

## Why Must Catholics be Confirmed to be a Godparent or Sponsor?

There is a simple rationale as to why the Sacrament of Confirmation is required for Catholic Godparents. For Catholics, Confirmation **completes** the initiation process (begun at baptism, deepened with Eucharist, and completed with Confirmation). Because a Godparent is stating that he/she will help the parents form the child to-be-baptized in our faith, he or she themselves must be **fully initiated** (meaning Confirmed) to be able to make such a promise.

Another way to understand this rationale would be like expecting a person who only has a Learner's Permit to be a Driving Instructor; such a person is not *fully trained* to be an instructor. Likewise with a non-Confirmed Catholic; such a person is not yet fully initiated, so they cannot promise to what they have yet to experience. (No one is stating that the non-Confirmed Catholic is not a good person or even a good Catholic, simply that to be a Catholic Godparent, they must be *fully initiated*).

As to why another parish may not follow this norm, we cannot say. Often there is some "wobble room" in some areas of church life, but in this area, the Church is very clear (see below). Regrettably, practices do vary from Parish to Parish, which unfairly creates confusion and hurt feelings among our people.

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From the **Archdiocese of Boston, Pastoral Guidelines and Policies, Book II, Sanctifying Office**:

### VII. SPONSORS FOR BAPTISM

A. The role and qualifications for baptismal sponsors and godparents are defined in canons 872-874. These qualifications include that the sponsor or godparent be:

- **a confirmed Catholic, who is living a life befitting the role of sponsor\***,
- **and who is not under canonical penalty,**
- **and who is not a parent of the person being baptized,**
- **and who is, ordinarily, sixteen years of age.**

These qualifications are to be explained to the catechumens, or to the parents of those to be baptized as infants, early in the formation of the sacrament, so that they can choose suitable sponsors or godparents. When this is done, there is no need for Testimonial Letters, except when a doubt arises regarding suitability.

B. It is worth noting that only one sponsor is required for Baptism, who, of necessity, must fulfill all of the canonical requirements for this role. Also, there can be no more than two sponsors, one of each sex. When circumstances warrant it, one of the sponsors may be replaced by a baptized non-Catholic Christian as a witness of the Baptism.

*\*Within the definition of one "living a life befitting the role of sponsor" is the understanding that if the Sponsor-to-be is currently married that the marriage is both valid and sacramental (meaning that there are no previous marriages by a Justice of the Peace or through another faith that have yet to be normalized with the Church).*