

***HANDING ON THE FAITH***

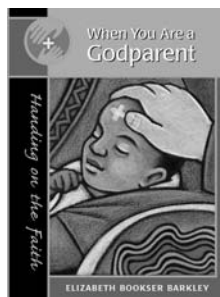
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# **GODPARENTS OF CHILDREN**



## **LEADER'S GUIDE**

**PLEASE NOTE:** This leader's guide was originally written for those using this video program in its VHS format. Those now using this program on DVD may find some references that do not apply to their use (i.e., directions for locating segments, time notations, etc.). We trust that both VHS- and DVD-users will find this guide a valuable resource.



This program is a video companion to the booklet

*Handing on the Faith: When You Are a Godparent* (B16447) by Elizabeth Bookser Barkley. Both are produced by St. Anthony Messenger Press and can be ordered by calling 1-800-488-0488.

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## Catholic Update Video

### The Use of Video in Faith Formation

Jesus used the “media” of his day to teach. He was a master storyteller. His preaching is full of imagery. His parables are calculated to engage his audience. Through the ages, Christian teachers and preachers have followed Jesus in the creative proclamation of his message.

From the culture of Jesus’ time, heavily dependent on *oral communication*—to the advent of *print communication*—to our own time and its dependence on *electronic media*—Christian teachers have adapted their proclamation to each new medium and its particular demands.

Media scholars like Marshall McLuhan remind us of the impact of the medium on the message it carries. *How* we communicate affects *what* we communicate. Electronic media offer us new ways to tell the story of our faith. Father Pierre Babin points out (see *The New Era in Religious Communications*, Pierre Babin with Mercedes Iannone, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991) that the message, as well as the sender and receiver, all will be re-shaped in the telling.

Catechesis, as a part of the total evangelization process, must touch the learners’ hearts and shine the light of faith on their lives. It must connect to the learners’ experience or risk being discarded as irrelevant. To be effective, catechists must learn how to make the best use of the electronic media available in our culture, aware of the particular medium’s strengths and weaknesses.

Video is a very popular, familiar and accessible part of our electronic culture. It draws us in, captures our imaginations and touches us on a deep, emotional level.

As it speaks to our experience and utilizes several of our senses, its message is more likely to be heard and remembered. By integrating quality video programs into the catechetical process, catechists can share the message more effectively.

At the same time, as television becomes a more pervasive part of our lives, we can be lulled into thinking that it can do everything for us—inform, entertain, shop, even worship. The reality is that it can't and shouldn't do everything. As Pierre Babin emphasizes, electronic media function differently than print media. They appeal first to the *emotional* content of our faith rather than the *intellectual* content. Video cannot begin to convey the amount of information print can. It cannot replace the live presence and personal witness of the catechist. But in a catechetical setting, it can be a powerful part of the “mix of media” used in proclaiming the message.

How effectively video—or any electronic media—is used in the catechetical setting depends primarily on how prepared the catechist is to use it:

- A preview of the video is essential to determine the best use of the program with a particular group.
- The catechist should select a video program (or section of a video) based on the audience, the purpose, and the availability of competent teachers and other resources and activities to support the theme.
- Sufficient time should be available to introduce the video and to process the viewing experience.

Catechists must realize that they control the use of video in their sessions. They might approach a video program in one of two ways: as a skeleton on which to build a presentation or as a way to “enflesh” an existing skeleton.

A video program well-tailored to the needs of a

group might be used in its entirety. At other times, catechists may creatively manipulate the video to fit their needs:

- An excerpt may be taken from a longer piece to illustrate a point.
- A video may be shown with the *sound off* to highlight an aspect of the program.
- The “pause” button can be used freely to interject explanations and examples or to elicit reactions.
- The program or excerpt may be repeated to emphasize a point.

The producers of this video program have attempted to craft both medium and message with an awareness of the power of the medium as well as its limitations. They encourage those who use it to study this guide and become familiar with ways to allow this program to supplement their own sharing of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

### **Introduction to the Series**

*Catholic Update Video* is a video resource designed for use in the RCIA, catechist formation, sacrament programs for parents, faith-sharing groups, study groups, ministry training and high school religious education. *Catholic Update Video* draws from Catholic life and practice to present a single topic in a “video toolbox” format with four distinct segments—story, witness, teaching and musical reflection.

