

CONFIRMATION

2017 - 2018





PREPARING FOR The Sacrament of Confirmation

In all of the other Hoboken/Weehawken parishes, Confirmation is administered to students in the eighth grade. It had been our experience at Ss Peter and Paul that at this age, students were oftentimes in conflict with eighth grade graduation requirements, sporting events, clubs and teams, family obligations, and simply being a teenager. Further, many of our young people had been less than engaged and were really not into the sacrament or its preparation requirements. In fact, believe it or not, after the reception of the sacrament most students stopped attending Church altogether!

Best practices in Catholic parishes of the United States suggest that the administration of Confirmation be moved to high school and that it be joined it to comprehensive and dynamic youth ministry programs. Consequently, beginning Fall, 2012, here at Ss Peter and Paul, we made that change. Our Confirmation program has been designed to be completed in one year, after participating in and meeting the requirements for Faith Formation in grades 1 through 8. High school students wishing to receive Confirmation are invited to participate in Youth Ministry, which is open to all high school students and specifically those high school students who wish to receive Confirmation.



In the context of a comprehensive youth ministry program, candidates for Confirmation receive special attention and mentoring, and share in a whole series of talks, movies, service projects and fun times, in order to ensure that s/he is ready to receive the Holy Spirit and grow in understanding his/her role in the community of the Church. While the program is designed to be completed in one year, students may elect to take the duration of their high school years to complete the requirements for the reception of Confirmation.

Ss Peter and Paul and St Lawrence students who attend Catholic schools and actively practice their faith here are exempt from this policy and are able to be confirmed with Ss Peter and Paul and St Lawrence endorsement with the other Catholic parishes of Hoboken and Weehawken, should they desire to be confirmed in the 8th grade.



Sacramental Workshops

Each sacrament has its own individual workshop but all of the sacramental workshops occur on the same day, which is the 3rd Sunday of the month. Parents are required to attend alongside the students as sacramental preparation is a family affair and the child or student can only be supported if the parents are familiar with what is being taught as well.

- ➔ Sunday, September 17
- ➔ Sunday, October 15
- ➔ Sunday, November 19
- ➔ Sunday, January 21
- ➔ Sunday, February 18
- ➔ Sunday, March 18
- ➔ Sunday, April 15

Location: Primetime Building
in various classrooms

Time: 10:00 AM to 11:15 AM

Parents are required to attend with children and students

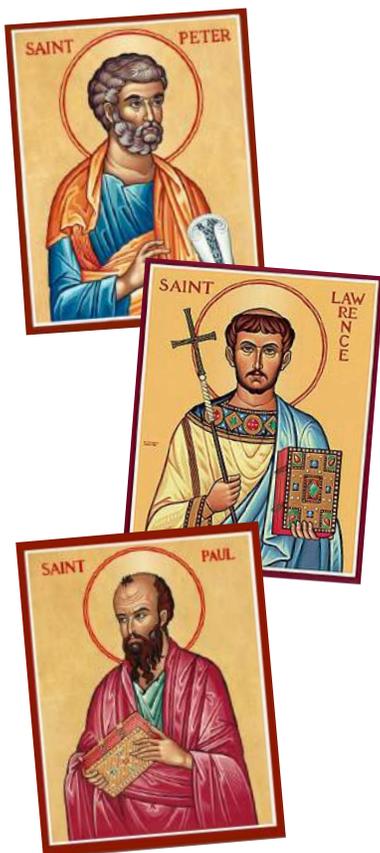
Confirmation Date:

Thursday, May 10, 2018 @ 7:00pm

WHY A SAINT?

