

SO YOU'VE BEEN ASKED TO BE A GODPARENT!

**What does it mean? What's involved?
Am I able to do it?**

What is a godparent?

When a child is baptized as an infant, their godparents (sometimes called *sponsors*) make the decisions of the Christian faith on the child's behalf. That is why, ideally, godparents should themselves have been baptized, as it makes little sense to make promises on behalf of another that you haven't accepted for yourself. If an older child or an adult are baptized, their Godparents are usually called sponsors, and they act as a support person to them in their baptism.

What are these promises?

Firstly where a young child is being baptized you are asked in the service if you will accept the responsibility of answering on behalf of your godchild.

Here are those questions.

Will you accept the responsibilities placed upon you in bringing *N* for baptism?

I will.

Are you willing to answer on behalf of *N*?

I am.

By your own prayers and example, by your friendship and love, will you encourage *N* in the life and faith of the Christian community?

I will, with God's help.

Then follow the traditional questions of baptism which date back to at least the 2nd or 3rd century. They are questions of repentance. Repentance can best be understood as turning away from evil (ie negative or destructive ways of living) and turning towards God. And as St John wrote, "God is love". Repentance is not something that is done only once. We do it time and time again along the journey of faith. But in baptism repentance is an important part of a new beginning. In baptism we are dedicating a person to God and admitting them to the family of the Christian church.

Here are those questions:

Do you turn to Christ?

I turn to Christ.

Do you repent of your sins?

I repent of my sins.

Do you reject selfish living, and all that is false and unjust?

I reject them all.

Do you renounce evil?

I renounce all that is evil.

The final question asked of the godparents is whether you commit yourself to the Great Commandment. Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God and to love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Here is the final question asked to godparents.

Will you each, by God's grace, strive to live as a disciple of Christ, loving God with your whole heart, and your neighbour as yourself, until your life's end?
I will, with God's help.

What else do I have to do?

By agreeing to be a godparent you are accepting a special responsibility in helping your godchild through life. Sometimes the spiritual side of our lives can get forgotten. Godparents can be someone who helps their godchild's spiritual growth, as well as other aspects of their lives.

You can help your godchild by:-

- *Talking and listening to them about God, faith, spirituality and the deeper things of life.*
- *Sharing your own story with its joys and struggles*
- *Praying for them*
- *Encouraging them to explore their spirituality*
- *Encouraging them to be part of a church community.*

Sometimes people may feel they're not good enough or religious enough to be a godparent. All people are spiritual. It is intrinsic to our humanity. People express their spirituality in different ways. Part of being a godparent means exploring your own spirituality and thinking about what you believe. It's about taking your spirituality seriously. This is the best resource you can offer your godchild - the treasure of sharing your own experience with them.

Making the decision.

Being a godparent is a big decision and a long term decision. We can only make such a decision in faith based on how we feel now. We may want to take time to think about it. If it is the case that you really don't agree with the vows you are being asked to make and you feel it would be hypocritical to make them. Then talk it over with the friends/family who asked you to be a godparent. It may be better in that case, for them, the child and for your own integrity to explain your position and to decline the offer to be a godparent. This may be a hard decision, but it is an important one.

More questions?

If you have any questions about what is involved, you are welcome to contact the priest who will be conducting the baptism.