

# Dear Sponsor/Mentor,

Congratulations: You are about to embark on a rewarding journey to share and grow in your own faith. In accepting the invitation to be a sponsor or mentor for your candidate, you are making a commitment to help him or her grow in his or her relationship with the Risen Lord and the Church. This is also an opportunity for you to renew and deepen your own faith.

This handbook is designed to help you prepare your candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation and to guide you in fruitful conversations with your candidate. The first part gives you background and tips about the program and process. The second part provides activities to do together after each of the sessions your candidate will attend.

Thank you for saying “yes” to your candidate, and remember the Holy Spirit is a present and constant companion as you journey together.



My best friend's son, Todd, asked me to be his Confirmation sponsor. I said “yes” right away just because I thought I should. Actually, I really thought it would involve one meeting and being there for the Confirmation ceremony. But after I attended the first sponsor meeting, I realized it was a time commitment. I was also supposed to talk about my faith—not something I was used to—and I was really busy. But I did it, reluctantly at first, and some really good things happened—not just for Todd, but also for me. One thing I learned was to balance my time and to give God some. Believe it or not, my life is more balanced and my faith is more real. Thanks, Todd.

Doug, Sponsor

# Understanding Your Role

*Pastors will see that sponsors, chosen by the candidates or their families, are spiritually fit to take on this responsibility and have these qualities: . . . sufficient maturity . . . membership in the Catholic Church and their own reception of Christian initiation through baptism, confirmation, and eucharist; . . . freedom from any impediment of law to their fulfilling the office of sponsor.*

Rite of Confirmation, 6

## Origins of Sponsor/Mentor

For adults seeking full initiation into the Church, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults identifies two different companions to accompany them on their journey. A **sponsor** guides the participants during their faith journey, but a **godparent** actively participates in the immediate preparation for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, and continues to accompany the newly initiated even after the celebration. In many situations, the same person serves as sponsor and godparent.

In the case of young people baptized as infants who will be celebrating the Rite of Confirmation, they already have godparents who ideally could fulfill the role of sponsor. (RC, 5) However, candidates might wish to choose a parent or another person as their sponsor. Who the sponsors are and what roles they play may vary from parish to parish.

In some parishes, a **mentor** works with the candidate during his or her preparation if the godparent or sponsor can only be present for the actual celebration of Confirmation. Because of this recent development, and because Confirmation sponsors can be likened to spiritual coaches or mentors, in this handbook, you will see the terms sponsor or sponsor/mentor used interchangeably throughout to indicate one or both spiritual companions.

## Role of a Sponsor/Mentor

Your role as a Confirmation sponsor is multifaceted. As you accompany your candidate throughout the preparation process, your role includes affirming the strengths of your candidate and pointing out ways he or she can grow and become better in the practice of faith. It may involve some guidance, teaching, and explanation of points brought up in the candidates' sessions. Your candidate may look to you for examples of how to live a life of faith.

The role of a sponsor is one of companionship. Good sponsorship does not demand sainthood or perfection. It flows from walking with the candidate, sharing your own faith story and experience, and listening to his or her story. You do not need to be an expert in adolescent psychology or the doctrines of the faith. Good sponsorship is based on your willingness to share your own experiences of being Catholic and growing in your relationship with God.

Depending on your parish program, you may:

- ▶ attend some of the catechetical sessions
- ▶ participate in retreats and service projects with your candidate
- ▶ spend time with your candidate doing the Journey Together activities and dialogue that are found on pages 18–25 in this handbook and in the *Candidate Book*
- ▶ share how the teachings and practices of the Church relate to your life on a daily basis

The most important thing my sponsor did was:

“She listened to me and respected my opinions.” (Tara)

“Acted interested in my life.” (Jaime)

“Took me on his Communion calls to the nursing home.” (Lee)

“Showed me easy ways to pray.” (María)

“Explained why going to Mass was important to her.” (Nina)