

RCIA Role of Sponsors 2022-2023

Adapted from TeamRCIA, a national organization. Updated Sept. 28, 2022.

Primary Purpose

The primary job of a sponsor is to be a life-long spiritual friend to the catechumen or baptized candidate, and to participate in the rites and sacraments during the RCIA formation year. A sponsor needs to be able to share his or her own faith and needs to be a person of prayer.

Note: RCIA sometimes distinguishes between “sponsors” and “godparents” (even for adults). A sponsor, primarily for Confirmation, may be someone who helps only during the RCIA year. A godparent, the sponsor at Baptism, is a lifelong commitment. Nativity RCIA generally does not make this distinction, and encourages catechumens and candidates to choose sponsors who will be lifelong, or at least long-term, companions.

Events for Sponsors

The sponsor accompanies the catechumen or baptized candidate to Mass every week and to other parish functions. The sponsor is encouraged to participate in the weekly catechetical sessions. In addition, the sponsor meets frequently, at least weekly, with the catechumen or candidate to talk about how God is working in both of their lives.

Note: The above is ideal. It is rarely possible to find a sponsor who can participate this much, particularly in the weekly lessons.

For Nativity RCIA, the following events are important for the sponsors:

Rite of Acceptance, held in fall, very likely Nov. 6 (desirable they attend, not required)

Rite of Election at the cathedral, first Sunday of Lent, Feb. 26 (highly desirable they attend, not required). Same for **Rite of Sending** at Mass at Nativity earlier in the day.

Scrutinies (special prayers for the RCIA at Mass), Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent, March 12-26 (desirable they attend, not required).

Rehearsal in church, Palm Sunday, April 2, 12:30 (same as class time) **(absolutely required)**

Holy Saturday retreat at Vallombrosa, April 8, 10 a.m. (desirable they attend, not required)

Easter Vigil, April 8, 8 p.m., **(absolutely required)**

Who Can Be a Sponsor

A sponsor must be a practicing Catholic, at least 16 years old, and confirmed.

It is generally not advisable that a spouse or close family member serve as a sponsor. A father or mother may not serve as a sponsor to their child (see Canon 874).

Note: At Nativity, we allow spouses and family members to serve as sponsors, but not parents.

A sponsor is not a catechist and isn't expected to know more about church teaching than the average adult Catholic. The catechumen or baptized candidate will raise many questions the sponsor will not be able to immediately answer. That's normal. The sponsor needs to know whom to call on to find the answers.

Sometimes a candidate wants a close friend or mentor from out of town to be their sponsor, even though that sponsor cannot make the Easter Vigil. We can try to accommodate this by using a local proxy sponsor for the vigil.