

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

The RCIA Process

--by Vickie Shepherd

How Do I Choose My Sponsor?

The RCIA Process

Choosing a sponsor or godparent may be the most important decision you ever make. Hopefully I can answer any questions you may have about the role of a godparent or sponsor. I will often just make a reference to this person as sponsor, but they both have mostly the same specifications when it comes to guiding a person through their faith journey in the Christian life.

The person who is not baptized will be picking a godparent to help guide them in the Catholic life they are choosing, a person who has been baptized in another faith or in the Catholic faith will be choosing a sponsor as their guide in the Church. I mention people baptized as Catholic here because there are some people who are baptized as a Catholic, but not brought up in a practicing household. This person would need much the same instruction in the faith as a person who is learning about the Catholic Church and our practices, customs, traditions and doctrine. The catechumen (non baptized person) will probably have the same person who is their godparent at the Easter Vigil become their sponsor for confirmation, which will happen directly after their baptism the same night. Choosing this person should be done with much thought and prayerful consideration.

Q ~ When will your sponsor first meet with you and start coming to the weekly meetings?

A ~ The first time you meet with your sponsor will be a week or two before the Rite of Acceptance. Then the role of the sponsor will be an active role from that time, hopefully for a very long time. This person will meet with you before the Rite of Acceptance to get to know you, and maybe ask you some questions. Your sponsor will be introducing you to our worshipping community, so they can accept you into their midst and recognize you as a new member of the Church. If you do not know anyone from your parish who can be your sponsor, let the parish priest or Co ordinator know. They can assist you in your search.

Q ~ What requirements and qualities should I look for in a sponsor or godparent?

A ~ The requirements are that your godparent / sponsor be at least 16 years old, and that this person be a “practicing” Catholic. The qualities this person should possess are that this is

someone you admire because of their unquestionable faith, someone who walks closely with God, and lives their life as closely to the Gospel teachings as possible. (I do realize that no one is perfect!) According to the Catholic Catechism of the Church (#1255) “this person must also be able and ready to help the newly baptized adult on the road to Christian life”. Also remember that you may not choose a parent to be a sponsor or godparent.

Q ~ Can I choose a sponsor or godparent who lives far away?

A ~ Ideally a sponsor or godparent should be someone who lives nearby and that this person be a member of your parish. The sponsor is a person who represents the worshipping community in your parish; your sponsor speaks on the behalf of those assembled at each Rite we celebrate. However the most important aspect of this relationship between you and your sponsor is that you can see it developing into a long-term commitment with each other. This is a person with whom you can share your faith, and other personal aspects of your life.

The time commitment for a sponsor or godparent in the RCIA process is a weekly one. Can you see this person as being there for you 100% when you need them? Is this person someone who can celebrate your new life in Christ with you throughout the coming years? Is this a person of prayer, who can help to guide you in the Catholic tradition? If you can answer these questions in a positive way, then this person will be an excellent sponsor for your continuing life journey through life with the Holy Spirit as your guides.

May God bless you abundantly in your search for a godparent / sponsor!

~ Vickie