

NEW WINE & NEW WINESKINS....Adult ED & Formation
Being a Sponsor in the Church

According to the dictionary a **sponsor is “one who takes the responsibility for some other person or thing.”** Of course, this definition can apply to something secular, such as a business that pays for a program on television and in return can advertise during the program. It can also apply to something religious, such as an adult standing with a teenager when a bishop confirms that person. “Taking responsibility” is the operative word in both of these incidents.

At the Baptism and Confirmation, church members are named as sponsors for other persons. It does not matter if the person being baptized or being confirmed is a child or an adult. Remember that during the RCIA process, a person choosing to join the Church selects a sponsor. There are requirements of sponsors whether the person is standing with a child or an adult.

The concept of sponsor by definition establishes some requirements on the person who is named as a sponsor and says “yes” to that designation. ***Being a sponsor in the Church requires knowledge, living in relationship and personal growth in faith.*** It is safe to say that many persons in the Church do not start with looking at the requirements of being a sponsor, but rather with one’s personal feelings about being asked to be a sponsor. Simply put, many folks center on their own feelings of being asked and feeling honored rather than saying “what is being required of me” and “can I meet the requirements.”

To be a sponsor means being knowledgeable of the Catholic faith and not just faith in general. So it seems advisory that folks should have a Catechism of the Church in hand, look at it and then after some reflection on the content of it, say whether they will be a sponsor. After all, how can one lead a youngster in decision making if that person does not know how to help form a child in decision making. How can one advise another adult if one does not know the Church’s doctrine?

Church is about relationships with God and with each other. A sponsor for a baby at Baptism implies a long term relational commitment by the adult with the child to assist in the decision making process of the child. It also implies a long-term relational commitment to the parents of that child. Because a person or persons have a child, those folks are not necessarily experts in raising a child in the faith. By interaction of the sponsor and the parents, the setting for a child’s faith development is established and grows. Simply put, the sponsor is part of the faith development that occurs in a family. Sponsors must have a good relationship with the child and family and talk about faith and live the faith together.

Sponsors need to be people of faith who actively live the faith and strive to grow in the faith. One cannot be of assistance to another in matters of faith and decision making if one does not take seriously living the faith and growing in the faith. Sponsors are persons who seek a deeper relationship with God and their neighbors.

So if sponsorship in the Church implies being knowledgeable, being relational and growing in faith, then why must one go to classes for Baptism, Confirmation and RCIA? There is a simple answer. The pastor is responsible for saying a person is knowledgeable, lives in relationship with the candidate and the candidate’s family and is growing in faith. Since the pastor is not God and only works for God, public gatherings seem to be the best way of assisting the pastor in being responsible for selected sponsors. For similar reasons, persons being sponsors at sacramental celebrations in other parishes need to have a document that states to the best of the pastor’s knowledge that a designated sponsor is knowledgeable, relational and striving to grow in faith.

In the big picture, sponsorship is about God and us and not about “feeling honored” to be a sponsor. Sponsorship is about working in the vineyard.

To receive a sponsor form from St. Clare of Assisi Parish to be a sponsor in another parish, a person must:

- * *Be currently registered as a member of St. Clare of Assisi Parish or another Catholic Parish*
- * *Be at least 16 years of age*
- * *Have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation*
- * *Be presently practicing their faith by attending Mass, contributing to the support of the Church, and living a good moral life, worthy of the imitation of the person being sponsored.*
- * *IF MARRIED - Be in a Valid Sacramental Catholic Marriage and must be raising children in the Catholic Faith.*