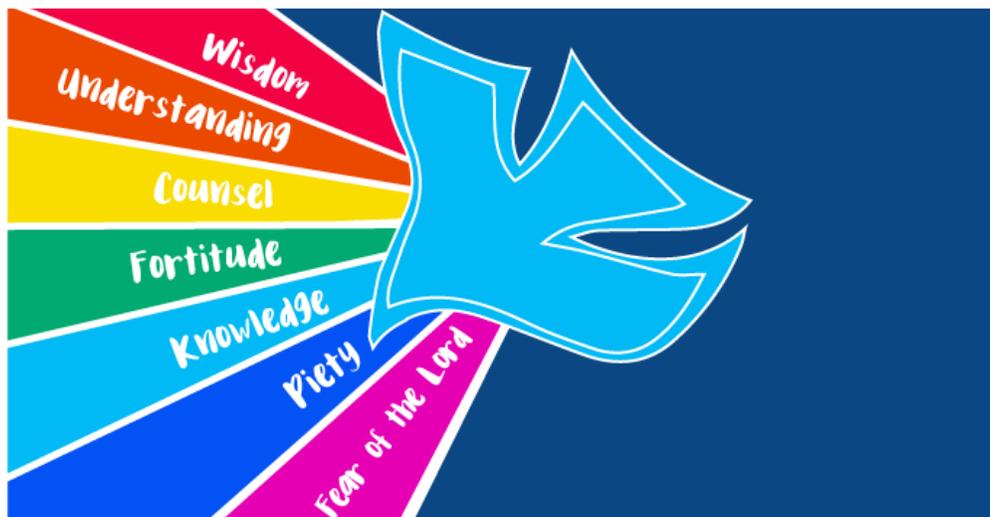
Through the process of sacramental preparation for Confirmation, the name a saint is chosen by each candidate.

The chosen saint is a model, who lived out some particular aspect of their faith in a way that inspires us. They are also chosen to intercede for us to the Father until finally receiving the fullness of grace and blessings from the Holy Spirit. Through the process of canonization, when someone is declared by the Church to be a saint, the Church is proclaiming that this member of the faithful practiced heroic virtue during their life on earth, 'the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors' (CCC 828). **To aspire to be like a saint is the same as trying to imitate an actor, musician, or athlete; a confirmation saint is someone we aspire to be like.**



The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The Manifestation of Sanctifying Grace

by Scott P Richert



The Catholic Church recognizes seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; a listing of these gifts is found in Isaiah 11:2-3. (Saint Paul writes of "manifestations of the Spirit" in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, and some Protestants use that list to come up with nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, but these are not the same as the ones recognized by the Catholic Church.)

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are present in their fullness in Jesus Christ, but they are also found in all Christians who are in a state of grace. We receive them when we are infused with sanctifying grace, the life of God within us—as, for example, when we receive a sacrament worthily. We first receive the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism; these gifts are strengthened in the Sacrament of Confirmation, which is one of the reasons why the Catholic Church teaches that Confirmation is properly viewed as the completion of Baptism.

As the current Catechism of the Catholic Church (para. 1831) notes, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit "complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them." Infused with His gifts, we respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as if by instinct, the way Christ Himself would.



THE FIRST GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Wisdom is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3. They are present in their fullness in Jesus Christ, Whom Isaiah foretold (Isaiah 11:1), but they are available to all Christians who are in a state of grace. We receive the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit when we are infused with sanctifying grace, the life of God within us—as, for example, when we receive a sacrament worthily. As the current Catechism of the Catholic Church (para. 1831) notes, "They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them."

THE FIRST AND HIGHEST GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT Wisdom is the perfection of faith. As Fr John A Hardon, SJ, notes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Where faith is a simple knowledge of the articles of Christian belief, wisdom goes on to a certain divine penetration of the truths themselves." The better we understand those truths, the more we value them properly. Thus wisdom, the Catholic Encyclopedia notes, "by detaching us from the world, makes us relish and love only the things of heaven." Through wisdom, we judge the things of the world in light of the highest end of man—the contemplation of God.

