

# CHOOSING A CONFIRMATION SPONSOR

## Brief Historical Background

A sponsor can make an enormous difference in the preparation of a candidate (youth) for the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is important, therefore, that the candidates are encouraged to choose sponsors who are well suited to the role and who will be integral to the preparation process.

The Church's tradition of involving a sponsor in the preparation of candidates for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation is one of our most ancient approaches to faith formation. In the early centuries, when the catechumenate was the entry point for anyone seeking to become a Christian, the sponsor played an extremely vital role.

The sponsor was a living witness and mentor who represented the Christian community (its values, beliefs, behaviors, and so on) to the catechumen. The sponsor would, in turn, witness to the community on behalf of the catechumen's readiness for the initiatory sacraments.

The role of a sponsor was not over with the celebration of the sacraments, however. It was seen as a **lifetime commitment**, a **relationship** that would last throughout the individual's journey of faith.

In the early Church the three Sacraments of Christian Initiation were always celebrated at one time; therefore, there was never a different sponsor at Baptism and Confirmation. In subsequent centuries, however, with the separation of Confirmation from Baptism, it became more common to have different persons act as sponsor for those two sacraments.

Both the *Code of Canon Law* (Canon 893.2) and the introduction to the Rite of Confirmation (5) suggest that in view of contemporary pastoral circumstances, it is desirable to have one's baptismal sponsor act as sponsor at Confirmation. While this remains the ideal, it seems much more important that the **sponsor chosen be available and involved with the candidate in a significant way, and be able to offer an authentic example of lived Christian faith.**

As a bare minimum, the *Code of Canon Law* specifies that the requirements for acting as a sponsor at Confirmation (Canon 893) are the same as those for godparents at Baptism (Canon 874). Briefly, that canon directs that the person must have completed their sixteenth year, be fully initiated themselves (confirmed), live a life of faith, not be the parent, and not be bound by any other canonical restrictions.

One of the challenges that might exist occurs when sponsors live at a distance and cannot interact in person with their candidate. However, in today's culture of instantaneous digital communication, only a little extra effort is required to maintain regular contact between sponsor and candidate. It is important that interaction occurs on a consistent basis and that sponsors are informed about meetings or information they may have missed because of their distance.

Therefore, what is “required” to be qualified as a Sponsor?

A Sponsor:

- Must be a practicing (registered), confirmed Catholic
- Must be at least 16 years of age.
- May not be the candidate’s mother or father
- May be the baptismal godparents of the candidate
- Must be a person who leads, “a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on.”

### **Role of the Sponsor**

The sponsor represents the support and prayer of the entire Church. He/she will be the candidate’s spiritual mentor and guide.

During this process, the following is asked of the sponsor.

1. Help answer candidate’s questions about the Catholic faith. If you don’t know the answer, say, “I don’t know, I will research that and get back to you.”
2. Help the candidate to know, love and serve Christ and his Church (the faith community) more deeply. Perhaps invite the candidate to join you in a service project.
3. Present the Candidate to the Church (the people of God), at the Confirmation Liturgy, announcing his/her readiness & willingness to celebrate, and live as a fully participating, active disciple of Jesus, through involvement in the Church while embracing a life-long journey of faith formation.
4. Sponsors need to attend the Confirmation rehearsal.
5. Attend the Liturgical celebration of Confirmation.
6. Meet with the candidate regularly throughout the final year of preparation and discuss the topics addressed in the preparation sessions.
7. Be open (vulnerable) & honest about your own spiritual faith journey with the candidate. Share the struggles and joys of your own faith and how God in Christ Jesus has been made real to you.
8. Share about how you have developed and practice an active prayer life. If your prayer life has stalled or you haven’t developed one, use this opportunity to begin.
9. Be willing to point out instances of injustice, and situations that pull us away from God. The Church calls that which comes between us and God, sin.
10. Share examples of how reconciliation has drawn you closer to God and to others. Consider inviting your candidate to join you in celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
11. Spend time getting to know your candidate on a more personal level, consider taking your candidate out to lunch, dinner or coffee to share in conversation.
12. Pray for and with your candidate regularly.
13. Continue to be available to the candidate and lend spiritual support after the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
14. A person in close geographic proximity to the candidate (Ideally, but not required.)