

# Godparents

In an election year such as this, one question exists on every voter's mind: "Who is the best person for the job?" 2012 will bring another important decision for my household involving candidates of a different variety: Godparents. With the arrival of our second child less than two months away, my husband and I must choose one man and one woman to share the responsibility of guiding our child's spiritual life. And so, we ask ourselves: "Who is the best person for the job?"

To answer that question, we must first look at the job, itself. What is a godparent, anyway? Is it someone who agrees to take custody of your child in the event of your death? Is it a way of honoring someone you love and respect? Is it someone who loves kids? Is it someone you can ask for money in case you end up involved in some nefarious dealings? To all of those questions the answer is, "maybe" and "not quite."

It's hard for non-Catholics to understand sometimes why some Catholic parents insist that their children's Godparents also be Catholic. In other faiths, the role of godparent could mean surrogate parent or take on a shade of meaning similar to the "best man" or "maid of honor" at a wedding. The godparent's role is a bit more complex in our faith.

Obviously, our child's godparents' first official job will be to stand beside us as our child is baptized. But, their role and responsibilities do not end there. Our child's godparents should also guide him or her through life's religious journey. Since our child will be raised Catholic, this includes the sacraments. My child's godparents must be able to help my child prepare for his or her first holy Communion, confirmation, and marriage, in addition to offering spiritual guidance through other life events. I'd like my child to be remembered in a special way during his or her godparents' daily prayers, just as my child will ask God's blessing for his or her godparents. My child's godparent should participate in Mass. Most importantly, he or she should demonstrate Christ's teachings in his or her day-to-day life by being a positive role model.

If my standards seem high, it's because I've been blessed with two exemplary godparents myself. My parents chose their nephew, my cousin, Bill and their niece,

my cousin, Bonnie, to be my godparents. I've been blessed many times over to have them in my lives.

Bill is someone who has faced a great number of challenges in his life, all of which he has handled with a calm, quiet strength. He's now the primary caregiver for his intellectually disabled brother and father, who suffered a stroke. Bill and his partner, Lisa, whom I've "adopted" as a second godmother, always make time to attend gatherings I host, even though they live a long haul away. They also travel the world, which is a dream of mine. From Antarctica to India to Nova Scotia to the Holy Land, Bill and Lisa are always bringing back exciting stories and treasures for me. Bill inspires me with his patient manner, his acceptance of God's will, and his thirst for adventure.

Like Bill, Bonnie amazes me with her generosity, her wisdom, and her inability to let life defeat her. Bonnie and her husband, Billy, have raised four wonderful children. Their family is heavily involved in their parish and in the local sports scene. Additionally, Bonnie helps take care of her young niece and nephew, since their mother, her sister, Nancy lost her battle with pancreatic cancer in January 2010. As busy as looking after six children can be, Bonnie always has time help those who need her sympathetic ear and solid advice. When I'm going through a difficult time, Bonnie just knows. She shows up at my house with a hug, a hot meal and a prayer. She sponsored me when I was confirmed, advised me on what makes marriage work as I prepared for my wedding, and can talk me through any issue motherhood sends my way. Bonnie has been the perfect role model for me throughout every stage of my life. Cinderella's got nothing on me.

As you can see, my expectations of what a Godparent should be have been shaped by my experience as a godchild. I have many other important people in my life, but these are two who I feel God has appointed via my parents to look out for my spiritual well-being. My son's godparents have proven to be just as wonderful as mine.

When my husband and I chose godparents for our son, it was a decision that seemed to come naturally. My brother, Greg, is our son's godfather and my cousin, Becky, his godmother. My brother and I are only a year apart. We were raised in the church

together, and share many of the same beliefs as a result of our upbringing. While I lapsed in faith as a young teen, Greg became heavily involved in the youth group. I was honored to be his confirmation sponsor, though he ended up teaching me more about our faith, since he was excelling at his religion classes at John Carroll. Like my godparents, Greg is calm and faces problems with a positive, often humorous, attitude. He has tremendous patience, particularly with the elderly and children, which is essential to his job as a physical therapist. Unlike a lot of grown men, Uncle Greg isn't afraid to get on the ground and play trucks or blocks with his godson. When he's in the area, Greg joins us for Mass, which is a special experience for the whole family.

Becky has always had strong faith, even as a child when she participated in a Catholic children's group called Mary's Garden. She is a person of strong principles who always makes smart and ethical decisions. After her undergrad degree enabled her to be fluent in Spanish, she lived, studied and worked in Ecuador for nearly a year, and returned wanting to make the world a better place, with teaching as one of her methods for doing so. Becky was accepted into Notre Dame of Maryland University's exclusive Operation Teach Program, and will graduate in May with her masters' degree in teaching. The experience allowed her to teach Spanish at a school in the archdiocese and live in housing formerly used for clergy with other young Catholics. Becky prays often, at school and within her small community, and attends Spanish mass with her boyfriend, Jorge, who has also taken a role in our son's life. In addition to teaching him Spanish, Becky is always surprising her godson, whom she calls, "Mi Corazon," with the most perfect little gifts. The best gift, of course, is how she exemplifies Jesus' teachings in her everyday life through her words and actions.

In our family, siblings don't share godparents. It's a way for brothers and sisters to have their own special adults to look out for them. Obviously, my children will share my husband and I, but Greg and Becky will only be Collin's godparents, though surely they will be involved in the new baby's life, as well. With such a big family and so many friends, my children will never have a shortage of people to love them. Two of those people will be selected to become guardians of our second child's faith. These two people will impact our baby's life as Bill and Bonnie have mine and Greg and Becky have my son's. I know that some people's feelings might be hurt because

they were not selected for the role. It does not mean that we value them less or that we don't see their virtues. The candidates we select must meet certain criteria in order to fill an important role. God will help us choose the best people for the job.