THE APPLICATION OF WISDOM Such detachment, however, is not the same as renunciation of the world—far from it. Rather, wisdom helps us to love the world properly, as the creation of God, rather than for its own sake. The material world, though fallen as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, is still worthy of our love; we simply need to see it in the proper light, and wisdom allows us to do so. Knowing the proper ordering of the material and spiritual worlds through wisdom, we can more easily bear the burdens of this life and respond to our fellow man with charity and patience.



2. UNDERSTANDING

THE SECOND GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Understanding is the second of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3, behind only wisdom. It differs from wisdom in that wisdom is the desire to contemplate the things of God, while understanding allows us, as Fr John A Hardon writes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, to "penetrate to the very core of revealed truths." This doesn't mean that we can come to understand, say, the Trinity the way that we might a mathematical equation, but that we become certain of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. Such certitude moves beyond faith, which "merely assents to what God has revealed."

UNDERSTANDING IN PRACTICE Once we become convinced through understanding of the truths of the Faith, we can also draw conclusions from those truths and arrive at a further understanding of man's relation to God and his role in the world. Understanding rises above natural reason, which is concerned only with the things we can sense in the world around us. Thus, understanding is both speculative—concerned with intellectual knowledge—and practical, because it can help us to order the actions of our lives toward our final end, which is God. Through understanding, we see the world and our life within it in the larger context of the eternal law and the relation of our souls to God.



3. COUNSEL

THE THIRD GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Counsel, the third of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3, is the perfection of the cardinal virtue of prudence. While prudence, like all the cardinal virtues, can be practiced by anyone, whether in a state of grace or not, it can take on a supernatural dimension through sanctifying grace. Counsel is the fruit of this supernatural prudence.

Like prudence, counsel allows us to judge rightly what we should do in a particular circumstance. It goes beyond prudence, though, in allowing such judgments to be made promptly, "as by a sort of supernatural intuition," as Fr John A Hardon writes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*. When we are infused with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as if by instinct.

COUNSEL IN PRACTICE Counsel builds on both wisdom, which allows us to judge the things of the world in light of our final end, and understanding, which helps us to penetrate to the very core of the mysteries of our faith. "With the gift of counsel, the Holy Spirit speaks, as it were, to the heart and in an instant enlightens a person what to do," writes Father Hardon. It is the gift that allows us as Christians to be assured that we will act correctly in times of trouble and trial. Through counsel, we can speak without fear in defense of the Christian Faith. Thus, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes, counsel "enables us to see and choose correctly what will help most to the glory of God and our own salvation."



4. FORTITUDE

THE FOURTH GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Fortitude is one of the four cardinal virtues. That means that the virtue of fortitude can be practiced by anyone, Christian or not, since, unlike the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues are not, in themselves, the gifts of God through grace but the outgrowth of habit. The virtue of fortitude is commonly called courage, but it is different from what much of what we think of as courage today.

Fortitude is always reasoned and reasonable; the person exercising fortitude is willing to put himself in danger if necessary, but he does not seek danger for danger's sake. Fortitude always serves a higher purpose.

FORTITUDE IS THE THIRD OF THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

St Thomas Aquinas ranked fortitude as the third of the cardinal virtues, because it serves the higher virtues of prudence and justice. Fortitude is the virtue that allows us to overcome fear and to remain steady in our will in the face of all obstacles, physical and spiritual. Prudence and justice are the virtues through which we decide what needs to be done; fortitude gives us the strength to do it.

WHAT FORTITUDE IS NOT Fortitude is not foolhardiness or rashness, "rushing in where angels fear to tread." Indeed, part of the virtue of fortitude, as Fr John A Hardon, SJ, notes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, is the "curbing of recklessness." Putting our bodies or lives in danger when it is not necessary is not fortitude but foolishness; acting rashly is not a virtue but a vice.

FORTITUDE IS A GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT Sometimes, however, the ultimate sacrifice is necessary, in order to stand up for what is right in this world and to save our souls in the next. Fortitude is the virtue of the martyrs, who are willing to give up their lives rather than to renounce their faith. That sacrifice may be passive—Christian martyrs do not actively seek to die for their faith—but it is nonetheless determined and resolute.

