

PREPARING TO BE A SPONSOR AT A BAPTISM

"In Him was life and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4)

The Sponsor at Baptism:

Let us look at what the sponsor does during the sacrament of Baptism. We must remember that the Sponsor is the representative of the infant which is being admitted into the Church of Christ. The Sponsor speaks for the infant and vows that he/she will make certain that the child will grow learning and living the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. **The Sponsor not only accepts the sacred responsibility of guiding the child into the understanding and practice of the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but also vows that he/she will set a good example for the child to follow.**

In behalf of the infant, the sponsor makes the renunciation of the Devil. He/she promises that the child will grow later to renounce the Devil, both in word and in deed and to repudiate his tempting influence.

The Sponsor is called upon to answer questions put to him/her by the Priest. The same question is asked three times and three times the sponsor must reply. "Do you renounce Satan, and all his angels, and all his works, and all his service, and all his pride".

The Sponsor replies: " I Do" three times.

Then the Priest will ask the Sponsor again three times: "Have you renounced Satan?" The Sponsor again replies: "I Have".

The sponsor then turns and faces the Sanctuary and responds to the second series of the questions: "Do you unite thyself unto Christ?" Sponsor replies "I Do". "Have you united yourself unto Christ?" Sponsor: "I Have". Both questions are asked three times. Then the Priest continues with: "Do you believe in Him?" The Sponsor replies: "I believe in Him as my King and as my God."

Then the Sponsor recites a confession of Faith, the Nicene Creed. It is a serious violation when the Sponsor is not prepared to recite the Creed of Faith. Knowledge of the Creed and familiarity with it constitutes the most important pre-requisite for becoming a Sponsor. It is the height of mockery of Holy Baptism when the Sponsor is unable to recite the Creed, which is the symbol of the Christian Faith. This is the Nicean Creed:

**I believe in One God, The Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen and unseen. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father. Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Through Him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit
He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.**

**For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered, died, and was buried. On
the third day He rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is
seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the
dead, and His kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of
life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and**

glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

After the Creed the Priest once again directs the question to the Sponsor: "Have you united yourself unto Christ?" The answer which is given is: "I Have". **This question and answer are again repeated three times. Then the Priest directs** "Bow down also and adore Him." The Sponsor blessing himself/herself responds: "I bow down before the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, one in Essence and undivided."

The Sponsor pledges himself \ herself to do whatever is necessary to educate his or her Godchild in the Christian Faith and that he or she will set a good example of a Christian to the Godchild.

Responsibilities of the Godparent

The Responsibilities of the Godparent only begin at baptism, the role really expands and hopefully blossoms as the Godparent and Godchild develop a close and loving relationship. As with any relationship, this spiritual one needs to be fostered and cared for in order for it to develop. The best way for this relationship to grow is through prayer. Pray for your Godchild and his or her parents, and the parents should encourage their child to pray for the Godparents. By doing this you are encouraging a relationship and giving it the spiritual basis on which to mature.

It is a rule of the Catholic Faith that every person, child or adult, should have a Godparent at Baptism. To serve as a Godparent is both a special honor and imposes responsibilities which last a lifetime. Have you ever thought what a sacred privilege it is to be a Sponsor?

Too many take the responsibilities of a Sponsor very lightly. Indeed for many people it has become merely a social custom in which social interests become the only important consideration both for the Parents of the child and for the Sponsor.

Before one accepts to become a Sponsor, one should think seriously of the sacred responsibility which they assume for the child that will be baptized. To show indifference in this respect is to commit a grave sin in the sight of God. Every Sponsor becomes accountable to God as to whether or not he/she has discharged his/her duties to the child which he/she has sponsored.

Christ tells us: "Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Through Baptism we receive a full forgiveness of all sin, whether original or actual; we "put on Christ," becoming members of His Body, the Church. The Godparent, along with the parents and guided by the Church, should assist the newly baptized child through the walk of life. Just as natural parents have serious obligations for the care and nurture of their child, so Godparents have important duties in regard to their Godchild, in particular to see to it that the child receives a Christian upbringing.

Before one says "Yes," to assuming the role of Godparent, he or she should make certain that the commitment to the baptized child will be honored. Every Godparent becomes accountable to God as to whether or not he has discharged his duties to the child which he has baptized. Mindful of the sacred task of the Godparent, this booklet has been prepared to provide every Orthodox Christian parent helpful hints in selecting the right person for the new infant and to make the intended Godparent acutely aware of his or her task.

Working together: Godparent and Parent

It is important for the Godparent to work with your godchild's parents. Talk with your godchild's parents often about his or her life, spiritual and otherwise, and ask how you can help. Parents can often use another perspective -- and another willing hand -- as they guide their children to adulthood. Parents choose Godparents who will reinforce them, people to whom our children can turn when the parents are not cool enough to listen to them, and when they need to hear difficult truths from someone who loves them.

Parents may be unsure whether they are too strict or too lenient, Godparents are a good sounding board for discussing this when it pertains to the Godchild. Parents may wish to make the Godparents the child's emergency contact person after the parents so the secular world relies appropriately on the Godparent when crisis hits.

Parents should light candles and pray for their children's Godparents every time they enter a church, say their family and personal prayers. Likewise the Godparents should pray not only for their Godchild but the Godchild's parents as well.