*Catholic Update Video* has been designed with today’s learner in mind. Its segments are short and can stand alone or be used with others in the program. The format is flexible, making it useful in a variety of group settings as well as for individual viewing. The emphasis is on what video can do best, namely touch us through story (story segment), testimony (witness segment) and

song (musical reflection segment) with images and the emotions they carry. But a more “didactic” approach (teaching segment) respects the need to convey a concise core of information.

The general model for catechetical process (life experience, message or doctrine, response) is respected by the order of the four segments, although at times a catechist may choose to use them alone or out of sequence:

- Each program begins with a **story segment** designed to draw viewers in and help them connect their life experience to the faith topic.
- The testimony of real-life Catholics in the **witness segment** helps viewers reflect on their own life experience and prepare for group sharing.
- Our teacher briefly highlights some aspects of the topic in the **teaching segment**. Relevant images help to illustrate the points being made. (*This segment is not intended to treat a topic exhaustively nor substitute for a more thorough presentation on the message or doctrine.*)
- Viewers are invited to respond in prayer using the **musical reflection segment**.

The program’s host provides a context for each segment. This is designed to help viewers who will see the program from beginning to end. Catechists who use segments individually or out of sequence may wish to prepare their own lead-ins. On-screen graphics provide viewers with a question for reflection or sharing between segments.

This leader’s guide is an important tool for making the best use of this video program. It includes the following features.

- **Small Group Process** incorporating all four segments in a single session.

- **Summary and Suggestions for Use** for each segment.
- **Questions for Sharing** for the story, witness and teaching segments; facilitators can choose from them or use them as models for developing their own questions.
- **Suggestions for Use** for the musical reflection segment provide suggestions for using this segment in a prayer setting.
- **Resources for Further Study** are listed at the end of this guide.
- Approximate times are noted for where each segment begins. *(If the VCR is equipped with an “elapsed time” counter, reset the counter to 0:00:00 at the beginning of the tape and fast-forward to the time listed for the beginning of the desired segment. If the VCR does not have an “elapsed time” counter, the facilitator can fast-forward in the “review” mode [i.e., while the VCR is in “play”] to find the gray screen and Catholic Update Video logo that indicate the start of a segment.)*

***HANDING ON THE FAITH***  
**GODPARENTS OF CHILDREN**

**Overview of the Program**

Plants aren't the only growing things that need nurturing. People do as well. It's especially true that our faith, planted within us as a seed at Baptism, needs to be tended carefully so that it may grow. God, the "Master Gardener," gives the growth, but invites all of us in the Christian community to be partners in nurturing that growth. And, in the case of the faith of children, the most important care comes from parents.

In the baptismal rite, parents are charged with the chief responsibility of bringing their children up in the practice of the faith. It's a big job, and it involves not only the formal religious formation parents help to provide, but also the living example of their own faith.

It's been the wise practice of the Church through the ages that parents have some help in this task. And while the role of godparent has had many meanings over the centuries—including social, cultural and even legal implications—it remains a key *spiritual* role within the faith community.

Through this program we hope both parents and godparents will gain a greater appreciation of the important role of godparent. We want to both assist parents in their selection of godparents and offer guidance to godparents and Christian witnesses.

Godparents of children must meet certain requirements. A godparent must be a fully practicing Catholic, free to carry out that role and responsibility. Parents may also choose one Christian witness, a friend or family member of another Christian faith, to serve as a guide on the Christian way.

All the future hopes we have for a child are connected most intimately to a life of faith. What he or she needs most—along with food, clothing and shelter—is human love. And we believe that human love is a sharing in the love God has for each of us. So it follows that helping this child know God’s love is as important as providing for all those other human needs.

If godparents take their role seriously, they will want to do more than just be present at the ceremony, go through the ritual, or buy appropriate gifts for the child as the years pass. They will offer support and witness of faith at various times and in various ways.

This program offers four segments giving both parents and godparents some practical support in making the role of godparent come to life and have a special meaning that will last throughout the lifetime of the child.