FORTITUDE IS THE VIRTUE OF THE MARTYRS It is in martyrdom that we see the best example of fortitude rising above a mere cardinal virtue (able to be practiced by anyone) into one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3. But fortitude as a gift of the Holy Spirit also shows itself, as the *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes, "in moral courage against the evil spirit of the times, against improper fashions, against human respect, against the common tendency to seek at least the comfortable, if not the voluptuous." In other words, fortitude is the virtue that helps us to stand up for what is right, even when others say that Christian belief or moral action is "outdated."

Fortitude, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, also allows us to cope with poverty and loss, and to cultivate the Christian virtues that allow us to rise above the basic requirements of Christianity. The saints, in their love for God and their fellow man and their determination to do what is right, exhibit fortitude as a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, and not merely as a cardinal virtue.

You might notice that the seven gifts include the repetition of the last gift—fear. Scholars suggest that the repetition reflects the preference for using the number seven symbolically in Christian literature, such as we see in the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, the Seven Deadly Sins, and the Seven Virtues. To distinguish between two gifts that are both called fear, the sixth gift is sometimes described as "piety" or "reverence," while the seventh is described as "wonder and awe."



THE FIFTH GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

An Old Testament passage from the book of Isaiah (11:2-3) enumerates seven gifts believed to have been bestowed on Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear. For Christians, these gifts thought to be theirs as believers and followers of the example of Christ.

The context of this passage is as follows:

*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*

*The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
--the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord--
and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.*

THE PERFECTION OF FAITH Like wisdom (the first gift) knowledge (the fifth gift) perfects the theological virtue of faith. The aims of knowledge and wisdom are different, however. Whereas wisdom helps us to penetrate divine truth and prepares us to judge all things according to that truth, knowledge gives us that ability to judge. As Fr John A Hardon, SJ, writes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "The object of this gift is the whole spectrum of created things insofar as they lead one to God."

Another way to articulate this distinction is to think of wisdom as the desire to know God's will, while knowledge is the actual faculty by which these things are known. In the Christian sense, however, knowledge is not just the mere collection of facts, but also the ability to choose the correct path.

THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE From the Christian perspective, knowledge allows us to see the circumstances of our life as God sees them, albeit in a more limited way, since we are constricted by our human nature. Through the exercise of knowledge, we can ascertain God's purpose in our lives and His reason for placing us in our particular circumstances. As Father Hardon notes, knowledge is sometimes called "the science of the saints," because "it enables those who have the gift to discern easily and effectively between the impulses of temptation and the inspirations of grace." Judging all things in the light of divine truth, we can more easily distinguish between the promptings of God and the subtle wiles of the devil. Knowledge is what makes it possible to distinguish between good and evil and choose our actions accordingly.



THE SIXTH GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Piety is the sixth of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3. Like all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, piety is granted to those who are in a state of grace. As, in the words of the current Catechism of the Catholic Church (para. 1831), the other gifts of the Holy Spirit "complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them," piety completes and perfects the virtue of religion.

THE PERFECTION OF RELIGION When we are infused with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as if by instinct, the way that Christ Himself would. Perhaps in none of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is this instinctual response more obvious than in piety. While wisdom and knowledge perfect the theological virtue of faith, piety perfects religion, which, as Fr John A Hardon, SJ, notes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, is "The moral virtue by which a person is disposed to render to God the worship and service he deserves." Far from being a drudgery, worship should be an act of love, and piety is the instinctive affection for God that makes us desire to render worship to Him, just as we voluntarily honor our parents.

