St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

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Parish Guidelines
For Choosing Godparents
For the Sacrament of Infant Baptism

Being a Godparent is special. Watch people's reactions when you say, "I'm his Godmother." It is a lifetime commitment to the spiritual birth and growth of a child. While parents are the prime teachers responsible for a child's religious formation and passing on the Faith to the child, Godparents can lend support and led by example. The role of Godparents for baptism is rooted in the role of the sponsor of "catechumens" or those adult persons to be baptized in the early Church. The function godparent was to attest to the integrity of the person asking to be admitted to the Christian community and to journey with the person in the long preparation process. In the baptism ceremony today, the parents and Godparents stand in for the child and profess their faith in the name of the child who will, later on as an adult, personally affirm membership in the Church and all the rights and responsibilities that being a Christian Catholic mean.

The Godparent is a person to whom the parents can point and say to their child: "This is the kind of Christian Catholic we would like you to become." A Godparent is a role model and to be chosen is truly an "honor," but also much more serious responsibility than just a social honor which we want to confer on a family member, favorite relative or friend. From this understanding of the role and meaning of Godparents the following guidelines logically flow:

- A Godparent should be a ***connected***, ***active and committed*** Catholic in relation to a Catholic parish. They should be regular Mass-goers (what we sometimes call a "practicing" Catholic). A person, who no longer attends Mass on a regular basis, has left the Church or drifted from the Faith is not a suitable Godparent.

- Godparent from parishes other than St. John's must provide testimony from their home parish stating they are qualified to act as Godparents for the sacrament of baptism. This document should be in the parish office ***before the baptism*** and can be mailed directly from another parish to St. Johns.

- Obviously, someone who is not a Catholic cannot represent and model the Catholic faith. A baptized Christian from a Protestant denomination, however, can act as a "Christian witness" to the baptism, but is not listed as the official Godparent.

- A Catholic who was ***not married by a priest in the Church*** (an "invalid" marriage") is not qualified to act as a sponsor until the marriage is validated in the Church through an annulment (if married validly before) or a dispensation if the marriage did not occur in the Church by a priest. A divorced Catholic ***who has not remarried outside the Church and does not plan to do so***, and living a Catholic sacramental life may serve as a Godparent.

- **Godparents must have reached the age of 16 and have received the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation**.

- Any exception to these guidelines is at the discretion of the pastor.