

Do Godparents Have To Be Married in the Church?

Those who serve as sponsors (a man and a woman together are commonly referred to as “godparents”) must, if married, be married in the Catholic Church. Why is this? The role of a sponsor is to provide spiritual support to the parents as they keep their solemn promise that they intend to practice their faith and raise the child as a Catholic. If the godparents continue to be an important part of the child’s life as he/she grows, they will need to be a good Christian example to the child. Persons who are not married in the Church or who are cohabiting (living together) are not in a position to provide that example due to their living situation. People who are not married in the Church have, for whatever reason, chosen not to participate in the Church’s sacraments and have placed themselves outside of the communion of the Church. These persons are encouraged to continue to go to Mass and worship, but they are not permitted to receive the Eucharist (Holy Communion) until they receive what is called a convalidation, sometimes referred to as “marriage in the Church.”

Modern life is full of difficulties that were not as prevalent just a generation or two ago. Many Catholics have chosen to marry outside of the Church, which means their marriage is not a sacrament. Some are living together in a sexual relationship without marriage at all. While it is understandable that circumstances and social pressures make it easier for some couples not to marry, it is the view of the Church that baptized Catholics should keep their baptism promises by practicing the faith in which they were baptized, including marriage.

A godparent’s first obligation is to attend Sunday Mass every Sunday. There may be occasions when you miss, but those should be occasional, not routine. You cannot pass on the practice of the faith unless you are practicing it yourself.

If you need help, please contact me: gingerh@st-mm.com