



Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Sponsorship in the Process of Initiation

Sponsors in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults come in two forms: sponsors and godparents.¹ The roles and responsibilities are indicated in the rite. It is always a good practice to re-read the appropriate paragraph in the rite when welcoming candidates and catechumens into the RCIA process.² The sponsor accompanies the candidate and the catechumen on a journey of faith. The role of the godparent begins with the Rite of Election of the catechumen and is a lifetime commitment. A sponsor is a witness of the Christian life who is willing to share with the person she is sponsoring the path which has led her to Christ and continues to guide her as a Christian witness.³ A sponsor is one whom Pope Francis sees as being willing to share the reason for his hope. A sponsor is willing to accompany another person on the journey of faith. An effective sponsor will have some specific traits.⁴ The sponsor:

A Person of Prayer

- has a daily habit of prayer and is willing to share the experience of prayer;
- is open to learn new forms of prayer as these are introduced to the catechumen or candidate she is sponsoring;
- participates in the Sunday mass and is willing to accompany the catechumen or candidate to mass and other major worship events;
- participates in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) and other forms of penitential prayer; is **not** a recruiter for a specific prayer group or organization, but a bridge between the parish and the candidate or catechumen. Although a certain form of

THE ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT

“Each expression of art requires practice, repetition, even failure at times, yet the desire to keep trying. The energy required for our evangelization efforts flows from human virtues of kindness, charity, humility, affability, courage, patience and hope. Accompaniment continues through our lives, helping us to know ever more fully and live the *Joy of the Gospel*.”
- Father Thomas

¹ See The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, nos. 10 and 11.

² See The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults no. 10.

³ See Policies No. 605 https://caedm.ca/Portals/0/documents/policies/605_SelectionOfASponsor4Feb14.pdf and No. 606 https://caedm.ca/Portals/0/documents/policies/606_ChristianWitness1Sep13.pdf.

⁴ See also Ron Lewinski, *Guide for Sponsors 4th Ed.*, Liturgy Training Publications, 2008 and <http://teamrcia.com/2012/03/five-essential-elements-of-an-rcia-sponsors-job-description/>



prayer or small group is beneficial to the sponsor, the person being sponsored has unique needs.

A Person Who Listens

- listens to the Word of God, but also respectfully to the voice of the catechumen or candidate he is sponsoring, acknowledging the faith background without judging;
- listens to the struggles and provides both guidance and hope, witnessing to the catechumen or candidate a love of neighbour, which is not dependent on her becoming Catholic;
- listens with enthusiasm and humility to the spiritual growth which becomes visible in the catechumen or candidate;
- is **not** a spiritual director, if the catechumen or candidate requires in-depth guidance, the sponsor can always suggest a meeting with a priest or another spiritual director.

A Person of Hope

- shares the reason for hope in a world that is often in conflict with the teachings of the Church;
- shows his/her hope in a very real way by accompanying the catechumen or candidate along his/her journey of faith: by assisting in the catechetical sessions; by taking time to meet and introducing him/her to other members of the community; by introducing him/her to the work of the Church, especially with the poor; and by being a friend.
- is **not necessarily** a catechist; if a sponsor is not able to answer questions asked by the catechumen or candidate, the sponsor can always ask a priest or a member of the RCIA team to answer the catechumen's questions.

The sponsor is there to encourage and to support the person she is sponsoring, accompanying the person she is sponsoring to both the mass and the weekly RCIA sessions.

In many ways the sponsor acts as a confidante for the person she is sponsoring, leading her to relationship with Jesus in truth. At the same time, the sponsor is in turn led to Christ by the person he is sponsoring. This mutual sharing of the faith journey is a basis for a Christian friendship, a friendship based on prayer, mutual respect, and hope.

When discerning a specific sponsor, it is important to match him/her to the personal traits of the person being sponsored, being mindful of gender, age and culture.