

## ***A WORD FROM FR. JOHN...***

In conjunction with the celebrations of baptisms and confirmations during the Easter season, it may be helpful to review the minimum qualifications of those who are asked to serve as godparents for someone to be baptized, or as sponsors for those to be confirmed. Hopefully, this will help answer a number of questions that arise about whether a proposed person can serve in these important roles.

Within the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism, the godparent promises to help the child's parents in their role as Christian parents. In asking to have their child baptized, the parents accept the responsibility of training their child in the practice of the faith. It is their duty to bring their child up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. The best way for parents and godparents to do so is by actively practicing the faith themselves, setting an example for their children and godchildren to follow. The same is true for confirmation sponsors with regard to actively practicing the faith.



So what does the active practice of the faith look like? As an essential minimum, someone who actively practices the Catholic faith follows the Precepts of the Church:

- ◆ Attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
- ◆ Confess serious sins at least once a year.
- ◆ Receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) at least once per year during the Easter season.
- ◆ Observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church, which include fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and abstaining from meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent.
- ◆ Help provide for the material needs of the Church according to your ability.

Again, these are the necessary minimum. If we are considering whom we should invite to be a godparent or a sponsor, or whether we ourselves should accept such an invitation, we probably would be hoping for more than just the bare minimum, as living out our faith in a loving and inspiring way for those we sponsor goes well beyond these.

In assessing potential godparents and sponsors, the Church also offers a number of qualifications to consider beyond their leading a life of faith. First and perhaps obviously, to take on the role of a godparent or sponsor, they must have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling that role. Second, they must be at least sixteen years old, unless it seems to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for a just cause. Third, they need to be a

fully initiated Catholic, having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Fourth, they are not the father or mother of the one to be baptized or confirmed.

Often we are asked if someone who is a baptized non-Catholic can serve as a godparent. In such an instance, they may participate together with a Catholic godparent, serving in the role of a Christian witness. This arises sometimes when the Catholic parents would like a sibling and their non-Catholic spouse or perhaps a close personal friend who is non-Catholic to participate in their child's baptism.

Sometimes, parents struggle to find two godparents for their child. The church only requires one godparent. There is no requirement for two godparents. Yet, if there are to be two godparents, then there should be only one godfather and one godmother.

Fr. Matthew and I, as well as Sr. Kathleen, our Director of Faith Formation, stand ready to assist parents as they seek to share the sacraments with their children, and in assuring that these qualifications are met. If the proposed godparent or sponsor is not known to us, then diocesan policies require us to ask that they provide us with a letter from the pastor of their parish testifying that they meet the qualifications to serve as a godparent or sponsor.

Baptism and Confirmation, like all sacraments of the Church are not a private or family affair, nor are they a cultural event or rite of passage. They are an act of faith, of prayer, of the whole Church with Christ as its head, as the newly baptized and confirmed are embraced by the grace and Spirit of Jesus Christ, and take their rightful place in the community of believers, the family of God, the Body of Christ, the Church.

As I mentioned last week, our Liturgical Ministers Appreciation Breakfast is coming up on Saturday morning April 28 at St. Mary's. Preparations for the Next-To-New Sale are underway as Set-up Day, is this coming Friday, April 13, donations will be accepted from April 14-26, and the actual sale is on May 3-5. We would appreciate a few hours of your time to assist with this important parish fund raiser, that also provides essential goods to a number of those living on limited means in our community. Also, over the next several weeks, we will be accepting nominations for service on our Parish Pastoral Council, which has a significant role in shaping the vision and mission of parish community.

While the weather may not promote it, I hope you are having a blessed and joyful Easter season.

Yours,  
Fr. John