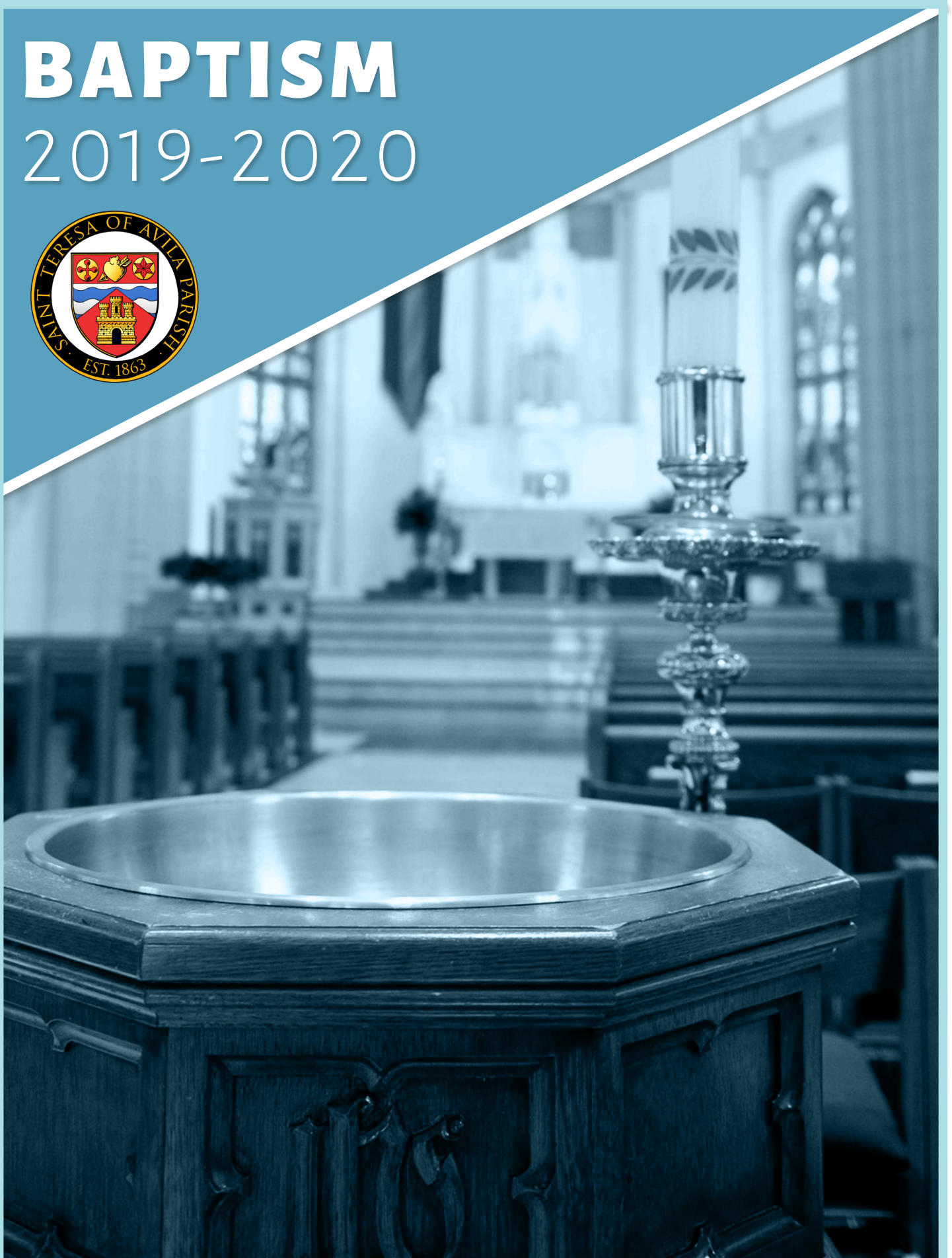


# BAPTISM

## 2019-2020



# The Sacrament of Baptism



## What is Baptism? —————

**T**HE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM IS AN IMPORTANT ONE IN THE LIFE OF A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN. As one of the three sacraments of initiation that unites us in communion with Christ, Baptism offers us the grace to not only be welcomed into the Church as children of God but also enables us to identify ourselves with Jesus and to be purified from sin.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls Baptism "the basis of the whole Christian life" and "the gateway to life in the Spirit". It explains that the sacrament of Baptism is a necessity for salvation and confers the grace of justification, empowering the believer to believe, hope, and love and to live under the promptings of the Spirit, growing in goodness through the moral virtues (1265-66)