- *Story*: a woman follower of Jesus assists parents in bringing their children to Christ, over the apostles’ objections (Mark 10:13-16).
- *Witness*: parents and godparents share their understanding of the role of godparent.
- *Teaching*: Elizabeth Bookser Barkley, mother, godmother, college professor and author, shares key points about the role of godparent from her booklet *Handing on the Faith: When You Are a Godparent*.
- *Music Video Reflection*: a prayer invoking God’s help for those who serve as godparents.

### **Audience**

This program is intended for an adult audience including parents preparing for a child’s Baptism and those selected to serve as godparents or Christian witnesses of children. Some parishes offer formation

for both parents and godparents prior to the celebration of Baptism. In these cases, the video program can be shown at these formation events. Parishes in which only parents are included in baptismal preparation workshops may consider sending a copy of this program home with the child's parents. The parents can then share it with the child's godparents and return it to the parish on the day of Baptism.

### **Small Group Process**

While some groups may choose to use the segments in separate sessions, we provide here a sample outline for a small group process incorporating all four of the video segments in a single session. This outline will help volunteer catechists/facilitators who may need assistance in planning group sessions and professionals who like to adapt a sample plan.

### **Suggested Process**

#### ***1. Setting the Environment***

An analogy used within this video is that of faith being like a plant that grows and needs nurturing. A central table may be set with a plant and items that are used in planting seeds and nurturing the growth of plants (e.g., packet of seeds, trowel, garden gloves, watering can, fertilizer, soil, pots, gardening book, etc.).

#### ***2. Gathering***

Invite participants to gather around the table for an opening prayer or song. Choose a song familiar to the participants on the theme of Baptism, faith, community or discipleship. Use the following or

similar opening prayer: *Loving God, we gather today as men and women who have been called to share our faith and to nurture the growth in faith of special children in our lives. As we prepare to celebrate the planting of the seed of faith at Baptism, help us to water, fertilize, nurture and prune our own faith, so that we might best share it with our children/godchildren. Amen.*

### **3. Sharing My Story**

- Invite personal reflection and group sharing on the question “What does it mean to ‘embrace the Kingdom of God like a child’?”
- Show the *story segment* and invite participants to name the ways the woman in the story is a model for you as parent or godparent/Christian witness. Invite reflection and sharing on this question: “What does the story say to you about your growth in discipleship?”
- View the *witness segment* and ask participants to share about their own understanding and expectations of the role of godparent.

### **4. Relating My Story to the Church’s Story**

Show the *teaching segment* and discuss the roles and qualities of godparents of children. Use discussion questions on page 22.

### **5. Responding in Life and Faith**

Use the *musical reflection segment* as a closing prayer. (If time permits, consider using or modifying the sample prayer experience outlined on page 23 of this guide.)

## **Story Segment “I Was There”**

*(Begins approximately 05:35 into program.)*

### **Summary**

“I was there.” That’s what a woman disciple of Jesus says when people ask her about being his follower. She was there on the day when parents brought their children to Jesus for his blessing.

As a woman in the company of Jesus, her role was to be of service to Jesus and the apostles. She, by both cultural limits and personality, did her work in the background, behind the scenes. But she also listened to Jesus and took his message to heart.

She watched as some of the apostles rebuked the parents: The Master is busy today. The Rabbi has much to teach. Don’t interrupt him while he’s speaking. Keep your children back. The Teacher has more important things to do.

She recalled that Jesus had spoken about how God welcomes the littlest ones, and how we must accept and welcome them in the name of the Kingdom. She knew that Jesus meant not only children but also the poor, sick, lepers, outcast and sinners. She noted that the apostles should have known better since they too had heard Jesus’ words many times.

She tells how some of the parents came to her after the disciples had turned them away. They asked if she could help them present their little ones to the Teacher.

So she decided to take action. Marching up to James and John, she asked, “Don’t you remember what Jesus said about welcoming the little ones? We’ve got to help these children get close to the Teacher. He wants to see them. He wants to bless them.”

The disciples weren’t used to a woman correcting them in public, and this caused such a commotion that

Jesus stopped preaching. He wanted to know what was happening. Before the apostles could reply, she said, “Master, don’t the children deserve a place in your circle as well? Didn’t you say that we should welcome them?”

