

Confirmation--Choosing a Sponsor

The History of the Confirmation Sponsor

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 regarding 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 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.

How Do I Choose a Sponsor?

A Confirmation sponsor supports the candidate as they prepare to become full members of the church. It's an important role to play, and one no sponsor should take lightly. Choosing a sponsor is also a decision that candidates should take seriously. The following are a few things candidates can consider when choosing a sponsor for their Confirmation candidacy. There are certain rules and requirements with regard to who can and cannot be a Confirmation sponsor.

- In general, a sponsor must be at least 18 years of age. In addition, candidates cannot choose one of their parents to act as a sponsor. However, godparents or even siblings often do qualify as sponsors.
- A Confirmation sponsor must also be a confirmed member of the Catholic church. The sponsor must also be a practicing Catholic who attends Mass.
- Location--Another thing to consider when choosing a Confirmation sponsor is where that potential sponsor lives. Once chosen, the sponsor will be asked to fulfill certain requirements, including attending a retreat, so it helps to choose a sponsor who lives nearby. It's not required that a sponsor live in the community, but it will make it easier on the sponsor you choose.
- Age--Though any confirmed, practicing Catholic over the age of 18 is eligible to be a Confirmation sponsor in most parishes, it might help to choose someone who is older than 18. A sponsor is supposed to be a role model for the candidate who can offer advice and guidance not only during your candidacy, but after you have been confirmed as well. Someone who is just a few years older than you might not be the best person to provide that advice and guidance.
- Relationship--It might make things easier if the person you ultimately choose to be a sponsor is someone you already have a strong relationship with and find is easy to talk to. The relationship is one that should continue and strengthen after you have been confirmed, so choosing someone you already have a good rapport with will make it easier for the relationship to flourish. In addition, most people find it easier to ask questions or seek advice from someone they're personally close to, and you will likely have a few questions along the way to being confirmed.
- Most importantly, **the sponsor chosen should be available and involved with the candidate in a significant way, and be able to offer an authentic example of lived Catholic Christian faith.**