A baptized person shares in the community of God's people who make up the Church. Through the sacrament, those who have been baptized are welcomed to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God, and to obtain the spiritual helps of the Church (1268-70). Baptism is a sign of communion among Christians (1271). This sacrament configures a person to Christ and seals him or her with an indelible spiritual mark of belonging to Christ. The baptized are committed to participate in the Church's liturgy and to exercise their Baptismal priesthood in a life of holiness and charity. The Baptismal seal is conferred by the Holy Spirit in anticipation of the day of redemption. The Christian who remains faithful to the demands of Baptism can depart this life with an expectation of the vision of God (1272-74). Ultimately, Baptism is the sacrament of faith which unites us with Christ in his life, death, and Resurrection. Christ is the source and summit of our faith, and through Baptism we are made His disciples in the world

*"Baptism is a manifestation of the Father's prevenient love, a sharing in the Son's Paschal Mystery, and a communication of new life in the Spirit; it brings people into the inheritance of God and joins them to the body of Christ, the Church."*

-Instruction of Infant Baptism, 1.9

## Why Baptize? —————

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ASKED OF PARENTS AT THE MOMENT WHEN THEIR CHILD IS PRESENTED IN CHURCH during the ceremony is "what do you ask of the Church for your child?". Parents usually respond that they wish to have their child baptized, but another question remains unanswered, at least publicly. Why do you want your child to be baptized?

While some parents have the natural inclination to respond to that question with the acknowledgment of their own baptismal journeys and their desires to raise their children in the faith, all parents who desire baptism for their children make this decision to offer their children the foundation for a meaningful life and a relationship with Christ.

The responsibilities of parenting are very serious ones that parents accept with the birth of their child. Many realize that the child they've been given is a miracle from God. Our faith teaches us that God is the creator who gives life and forms life in womb (Ps. 139:13). As the Catechism teaches us, Baptism "accords with parents' role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them" (CCC 1251). Thus, parents' decisions to baptize their newborn is a way in which to honor and give thanks for the miracle bestowed onto their family from God.

In a national survey conducted by CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2008), 88% of Catholic parents who had their children baptized noted that the sacrament was the most meaningful experience for them. For parents, the reception of this sacrament not only helps their child to have a life in Christ it also helps their family to enter into the community of faith and be unified with all of God's people. It is more than just an occasion to adorn the child in special garb, take photos, and host family and friends for lunch. Ultimately, parents should want to have their child baptized not because it is the custom, but because they sincerely desire a meaningful Christian life for that child.

The decision to have children baptized must come only after serious reflection. Baptism involves the pledge of parents to raise and educate their children in the beliefs and practices of the Catholic faith, and thus it is vital for parents to realize the importance of that commitment. Baptism is seen as a journey, an answer to God's call through the ways in which we live our lives. It is not a sacrament that only pertains to the child, rather it is an invitation to the entire family to draw closer and deeper to our faith.



# The Rite of Baptism and Its Symbols

Our faith has a wealth of meaningful rituals and symbols that help us to experience God and live out the Gospel messages more emphatically. The sacraments are one example of this aspect to who we are as Catholic Christians. The sacrament of Baptism is a beautiful tradition wherein God's graces are bestowed onto the child, and the signs and symbols of the sacred sacrament help us to understand these blessings.

## PRESENTATION OF THE CHILDREN AND QUESTION OF INTENT

At the start of the ceremony, the family is asked what they wish to name their child and why they have brought their child to the Church. The response to the question, "What do you ask of the church for your child?" can be answered simply, following the lead of the rite with the answer of "Baptism". This moment is special for two reasons. First, it gives the parents the opportunity to internalize and summarize for themselves what they are asking of the church for their child. Second, it is moving, in the course of the rite, to hear parents answer this question from their hearts.

## SIGNING WITH THE CROSS

The priest speaks about the significance of marking the children with the sign of our faith. The catechist priest encourages parents to invite the whole family gathered with them to participate in this signing. It symbolizes the children's acceptance into the believing family as well as the larger church.

