



RCIA MINISTRY

Diocese of Winona-Rochester

"...to seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion"

(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults #1)



BACKGROUND NOTES ON THE ROLE OF SPONSORS

BASIC INFORMATION...

(from the RCIA text)

Regarding unbaptized "catechumens":

"10. A sponsor accompanies any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen. Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention. It may happen that it is not the sponsor for the rite of acceptance and the period of the catechumenate but another person who serves as godparent for the periods of purification and enlightenment and of mystagogy.

"11. Their godparents (for each a godmother or godfather, or both) accompany the candidates on the day of election, at the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the period of mystagogy. Godparents are persons chosen by the candidates on the basis of example, good qualities, and friendship, delegated by the local Christian community, and approved by the priest. It is the responsibility of godparents to show the candidates how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness, and to guide the candidates' progress in the baptismal life. Chosen before the candidates' election, godparents fulfill this office publicly from the day of the rite of election, when they give testimony to the community about the candidates. They continue to be important during the time after reception of the sacraments when the neophytes need to be assisted so that they remain true to their baptismal promises."

Regarding baptized but uncatechized "candidates":

"404. A sponsor presents these adults to the community (see #10). During the period of their catechetical formation, they all choose godparents (a godfather, a godmother, or both) approved by the priest. Their godparents work with these adults as the representatives of the community and have the same responsibilities as the godparents have toward catechumens (see #11). The same persons who were the godparents at the baptism of these adults may be chosen as godparents at this time, provided they are truly capable of carrying out the responsibilities of godparents."

Regarding baptized "candidates":

"483. At the reception, the candidate should be accompanied by a sponsor and may even have two sponsors. If someone has had the principal part in guiding or preparing the candidate, he or she should be the sponsor."

“RCIA SPONSOR GUIDELINES”

(from the web site of: Christ the King Catholic Church / Nashville, TN)

[<https://ctk.org/rcia-sponsor-guidelines>]

The Ministry of the Sponsor

- The ministry of the sponsor is a ministry of *accompaniment*.
- A sponsor is not a teacher, not a spiritual director, not an expert.
- A sponsor is a living example of what it means to be an ordinary, happy Catholic.
- A sponsor supports the candidate through the gift of her or his presence, consistently and intentionally.
- A sponsor is a witness of the candidate’s spiritual journey into the Catholic Church.
- A sponsor helps the candidate discover the Church as a living, practical, day to day reality.
- A sponsor presents the needs of his or her candidate to God daily in prayer.

Basic Requirements of a Sponsor

To be a sponsor, you must...

- Be at least 16 years of age.
- Have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
- Be someone other than the parent of the catechumen/candidate.
- Be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church.
- (Preferably...) Be a registered member of the parish.
- (Preferably...) Be someone other than the spouse or significant other of the catechumen/candidate.*

Specific Commitments of the Sponsor

- Attend Mass every Sunday, preferably with your candidate.
- Attend catechetical sessions (even when your candidate is not present).
- Meet with your candidate at least once every other week for at least 30 minutes.
- Pray for your candidate every day.
- Check in with the RCIA director at regularly scheduled times, and as needed.
- Intentionally invite your candidate join and participate in the communal life of [the parish].

* “Having a spouse or fiancé serve as a sponsor, though permissible, is not generally recommended. It is better to recruit a member of the parish who will enlarge the circle of support for the catechumen or candidate, rather than to rely on a spouse or fiancé who by nature of their relationship already has a central but different role in the person’s life.”

[From “[The Guidelines for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the Archdiocese of New York](#)”]

BACKGROUND RESOURCES...

“**RCIA Godparent and Sponsor Handbook**”, edited by William J. Keimig / Association for Catechumenal Ministry (available for purchase from Liturgy Training Publications / \$7.00)

[<https://ltp.org/products/details/ERGSH/rcia-godparent-and-sponsor-handbook>]

“**Guide for Sponsors**”, by Ronald J. Lewinski / Liturgy Training Publications (\$6.00)

[<https://ltp.org/products/details/ECIGS4/guide-for-sponsors-fourth-edition>]

“**Role of Sponsors and Companions in the Rites of Initiation and Reception**”

(from the web site of: Waterloo Catholics / Waterloo, IA)

[<https://waterloocatholics.org/the-role-of-sponsors-and-companions-in-the-rites-of-initiation-and-reception>]

“**Five Essential Elements of an RCIA Sponsor’s Job Description**”

(from the web site of: TeamRCIA)

[<https://teamrcia.com/2012/03/five-essential-elements-of-an-rcia-sponsors-job-description/>]