

The Expectations of being a Sponsor

The Church takes the role of a Confirmation Sponsor seriously. The Sponsor is a spiritual parent to the Candidate. The Sponsor "is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament" (Canon 892).

Potential Confirmation Sponsors can evaluate themselves in light of what the Church family expects (and has always expected) for this very important matter. That is:

• **As with Baptism, parents don't serve as a Sponsor for Confirmation.**

The role of Sponsor helps parents in assisting the training of the faith. While not always possible, the ideal is that the Godparent at Baptism also serves this role at the Sacrament of Confirmation.

• **A Sponsor is a Catholic in good standing—that is, living the Gospel message in their daily personal lives. They should practice the faith regularly by attending Mass and receiving the Sacrament of Confession. They are to be at least sixteen years of age, have the proper aptitude and intention to assume this role, and have received the Sacrament of Confirmation.**

• **Catholics married outside the Church, or Catholics who choose to cohabitate outside of the Sacrament of Marriage, cannot serve as a Sponsor.**

• **Any Catholic who is not living according to the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church should not be asked to serve in this important role as Sponsor.**

• **Non-Catholics, former Catholics, and members of Churches not in union with Rome may not serve as Godparents for Confirmation. Members of the Orthodox Churches, because of the lack of unity among the Churches, may not serve as a Sponsor for Confirmation.**

• **Pastors and directors of religious education can recommend a Sponsor if needed.**

Even if a potential Sponsor meets the requirements of canon law, personal considerations might encourage or discourage him from accepting the invitation. Such considerations include:

- Whether the potential Sponsor is prepared to fulfill the duties of a Confirmation Sponsor. A Sponsor becomes a *spiritual parent* to the Confirmation candidate. The Sponsor is to help guide the candidate in his or her faith. Sponsorship is a lifetime commitment. A Sponsor should be prepared to pray for the Candidate regularly—not only prior to Confirmation, but after Confirmation. The Sponsor might also consider whether she or he is prepared to maintain regular contact with the Candidate. (Someone once remarked that at the absolute minimum, the Candidate should be on the Sponsor's Christmas card list! Christmas cards, birthday cards, and *Confirmation anniversary cards*, along with phone calls and visits, can be important elements in sustaining the relationship. Attending Mass together, along with participating in Church activities such as service projects, are other good ways of maintaining contact.)
- Whether the potential Sponsor leads a life of faith that he or she would want the confirmand to imitate. Candidates for Confirmation generally ask a person to Sponsor them because they like and admire that person. That's a good start. But in general, does the potential Sponsor lead a life that someone could imitate and not be led astray? Is the potential Sponsor ready to answer (or find answers to) the questions the Candidate might have about the faith and about life in general?
- Whereas a godparent doesn't "know" the infant to be baptized, Confirmation Sponsorship generally builds on an existing relationship. This being the case, a potential Sponsor can consider her or his present relationship with the candidate. Is it strong and healthy? Does it have the potential to continue to grow? Will the Sponsor be able to guide and correct the Confirmand, helping him to be a true witness to Christ?
- At St. Mark's, Confirmation Sponsors are expected to help and encourage the Candidate if needed with their studies and prayer life and attend retreats and other events with the Candidate. Of course, if it's not possible to attend such events, a parent or other Sponsor stand-in can take their place.
- **Questions?** Contact Sister Angelina at 942-1616 or speak with Mr. Patenaude after class.

Since the earliest days of the Church, Sponsors played a crucial role in presenting a new member of the faith to the faithful. Today, Sponsors continue to serve this role: assuring the parish family that the Candidate is ready and committed to a lifetime in the family of faith of Christ's Church. The relationship between the Sponsor and the Candidate begins a lifetime of relationship—of Communion—with all Catholics in the world, and, of course, with God.