## ANOINTING WITH THE OIL OF CATECHUMENS

In the ancient world, oil was rubbed into muscles as a way of strengthening them. We understand this oil to be a sign of God's strength for the child. In the catechumenate adults and older children spend time learning

about the faith and growing stronger in their belief. The infants and young children being baptized are beginning that same process. They will be asked to learn about and grow stronger in their faith all their lives.

## COMMON PROFESSION OF FAITH

All those who are present renew their Baptismal promises. The priest encourages the families to answer loudly, even boldly, as they are asked these questions. By answering together, we are announcing what we believe as Christian people and acknowledging our responsibility to raise these children being baptized in the faith.

## BAPTISM WITH WATER

Water is the symbol of divine life as well as a sign of purity and cleansing from sin. The outward sign of baptism is the actual pouring of the water on the head of the child three times in the name of each part of the Holy Trinity. Each family is called forward to the font. The parents are asked, "Do you wish to have this child baptized?" The parents respond and the child is then immersed or the water is poured.

## ANOINTING WITH CHRISM

Chrism is a special scented oil that is used for Baptism, Confirmation, and ordination. Chrism is used to set people apart for a special role. The meaning in the symbol and the prayer that accompanies it invites the

family to do what Christ does by sharing the Good News of God with the life of their child. We all are called to help each other experience what is holy about our lives. When raising children, we raise them to be responsible. Responsibility means realizing that we are not the center of the universe and that we have obligations to other people. We may think of it as raising good parents for our grandchildren. We want our children to be the kind of adults to whom we would entrust our grandchildren. In order to get there, we have to raise our children to know what it means to pay attention to others and to realize that we all have the obligation to help each other.

## LIGHTING THE CANDLE

Each child's candle is lit from the paschal candle. The priest explains how the paschal candle is lit for the first time at the Easter Vigil, symbolizing Christ's resurrection. The smaller candle given to each child is a symbol of the light of Christ, which this child will carry throughout his or her life. While the children are still little, parents have the responsibility to keep this flame alive. When their children are older, parents hand that responsibility over to them.

## WHITE GARMENT

Whether the children are already clothed in white or are given something to wear as part of the ceremony, the garment is a symbol of their new life in Christ. The priest makes the connection between this white garment, the presider's liturgical clothing, and the pall placed on the coffin at funerals.

# Our baptismal preparation program helps to form parents who desire to have their children baptized at Saint Teresa's.

*This program operates in a two part format.*

**PART 1, THE INVITATION,** brings families in the pre-baptism phase of life to meet in a community/social format with a team of parents who have participated in the sacrament within recent years. It allows for fellowship and faith sharing about the importance of the sacrament and how to engage Baptism beyond ceremony.



**PART 2, THE FOLLOW-UP,** happens over the course of the year following the child's baptism to the first anniversary. It offers opportunities to maintain a connection with the recently baptized through invitations into parish life, engagement, and emailed/mailed resources. This process helps the family of the newly baptized to truly live out the baptismal call and develop a sense of belonging to the local church and the universal Church at large. Parents' willingness and commitment to participate in the baptismal preparation program will help them to develop the faith-life of their child as they grow, and also provide them with the support they need to deepen their own spiritual journey.



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*Please contact the parish office for information and dates about our preparation program.*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS *about* BAPTISM



### 1. WHAT IS THE BAPTISMAL PROCESS IN OUR PARISH?

Requesting that your baby be baptized here is about your family joining our parish family. It's not just a one time event, but the gateway to the rest of the Sacraments of the Church, and as such, ensuring that families are properly disposed to introduce their child(ren) to a sacramental life is essential. In particular, parents wishing to have their child(ren) baptized here, must be registered, regularly attend, and actively support (either with Envelopes or Online Giving) the parish in order to schedule a Baptismal date. Anonymous contributions are not verifiable. You are required to have a meeting with Father Bob before a date can be confirmed. This meeting is required for all families who wish to receive the Sacrament.

### 2. HOW DO I START THE PROCESS?

We recommend that parents who wish to have their child baptized contact us soon after the birth of their child. To schedule a date for Baptism and/or request to have Baptism elsewhere, please download, complete and return the form on our website along with at least one sponsor form and a copy of the child's birth certificate to the parish office. All requests for Baptism forms must be submitted with at least one original church sealed sponsor form and a copy of the birth certificate of the child. Dates are only confirmed once all documents are submitted and all requirements are met. Thank you for your kind understanding.

