

Responsibilities of a Godparent

The Responsibilities of a Godparent only begin at baptism, the role really expands and hopefully blossoms as the Godparent and Godchild develop a close and loving relationship. As with any relationship, this spiritual one needs to be fostered and cared for in order for it to develop. The best way for this relationship to grow is through prayer. Pray for your Godchild and his or her parents, and the parents should encourage their child to pray for their Godparents. By doing this you are encouraging a relationship and giving it the spiritual foundation upon which it can grow.

Here are some practical ideas:

1. Celebrate the anniversary of the baptism with a card, phone call or message. Along with learning about the child's patron saint, learn about the saint whose feast day is celebrated on the date of his or her baptism and share the story of that saint's life with your Godchild.
2. Model your faith through your actions. Grow in your own understanding of the Orthodox Christian Church and teachings and practices so that you will be able to better answer any questions that your Godchild may have.
3. Encourage them in their life of faith through the kinds of gifts that you give your Godchild. Some examples of gifts are a bible, prayer book, books on the lives of saints, prayer rope, icons, etc. By doing this you are giving tools to help your Godchild grow in the Orthodox Faith.
4. If you live in close proximity to your Godchild make yourself available to spend time with them. Find out when special concerts or school activities or sports events are scheduled and try to go to a few. Plan a special time, an outing or special event, to be with your Godchild. These times together will only help to make your relationship closer.
5. If you live far away, call, write, or e-mail your Godchild. Send a letter at the beginning of a church season (Advent, Lent, etc.) to let them know that you will be praying for them. If possible, plan visits to see your Godchild.
6. From the moment of Baptism, your Godchild deserves a very special place in your prayers, for on the day of judgment you will be asked about your Godchild's soul.
7. Pray through the ups and downs of life with your Godchild.
8. Find out what's troubling or challenging your Godchild, what they are excited about, interested in or eagerly anticipating, then try and show them how this relates to the Life in Christ (as all things can and do). Encourage your Godchild to pray, pray together, and let your godchild know that you are praying for them every day.
9. Make a big deal of your Godchild's Name's Day. Try to celebrate it with them with a special visit and dinner (if you're nearby) and a special gift.
10. Make it a tradition to read the stories of the Nativity and Pascha with your Godchild. Teach them the various traditions for the feasts of the Church.
11. Invite your Godchild to go with you to Vespers, Orthros or weekday services for the feasts if you live close by. Encourage your whole "God-family" to come to Church for services other than the Sunday Divine Liturgy, if they don't do so regularly.

12. Ask your Godchild what they are learning in Church school. Discuss the lesson of the week, and offer to help with any homework, prepare for oratorical competition or Bible bowl, etc. Encourage them to study the gospel. Be sure to lead by example!
13. Help your Godchild serve God. Choose a service project to work at regularly together, such as working at a hot-meal program or visiting parishioners in the hospital. Help them discover new ways to use their God-given talents to help others - the artistic might design posters or programs for retreats, the musical might record Church music for shut-ins, etc. Encourage your Godsons to serve in the altar, too, and "cheer them on" each week. Encourage your Goddaughters to find and use their particular gifts in the Church.
14. Encourage both boys and girls to attend seminary and learn about and explore the monastic life.
15. Make your Godchild "one of the family". Include your godchild, and their parents and siblings, in your own family's "social" events: reunions, picnics, camping trips, and outings.
16. Spend time together. Keep in touch by whatever means if your Godchild lives in the next town, out of province or across the globe. Prayer and love in Christ know no bounds!

Working together: Godparent and Parent

It is important for the Godparent to work with your Godchild's parents. Talk with your godchild's parents often about his or her life, spiritual and otherwise, and ask how you can help. Parents can often use another perspective -- and another willing hand -- as they guide their children to adulthood. Parents choose Godparents who will encourage them, people to whom our children can turn when the parents are not cool enough to listen to them, and when they need to hear difficult truths from someone who loves them.

Parents may be unsure whether they are too strict or too lenient, Godparents can be a good sounding board for discussing this when it pertains to the Godchild. Parents may wish to make the Godparents the child's emergency contact person after the parents so the Godparent can be there for them when crisis hits.

Parents should light candles and pray for their children's Godparents every time they enter a church and when they say their family and personal prayers. Likewise, the Godparents should pray not only for their Godchild but the Godchild's parents as well.