PIETY IN PRACTICE Piety, Father Hardon notes, arises "not so much from a studied effort or acquired habit as from a supernatural communication conferred by the Holy Spirit." People sometimes say that "piety demands it," which usually means that they feel compelled to do something that they don't want to do. True piety, however, makes no such demands but instills in us a desire always to do that which is pleasing to God—and, by extension, that which is pleasing to those who serve God in their own lives. In other words, piety, like each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, helps us to live our lives as full and complete human beings. Piety draws us to Mass; it prompts us to pray, even when we may not feel like doing so. Piety calls us to respect that natural order created by God, including the natural human order; to honor our father and our mother, but also to respect all of our elders and those in authority. And just as piety binds us to previous generations still alive, it moves us to remember and to pray for the dead.

PIETY AND TRADITION Piety, then, is tied closely to tradition, and like tradition, this gift of the Holy Spirit is not simply backward-looking but forward-looking. Caring for the world in which we live—especially our little corner of the vineyard—and trying to build up a culture of life not only for us but for future generations are natural outgrowths of the gift of piety.



THE SEVENTH GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Fear of the Lord is the last of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3. The gift of the fear of the Lord, Fr John A Hardon notes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, confirms the theological virtue of hope. We often think of hope and fear as mutually exclusive, but the fear of the Lord is the desire not to offend Him, and the certainty that He will give us the grace necessary to keep from doing so. It is that certainty that gives us hope. The fear of the Lord is like the respect we have for our parents. We do not wish to offend them, but we also do not live in fear of them, in the sense of being frightened.

WHAT THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS NOT In the same way, Father Hardon notes, "The fear of the Lord is not servile but filial." In other words, it is not a fear of punishment, but a desire not to offend God that parallels our desire not to offend our parents. Even so, many people misunderstand the fear of the Lord. Recalling the verse that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," they think that the fear of the Lord is something that is good to have when you first start out as a Christian, but that you should grow beyond it. That is not the case; rather, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because it is one of the foundations of our religious life, just as the desire to do what our parents wish us to do should remain with us our entire lives.

SLAP THEM SOONER: CONFIRMATION & FIRST COMMUNION, TOGETHER

By Rita Ferrone

It seems like all my life people have been arguing about the appropriate age of Confirmation. Should it be conferred along with infant Baptism, as it is in the Eastern churches? Should it be united with first Communion, inspired by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults? Should it be delayed to the late teen years, young adulthood, or even after marriage? Should it be celebrated in adolescence, as a rite of passage, like a Catholic bar mitzvah? Some have even suggested that Confirmation should be a repeatable sacrament, to be administered whenever one has an experience of conversion or faith renewal.

Two Catholic bishops, Samuel Aquila of Denver and Larry Silva of Honolulu, have recently announced that they will restore the traditional order of the sacraments of initiation in their dioceses, celebrating Confirmation and Eucharist in a single ceremony for Catholic children aged seven to eight who were baptized in infancy. They join a small but growing number of dioceses that have reviewed the practice of adolescent Confirmation and found it wanting. In the words of Pope Francis, Confirmation has become the “sacrament of goodbye” as adolescents “graduate” from Confirmation programs and are never seen again. The pope has a point. These bishops are doing the right thing by moving Confirmation to an earlier age, and I hope others will follow suit.

I understand why enthusiasts for adolescent Confirmation value the programs they conduct for teens and preteens. They are reaching kids at a critical time in their lives. Youth catechesis is important. Having a special ritual for young people draws families together and gives a certain luster to these programs. Many argue that without pressure from their parents to receive confirmation these young people would abandon ship, so why not use Confirmation to keep them around a little longer? Unfortunately, a couple of important facts about sacraments are easily overlooked in this debate.

The first is that Eucharist is the culmination of Christian initiation. According to the Catechism, according to canon law, according to the great tradition of Catholic sacraments, Eucharist is the goal, the high point of all Christian initiation. Christians are baptized and confirmed in order to come to the table, and it is from the table that they are sent into the world to live their faith and to embrace the mission of Jesus. Setting the bar higher for Confirmation than for Eucharist—requiring six, eight, even nine more years of catechesis before one can be considered “ready”—is grievously paradoxical.



