" (*Rite of Baptism*)

So what then is your role? Let's look at the questions you will be asked during the celebration of baptism. They are the key to your role and your responsibility!

- ***"Dear parents and godparents: you have come here to present these children for Baptism. By water and the Holy Spirit they are to receive the gift of new life from God, who is love."***
- ***"And God-parents are you ready to help the parents of these children in their duty as Christian parents."***

Presumably, after due reflection and prayer you will be ready to answer "**Yes**" to both these questions. If you have reservations then it might best to consider if you are the best candidate! To ensure this the Church clearly sets out the criteria for this sacred role:

- ***he/she is to be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents, or by the pastor and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling the function;***
- ***has completed the sixteenth year*** (though the bishop or pastor can establish a different age for a just cause);
- ***has received all three sacraments of initiation (Baptism Eucharist and Confirmation) and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;***
- ***is not bound by any canonical penalty;***
- ***is not the father or mother of the one to be baptized.***

In other words, your role is to assist the parents in guiding their child to know God and to belong to his Church in the fullest way possible. As a Christian and now as a godparent, allow the liturgy of baptism to speak directly to you, not just about your new role but also as fellow traveler along the road of faith. Pay special attention to the forms and symbols used: **the water** that wash away sin and restores us to new life in Christ, that new life signified in *the white garment*, **the oil of chrism** that brings both healing and strength and sets us apart for the work of the Kingdom and of course the **lighted candle** symbolizing that Christ and his Gospel has become in the words of the psalm a "*light for our feet*", guiding us along the road of faith. This is why, at its very heart, your relationship with your new godchild is a "**spiritual**" one.

Of course as with any special relationship the affection that underpins it can be demonstrated in practical and giving ways. Over the next few years try some of the following ways to nurture and develop this spiritual relationship:

- Keep a note of the date of the Baptism and on each anniversary celebrate the day with a visit, a card, an appropriate gift (*such as a bible, religious books/goods,*) or a phone call.
- As you godchild grows in his/her knowledge of the Christian faith try to be present to encourage and share your own Christian faith and values. Send assurances of prayers and blessings to your godchild. Always speak well of the gift of our Christian faith and the need for regular prayer and worship of God.
- Mark each sacramental milestone in the life of your godchild with a special card or appropriate gift. Try to be present for his/her reception of First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation.
- Be supportive of your godchild's parents in their role as Christian parents and primary educators of their child.
- Use this wonderful opportunity to review your own faith life and practice. Become a model of Christian living for your godchild through the practice of daily prayer, weekly attendance at Mass and an active and full participation in the life of your own parish. When the initial delight and pride of your choice as godparents has evaporated you still remain in this sacred responsibility, a responsibility you undertook before God and his Church, in response to that invitation. Try to remain faithful to that invitation and active in the life of your godchild. It is after the Baptism ceremony that your real work begins!
- Remember always, that it is only by living a full Christian life that you both will experience the great and joyful potential this relationship has to offer.

Congratulations once more and may God bless you and your new godchild.