### 3. CAN WE CHOOSE OUR OWN DATE FOR A PRIVATE CEREMONY?

By their very nature, Baptisms are "communal" celebrations. At St Teresa of Avila there are two options for choosing a Baptism date: a Saturday or Sunday mass.

#### 4. CAN WE BRING IN AN OUTSIDE PRIEST? IF SO, WHAT'S THE PROCESS?

Families are very welcome to invite a priest in good standing to celebrate the Baptism of their child. The priest is required to provide certification of his good standing from his bishop or religious superior. The rest of the Baptism policy applies.

#### 5. WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BE A GODPARENT/ SPONSOR?

A godparent (sponsor) must be someone who meets the following requirements:

- ☒ Has been chosen by the parents and consents to fulfill the role
- ☒ Is at least 16 years old
- ☒ Be fully initiated in the Catholic Church  
(Received Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist)
- ☒ Leads a life in harmony with the Church
- ☒ Is a registered member and active member of his/her parish
- ☒ Regularly attends mass and participates in the sacramental life of his/her parish

#### 6. CAN WE ONLY HAVE ONE GODPARENT/ SPONSOR?

The Church requires that there must be one godparent (also called sponsors), but should there be two, they must be male and female.

#### 7. WHAT IS A SPONSOR CERTIFICATE? WHAT HAPPENS IF ONLY ONE SPONSOR PRODUCES THE CERTIFICATE?

A sponsor certificate is an official document, signed and sealed from the Sponsor's home parish certifying that the Sponsor meets the above requirements to serve in this important capacity. Only those providing a sponsor certificate can be admitted to serve in this capacity. Anyone else will be noted as a "witness".

#### 8. DO WE NEED TO BRING ANYTHING SPECIFIC ON THE DATE OF THE BAPTISM?

Families are requested to be in the Church at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the ceremony. Families should bring any items that can help their child be comfortable during the ceremony (eg: bottles, pacifiers, etc).

#### 9. IS THE CHURCH HANDI-ACCESSIBLE FOR THOSE WITH MOBILITY ISSUES?

Yes, there are handi-accessible entrances to the church and Memorial Hall.

#### 10. ARE FAMILY AND FRIENDS PERMITTED TO TAKE PICTURES DURING THE CEREMONY?

Families and friends in attendance are welcomed to freely take photos before and after the ceremony. During the ceremony, pictures may be taken, but we ask that guests remain in their seats in order to do so. They may not walk up the aisles, nor may they stand in the sanctuary. During the baptism with water, family members are invited to gather at the baptismal font to be close and present for that special moment. Photos may also be taken then.



**You can find the  
required Baptism  
Request and  
Sponsor Request  
Forms online at  
[st-teresa.org](http://st-teresa.org)**



#### **Scheduling the Baptism**

Please keep in mind that Baptisms are not scheduled during Advent and Lent.

Please do not make any definite reservations for post-baptismal celebrations until you have received the confirmation letter for the Baptismal date.



**Please visit  
[st-teresa.org](http://st-teresa.org)  
to download  
our baptism  
photographer/  
videographer  
guidelines**

# UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE SPONSOR (Godparent)

THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION HAVE AN ADDED DIMENSION AS PARENTS ARE ASKED TO SELECT SPONSORS (GODPARENTS) FOR THEIR CHILDREN WHO ARE ABOUT TO BE INITIATED INTO THE CATHOLIC FAITH. There is no more lively discussion in our parish office when the “nominee” for this important role as sponsor, is advised that “they do not qualify” for this important role. Perhaps the following brief essay which examines the historical, legal, and pastoral aspects of serving as sponsor may help.

## HISTORICAL

THE ROLE OF THE GODPARENT FOR BAPTISM IS ROOTED IN THE ROLE OF THE SPONSOR IN THE CATECHUMENATE, WHICH ORIGINATED IN THE EARLY CHURCH. Recall that until the year 313, the Church was under the persecution of the Roman Empire and had to be cautious in conducting its affairs so as to prevent pagan infiltration and persecution. Also, until the Middle Ages, the Sacraments of Initiation — Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation — were administered at once.