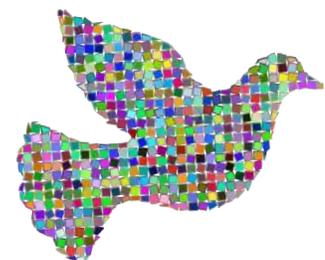
The pastoral fallout of this confused situation is obvious. Confirmation is ringed with social requirements, while Eucharist is reduced to an exercise in personal piety. Many of those enrolled in Confirmation programs do not even attend Mass regularly, and neither do their families. Confirmation programs rarely reverse this sorry state of affairs. Why are we pouring resources into getting youth “ready” to celebrate a one-time event? We should be bending all our efforts toward helping them engage with the celebration of the Eucharist—a grace-filled practice that can continue week after week for the rest of their lives.

Second, we sell short the grace of Confirmation by assuming that children are not ready or too immature for it. By deferring Confirmation until adolescence, we tacitly agree that it isn't going to “do anything” for the child that will be missed in that intervening period. But I'm not so sure about that. Sacraments are not magic, but they do work in mysterious ways, as gifts and doorways and identity markers. Suppose one entered adolescence with a sense of having already been “fully equipped” with the Holy Spirit from the age of reason, rather than always “waiting” or “preparing” for something not yet received? What would it be like if the task of adolescent faith development began with realizing that a huge gift has already been given in Baptism and Confirmation, and that now the challenge is to learn how to live according to an identity we already possess?

I was confirmed at age eight, one year after my first Communion. No particular theory was announced for this practice. It was just the way it was. We had

to pass a test, in which we recited from memory the Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love. We wore red beanies and white graduation gowns. We received the then-obligatory slap on the cheek from the bishop (only a light tap). Then we went home and had a party. I found the ceremony itself rather disappointing. First Communion had been so exciting. You got to eat the Body of Christ! Thereafter you could go to Communion all the time! Confirmation didn't live up to that high standard. Nevertheless, it did something for me. With that anointing I was given my inheritance, the completion of baptismal grace. The beautiful dignity of that sacrament remained with me in hidden ways.

By restoring the order of the sacraments of initiation for children of Catholic parents, the bishops of Denver and Honolulu are challenging their people to see adolescent catechesis and youth ministry as worthy endeavors in their own right—not because they lead to Confirmation, but because they are part of how the church accompanies children on their journey to adulthood. We need to reach out to our young people. But we also need a sacramental polity that reflects the best of our tradition, with Eucharist returned to its proper place as the crowning event of Christian initiation.



Understanding the Role of Sponsor (Godparent)

The raising of children in the knowledge and practice of our Catholic faith is an important part of the responsibility of parents and guardians.



The Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation have an added dimension as parents are asked to select sponsors (godparents) for those candidates who are about to be initiated into the Catholic faith. There is no more lively discussion in our parish office when the “nominee” for this important role as sponsor, is advised that “they do not qualify” for this important role. Perhaps the following brief essay which examines the historical, legal, and pastoral aspects of serving as a sponsor may help.

HISTORICAL The role of the godparent for baptism is rooted in the role of the sponsor in the catechumenate, which originated in the early Church. Recall that until the year 313, the Church was under the persecution of the Roman Empire and had to be cautious in conducting its affairs so as to prevent pagan infiltration and persecution. Also, until the Middle Ages, the Sacraments of Initiation — baptism, holy Eucharist, and confirmation — were administered at once.

The role of the sponsor then was to attest to the integrity of the person, oftentimes an adult, seeking admission into the Church as well as to assist him during the catechumenate in preparing for these sacraments and in living a Christian life. For infants, these sponsors would also make the Profession of Faith in the child's name and accept the responsibility of instructing the child in the faith, especially if the parents failed in this duty.

About the year 800 when infant baptism was truly the norm, these sponsors were called “patrinus” or “godfather.” Traditionally, we identify the sponsor of a child for baptism as the godparent — godmother or godfather, but the technical term remains “sponsor.”

