



in the know with **Father Joe**

What is the purpose of godparents?

Q **Dear Fr. Joe:** We are about to have our first child and want to choose godparents. Do they have to be Catholic? Why? What is the purpose of the godparent – isn't it just an honorary title?

a Thank you so much for your question! This is one of those elements of our Catholic faith that can get lost quite easily if we're not careful. Your question can help us pause and look at what the Church means when she talks to us about godparents. Hopefully, by the end of this article, we'll see that, while it's a great honor to be a godparent, it's far from an honorary title. Let's jump in!

First of all: congratulations on your baby – what a blessing! In your love for each other, you and your spouse have cooperated with God and created something that

will outlive all the stars in the sky and even time itself: an immortal soul. Your love for each other and God's grace have created something eternal – isn't that amazing?

This gift of life is now yours to care for: an unspeakably sacred trust that God has given you. By bringing your baby in to be baptized, you are showing your gratitude to God for this gift and pledging to do your absolute best to raise your child to love and honor God with his or her whole being.

Every part of the baptism ritual speaks to this simple, but important idea: You are entering into a covenant with God through the Church to

raise up your child to be holy. Your goal is nothing less than to raise a saint: someone to love and serve God above all things. God promises to love, protect and save your child and you promise to work with God in that through all you say and do.

Now, no doubt about it, this is a monumental task. In order to be faithful to such a great promise, you're going to need some help. You have four things to help you in this (in no particular order):

1. The Holy Spirit
2. The Church
3. The gifts God gave you and your spouse
4. Your child's godparents

I could write all day about the first three gifts, but we'll focus on the fourth because that is what you asked about!

Church law has a lot to say on godparents and I'm not able to cover them all here. Instead, I'll focus on a few key points and, from that, see if we can't understand the role a bit better.

A Godparent needs to be:

- At least 16 years old
- A Catholic who has been confirmed and receives the Eucharist
- A Catholic who regularly attends Mass and actively participates in the sacramental life of the Church
- A Catholic who lives his or her life in such a way as to be a good role model of a faithful Catholic

So, what's with all these rules?!

Think of it this way: someday your child will want to drive. (Scary day!) There are a lot of responsibilities associated with driving: a lot of



If you'd like to submit a question for Father Joe to

consider in a future column, please send it to: joeinblack@priest.com. Father Joe is unable to personally answer questions.

things one needs to learn well. Because of that, you will make sure that your son or daughter has a good driving teacher – someone who obeys the rules and teaches their students to do the same.

With our faith, the stakes are so much higher – they are eternal! Your child needs a godparent to walk with her and teach her the truth and beauty of our faith – to remind her how important it is to follow Jesus and live the life of faith we are made for.

There are many well-intentioned people out there who equate “being good” or “being nice” with being holy, but being holy is so much more than that. It is about placing our entire lives at the foot of the cross and letting Christ teach us how to live. Being holy entails recognizing that Christ has given us the Church as his vessel to show us the way to live our faith in these complicated times. Godparents need to believe this truth and teach it to our kids.

This holy person is not always easy to find, but such a person is always worth the search.

So, there we have it ... I pray that God fill you with joy at the gift of new life you have been given and guide all of us into a deeper love and appreciation for the wonder of baptism!

Enjoy another day in God's presence!