

Requirements of Baptismal Sponsors



Can a Catholic ever be a "Christian Witness?"

No. The Catholic must meet all the requirements for Catholics, even if the other godparent is Catholic. For example, the parents have, with difficulty, decided on one sponsor who is Catholic and meets all the requirements. The second sponsor is "hard to find," and may be a Catholic who never was confirmed, or someone who has left the Church. In these cases, the Catholic cannot stand as the "Christian witness," i.e., someone who has left the Church cannot sponsor a person into the Church. A Catholic who has left the Church is still considered as a Catholic under the penalty of excommunication. (Such a person is no longer bound by the canonical form of marriage, however.)

Requirements of Sponsors

There may be ONE or TWO sponsors. When there are TWO sponsors, one is male (godfather) and the other female (godmother). One sponsor must be Catholic.

Requirements for the Catholic

- at least sixteen years old and
- baptized and confirmed and received the Eucharist
- living an upright life
- no penalties (e.g., left the Church, etc.). Therefore, a Catholic who has left the Catholic Church cannot be a sponsor, and cannot be a "Christian witness" if they join another Christian communion.
- cannot be either parent
- Age exception:
 - The pastor or the minister of baptism may admit a Catholic who is younger than sixteen.
 - In this case, the Catholic who is younger than 16 must meet requirements above (i.e., full initiation, etc.).
- "Christian Witness"
 - baptized non-Catholic with Catholic sponsor
 - The other sponsor may be a baptized Christian of a different faith. This person is a "Christian witness" (and not a "sponsor").
 - The other witness with a Catholic sponsor may never be non-baptized. For example, Jewish or Muslim godparents are not permitted by universal church law.

Requirements for the Christian Witness:

- at least sixteen years old
- a validly baptized Christian
- living an upright life
- cannot be either parent
- cannot be a Catholic who has left the Church.
- The notation Christian witness is placed under the name of the non-Catholic Christian witness in the baptismal register.
- From the 1983 Code of Canon Law Canon 874, 1: To be admitted to the role of sponsors, a person must:
 - be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the one who takes their place or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister and is to have the qualifications and intention of performing this role.
 - have completed their sixteenth year, unless a different age has been established by the diocesan bishop or it seems to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for a just cause;
 - be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
 - not be bound by a canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.
 - not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized.