

THE GIFT OF GODPARENTS

FOR THOSE CHOSEN
WITH LOVE AND TRUST
TO BE GODPARENTS

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PUBLICATIONS

CONTENTS

A Special Invitation from the Parents • 7

A Word of Welcome • 9

Who, Me, a Godparent? • 11

Where Did It All Begin? • 15

Isn't Everything Different Now? • 21

What'll I Do at the Church? • 27

Will I Ever Stop Being a Godparent? • 35

What Are Godparents Really Like? • 39

What Else Do I Have to Know? • 43

How Can I Get Ready? • 51

Scripture Readings for Baptism • 61

Prayers for Baptism • 65

Resolutions for Godparents • 71

A SPECIAL INVITATION FROM THE PARENTS

We want you to become someone special in the life of our child. That is why we have asked you to be our child's godparent.

Our baby's baptism is an important moment for us and for our child. We want it to be memorable for you, too, and so we offer you this book as our gift to you.

Even if you've been a godparent for another child, our child is a unique person, full of unique gifts, the recipient of a unique touch from God. Both of you, adult and child, can be changed forever by this simple act of joining in the celebration of our child's baptism.

We're grateful that you said yes to this opportunity and to this challenge. We want you to understand what it means to be a godparent.

You will be someone for our child to look up to. With us, you will help form our child's values and morals and faith in Jesus.

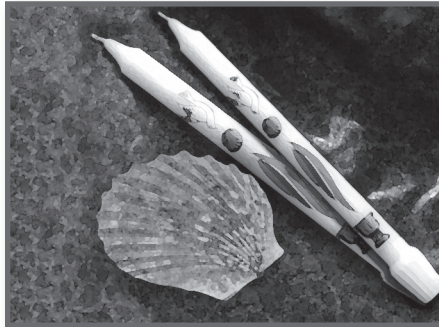
We want you, with us, to help our child to dream and hope and grow. We treasure your friendship and hope our relationship will be a source of strength for us as we walk through parenthood.

We are honored that you have agreed to be a friend and guide in our child's faith and life.

Gratefully,
The Parents of Your
New Godchild

For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith...
all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26-28



A WORD OF WELCOME

Since you're reading these pages, it means someone has asked you to become a godparent.

CONGRATULATIONS.

Now that the initial excitement of being chosen for this very special role may have worn off—or even if you've been a godmother or a godfather many times over—you might be wondering just what it all means. And that's why you are reading this book. It might have been a gift from the child's parents or their parish. Or it might have been something you spotted all by yourself. It doesn't matter which.

WELCOME.

As a godparent you are part of a grand and ancient tradition. Your spiritual forebears have walked this road for two millennia, caring, guiding, loving, helping—and perhaps most importantly—remembering the child with whom they have a special personal and spiritual relationship.

As a godparent you are about to be blessed with some very special rights, some awesome responsibilities and some tremendous opportunities.

You may never have thought about it in this way, but it's true: You are about to impact a young life. And there is little else quite as special, quite as awesome or as much an opportunity.

Being a godparent can be an exciting journey, much like that of holding onto the hand of a small child walking through a park. You never know exactly what's going to pop up.

The role you play in this life drama, this faith drama—that of godparent—is one that has had various understandings down through the

centuries. You may even see your role somewhat differently than the parents who have chosen you do. In any case, godparents are blessed with the continuing promise of faithfulness from the God who loves us and cares for us.

So that you might have a better understanding of what might be expected of you as a godparent (or baptismal sponsor), this little book will help you reflect on the sacrament of baptism, our Christian faith, the role of a godparent, the baptismal ceremony, the relationship between a child and a godparent, and what the future might hold for you as a Christian godparent.

Good luck and God bless you, dear and important godparent.

WHO, ME, A GODPARENT?

A brief story: A mother and a father—both faithful Catholics—are interested in having their newborn infant presented for baptism. At the preparation session held by their parish, they are asked whether they have chosen godparents yet.

They look at each other, very nearly in puzzlement.

“Godparents?” they both say almost in unison. “We really don’t know anyone worthy enough.”

And they mean it.

Now there’s a story capable of striking fear into the heart of any prospective godmother or godfather.

“Am I worthy enough? After all, it’s a big job. I mean, there’s responsibilities and everything, right?”

Of course there is. But “worthy” is a loaded word.

Parents have the responsibility of selecting good role models for their child, and there are rules in place to help guide that selection. Even so, it’s important to remember that none of us is perfect.

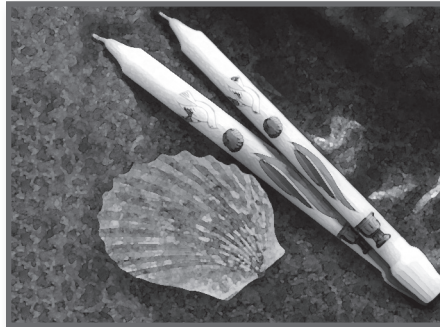
If you’re going to become a godparent, do you have to be perfect? No.

Are you expected to be a saint? Certainly not. In fact, you’ll probably be a better godparent if you aren’t.

Now about those rules.

While hard-and-fast rules for godparenting may vary from diocese to diocese, godparents are generally expected to be over the age of 16 or to have received the sacrament of confirmation. At least one godparent must be Catholic; the other, if not Catholic, must be a believing member of another Christian denomination.

Godparents do their best when they keep trying
to make the Gospel (the Good News) real.
The Good News that Jesus calls each of us to live
is neither complex nor magical.



Some parishes ask prospective Catholic godparents to present proof that they are practicing (active) in their churches. That usually means that the godparents have to get a letter from their parish stating that they are regular churchgoers.

Other parishes are more trusting of the parents. They figure that parents aren't going to lie about the rules. Or, if they do, it's only their child they are putting at risk, not the structure of the faith.

A godparent is expected to be a believing Christian because that's one of the values a godparent is supposed to pass along to the child. As a child's sponsor for the sacrament of baptism, a godparent should offer a positive example of faith. If we expect children to take a positive view of religion, it's a primary role of parents and godparents to show them the right direction.

Sometimes the most successful way that godparents can make an impression on a young person is to keep trying: Keep trying to do good, keep trying to make right decisions, keep trying to love God—even when it's not easy.

Godparents do their best when they keep trying to make the Gospel (the Good News) real. The Good News that Jesus calls each of us to live is neither complex nor magical.

It is simply...

To feed the hungry. To visit the sick. To welcome the stranger. To free the captives. To instruct the doubtful. To comfort the sorrowing. To proclaim the favor of God upon all people.

That's not an impossible task for a godparent. Nor does it take perfection. Only the promise to keep working at it.

To be a godparent is to invest in the future and to look far ahead. To look ahead, we must sometimes look behind—and that's what the next brief chapter is all about.