The role of the sponsor then was to attest to the integrity of the person, oftentimes an adult, seeking admission into the Church as well as to assist him during the catechumenate in preparing for these sacraments and in living a Christian life. For infants, these sponsors would also make the Profession of Faith in the child's name and accept the responsibility of instructing the child in the faith, especially if the parents failed in this duty.

About the year 800 when infant Baptism was truly the norm, these sponsors were called “patrinus” or “godfather.” Traditionally, we identify the sponsor of a child for Baptism as the godparent — godmother or godfather, but the technical term remains “sponsor.”

## LEGAL

ACCORDING TO THE CODE OF CANON LAW, “Insofar as possible, one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation, or, together with the parents, to present an infant at the Baptism, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with Baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it” (No 872). This statement clearly reflects the historical roots of the role of sponsor.

To be a sponsor, a person must be chosen by the person to be baptized, or by the parents or guardians of a child, or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister of the sacrament. The sponsor must not only have the intention of being a sponsor but also meet proper qualifications. The sponsor must have completed their sixteenth year unless the bishop has established another age for sponsorship, or the pastor or minister judges that a just cause warrants an exception to the rule. They must be a Catholic who has received the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation, and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken. Moreover, the sponsor cannot be impeded by some canonical penalty. Ideally, this sponsor at Baptism should also be the sponsor for Confirmation. Note that the mother and father of the child cannot serve as sponsors. Also note that these are the same requirements for Confirmation sponsors. (Cf Code of Canon Law, No 874.1).

Strictly speaking, a person only needs one sponsor for Baptism — male or female, but may have two sponsors, one male and one female. Here the Code of Canon Law wants to eliminate the practice of having numerous sponsors, as has occurred in some cultures (No. 873). Also, in the case of an emergency, such as imminent death, no sponsor is needed.

Technically, only Catholics can be godparents or sponsors. A Christian of another denomination, whether Orthodox or Protestant, however, may be a “Christian witness” to the Baptism along with the Catholic godparent. The reason for this distinction and restriction is that the godparent not only is taking responsibility for the religious education and spiritual formation of the baptized person, but also is representing the Church, the community of faith, into which the person is being baptized. A Christian who is not Catholic, although perhaps a very holy, Christian, cannot fully attest to the beliefs of the Catholic Church. Likewise, a Catholic can only be a Christian witness for someone who is baptized into another Christian denomination.

## PASTORAL

HERE WE SHOULD PAUSE TO CLARIFY WHO QUALIFIES AS A CATHOLIC GODPARENT. A Catholic who does not practice the faith by regularly attending Mass or who is in an invalid marriage disqualifies him/herself from being a godparent. Moreover, if a person is Catholic but antagonistic to the faith,

i.e. has the attitude “I am a Catholic but...,” and would not be a good example and witness to the faith also disqualifies him/herself. If a person is not striving to fulfill his own obligations of Baptism and Confirmation, s/he will not fulfill the responsibilities of helping another to do so.

Therefore, parents need to find good practicing Catholics for godparents. Sadly, this task can be very difficult in today's world, but the burden is on the parents to select the right person, not to challenge the Church teaching on the matter.

As a pastor, I am truly perturbed each time someone comes by the rectory office and wants me to sign a sponsor's certificate and attest that s/he is a practicing Catholic when this, in fact is not true. Have we come to the point where people will actually demand the priest to lie for them?

In our parish, while we are very pastorally sensitive, we seek to give the sacrament its due dignity. Sponsors must fulfill the requirements noted above and actually be registered, support and practice their faith with us. If I do not recognize the person, and/or s/he is not registered in the parish and/or s/he does not attend Mass faithfully, in justice, I cannot meet such a request and sign a form that certifies otherwise.

Parents need to find good practicing Catholics to be godparents. The best place is to look for relatives, even grandparents, who have a blood relationship with the godchild and have kept the faith over the years. Good friends are also appropriate, but sometimes friendships wane, leaving the godchild without an active godparent. Godparents should be faithful and practicing individuals who are ready to accept the responsibility of being a part of a godchild's life for the rest of his life.

In all, godparents serve a special role in the life of the baptized person. Therefore, each parent should choose a godparent not just because of a blood relationship or friendship; rather, a godparent should be an honest and trustworthy witness of the faith who will help the godchild attain salvation.

- Fr Bob

With thanks to: [catholiceducation.org](http://catholiceducation.org)