

## **Day 144 – Tuesday, August 11- *Baptism* - Frequently Asked Questions**

*Baptism* - Frequently Asked Questions – From the Archdiocese of Toronto

### **12. What does a godparent do?**

A godparent is called to model what it means to live as a Catholic Christian. The godparent is to assist the child in living a Christian life.

### **13. How many godparents are required?**

The child may have only one or two godparents. If two godparents are chosen, one is to be a man and the other a woman. (Canon 873)

### **14. Can a person of the Orthodox faith be a godparent?**

A member of the Eastern Orthodox Church may be a godparent together with a Catholic. "For a just cause, it is permitted to admit the Christian faithful of another Eastern non-Catholic Church to the function of a sponsor, but always at the same time with a Catholic sponsor." (Eastern Code of Canon Law, Canon 685 par. 3.) There must be at least one Catholic godparent.

### **15. What if the person I have chosen as godparent is sick or unable to be present at the time of the Baptism?**

In exceptional circumstances, it is possible for the godparent to be represented at the Baptism by a 'proxy'. The name of the godparent will be entered in the Baptismal Register. The name of the person who has served as proxy is not entered in the Baptismal Register.

### **16. May a Catholic serve as a godparent at a non-Catholic baptism?**

A Catholic may act as witness at a non-Catholic baptism, but not as a sponsor. The only situation in which a Catholic may be a godparent (sponsor) in "another ecclesial Community" is in an Eastern Orthodox Church "if he/she is so invited" (Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism, 98, a, b).

### **17. In the future, may I change the Baptismal sponsors?**

On occasion, one or both of the people who served as godparents are no longer a part of the child's life or they have moved a great distance and the possibility of an ongoing relationship is compromised. In this type of a situation, parents may wish to change the Baptismal record and add the name of a new godparent. Although a new person may now hold a place of prominence in the faith life of the child it is not possible to alter the Baptismal register. The register is a legal record and the original godparents were a witness to the event. It would be untruthful to remove the name of the original witness and replace it with a new name, perhaps someone who was not even present at the Baptism.

### **18. May a priest or a deacon serve as a godparent and also preside at the baptism?**

Clergy may serve as godparents (sponsors) but are asked not to be the minister of baptism if serving as a godparent (sponsor) so that the roles are not confused.

### **19. What is meant by the term "Christian witness"?**

A Christian witness is a baptized Christian and a member of a non-Catholic ecclesial community. (e.g., Anglican, United, Presbyterian, etc.) A member of the Eastern Orthodox Church may serve as a godparent if there is a Catholic godparent. A Christian witness is a witness to the Baptism, not a godparent. One Christian witness is allowed only if there is one godparent. (Canon 874) If there is a Christian witness, when his/her name is entered in the Baptismal Register the term Christian witness should be included. It is not necessary to have a Christian witness.

*In the light of eternity, we're here for a very short time, really. We're here for one thing, ultimately: to learn how to love, because God is love. - James Finley*

Sincerely,  
Fr. Jim Kaptein