LEGAL According to the Code of Canon Law, “Insofar as possible, one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation, or, together with the parents, to present an infant at the baptism, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it” (No. 872). This statement clearly reflects the historical roots of the role of sponsor.

To be a sponsor, a person must be chosen by the person to be baptized, or by the parents or guardians of a child, or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister of the sacrament.

The sponsor must not only have the intention of being a sponsor but also meet proper qualifications.

- ✓ The sponsor must have completed their sixteenth year unless the bishop has established another age for sponsorship, or the pastor or minister judges that a just cause warrants an exception to the rule.
- ✓ They must be a Catholic who has received the sacraments of holy Eucharist and confirmation, and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.
- ✓ Moreover, the sponsor cannot be impeded by some canonical penalty. Ideally, this sponsor at baptism should also be the sponsor for confirmation.

Note that the mother and father of the child cannot serve as sponsors. Also note that these are the same requirements for confirmation sponsors. (Cf. Code of Canon Law, No. 874.1).

Strictly speaking, a person only needs one sponsor for baptism — male or female, but may have two sponsors, one male and one female. Here the Code of Canon Law wants to eliminate the practice of having numerous sponsors, as has occurred in some cultures (No. 873). Also, in the case of an emergency, such as imminent death, no sponsor is needed. At Confirmation, only one sponsor is required.

Technically, only Catholics can be godparents or sponsors. A Christian of another denomination, whether Orthodox or Protestant, however, may be a “Christian witness” to the baptism along with the Catholic godparent. The reason for this distinction and restriction is that the godparent not only is taking responsibility for the religious education and spiritual formation of the baptized person, but also is representing the Church, the community of faith, into which the person is being baptized. A Christian who is not Catholic, although perhaps a very holy, Christian, cannot fully attest to the beliefs of the Catholic Church. Likewise, a Catholic can only be a Christian witness for someone who is baptized into another Christian denomination.

PASTORAL Here we should pause to clarify who qualifies as a Catholic godparent/sponsor. A Catholic who does not practice the faith by regularly attending Mass or who is in an invalid marriage disqualifies him/herself from being a godparent/sponsor. Moreover, if a person is Catholic but antagonistic to the faith, i.e. has the attitude “I am a Catholic but...,” and would not be a good example and witness to the faith also disqualifies him/herself. If a person is not striving to fulfill his own obligations of baptism and confirmation, s/he will not fulfill the responsibilities of helping another to do so.

Therefore, parents need to find good practicing Catholics for godparents/sponsors. Sadly, this task can be very difficult in today's world, but the burden is on the parents to select the right person, not to challenge the Church teaching on the matter.

As a pastor, I am truly perturbed each time someone comes by the rectory office and wants me to sign a sponsor's certificate and attest that s/he is a practicing Catholic when this, in fact is not true. Have we come to the point where people will actually demand the priest to lie for them?

In our parish, while we are very pastorally sensitive, we seek to give the sacraments their due dignity. Sponsors must fulfill the requirements noted above and actually be registered, support and practice their faith with us. If I do not recognize the person, and/or s/he is not registered in the parish and/or he/she does not attend Mass faithfully, in justice, I cannot meet such a request and sign a form that certifies otherwise.

Parents need to find good practicing Catholics to be godparents/sponsors. The best place is to look for relatives, even grandparents, who have a blood relationship with the godchild and have kept the faith over the years. Good friends are also appropriate, but sometimes friendships wane, leaving the godchild without an active godparent. Godparents/sponsors should be faithful and practicing individuals who are ready to accept the responsibility of being a part of a child's life for the rest of his/her life.

In all, godparents/sponsors serve a special role in the life of the candidate. Therefore, each parent should choose a godparent/sponsor not just because of a blood relationship or friendship; rather, a godparent/sponsor should be an honest and trustworthy witness of the faith who will help the godchild attain salvation. - **Fr Bob**

With thanks to: catholiceducation.org