Her words carried the passion of a mother who had held her own children and tried to shelter them. She recognized that the world is a place of both wonder and fear and recalled many times that her children depended on her to take care of them. She knew in her heart that that is what Jesus meant, that we all are sheltered and protected by God, who is our loving Parent.

Jesus became indignant. “Let the children come to me!” he said to his disciples. “Don’t keep them away! The Kingdom of God belongs to ones like these.” Then his voice became more serious, “If you do not embrace the Kingdom of God like a child, you cannot be a part of it.”

As this follower of Jesus looks back on that day, she realizes it was a turning point for her. That day she began to think of herself as a disciple; she learned to embrace the wonder and fear in her own heart and allow God to care for her.

Jesus’ words gave her the courage for that terrible day when he was crucified. She was there that day too, along with other women followers of Jesus. They stayed to witness what happened, knowing there was little they could do to stop it, but wanting to stand by him.

She was also there at his tomb the morning of the third day. She and the others were astonished to find the tomb empty. There, a young man told them Jesus had been raised up and was going to Galilee. He asked them to tell Peter and the other disciples this good news.

The women's reaction was that of little children—astonished and afraid. At first, fear kept them from delivering the message. Looking back, she realizes she shouldn't have been so hard on the apostles who didn't understand Jesus' message. Since those days they've all learned what it means to be his disciples—following Jesus as best they can through both fear and astonishment. Perhaps only at the end of the journey do we find that we are indeed part of the Kingdom, embracing it with the heart of a child.

### **Suggestions for Use**

Use this segment to invite participants to reflect and share about how we help each other come to know Jesus. How is this woman a model for their role as parent or godparent/Christian witness? Encourage them to first consider their own experience: Who assisted their growth as disciples? Follow this with reflection and sharing about how they assist others to experience Christ's presence. The following or similar questions may help viewers reflect and share.

### **Questions for Sharing**

1. What does it mean to “embrace the Kingdom of God like a child”?
2. How is the woman in the story a model for you as parent or godparent/Christian witness?
3. What does the story say to you about your growth in discipleship?
4. When have you stepped out of your “comfort zone” to support what is right?

## **Witness Segment**

*(Begins approximately 14:54 into program.)*

### **Summary**

Being a godparent means making a gift of self—sharing personal presence and faith. Parents and godparents share their understanding of the role of godparent. A summary of what the interviewees share follows:

*What is a godparent?*

- one who connects the child to the larger faith community
- one who works with the parent to help a child develop a relationship with God
- one who shares faith through everyday moments of life.

*Parents reflect on the role of godparent...*

- My daughter's godmother is my best friend. She's a warm-hearted person and practicing Catholic. Through our daily contact, my daughter sees what a good person she is.
- We look for someone who is a good role model.
- We choose family members because there's a natural connection. They're there for the holidays, family gatherings, vacation and religious moments.
- I've asked my children's godparents to pray for them during hard times.
- We let godparents know what's going on in our children's lives. We encourage the children to keep in touch with their godparents too.

*Godparents reflect on their role...*

- My godchildren live far away. I can't see them often, but the distance is short when you love somebody.
- My role is to be a special adult that they can confide in and who thinks they're somebody special.
- I hope my godchildren will continue to practice their Catholic faith and pick up not so much on what I say but what I do.
- Being a godparent is a way to live out the Christian call of mission, of sharing the gospel by how we live our lives.
- I hope my godson will remember things I've said to him, not deeply theological things, but just sharing faith with him. I was delighted when he said that Jesus forgives us when we do wrong.
- My 16-year old nephew is my godson. It's stressful to be a teenager, and I let him know that I am there for him.
- Being a godparent is life-giving for me. She's a *Goddaughter* to me indeed.

**Suggestions for Use**

Use this segment to invite reflection and sharing about the expectations participants have for the relationship between godparent and godchild. Focus here on the feelings and relationship. (*The teaching segment addresses the role and qualities of godparents and offers practical suggestions for making the role meaningful.*) The following or similar questions may help viewers reflect and share.

## Questions for Sharing

### *Parents:*

1. What do you expect of the relationship between godparent and godchild?
2. What feelings do you have as you prepare for the Baptism of your child?
3. What hopes do you have for the relationship between your child and his/her godparents?
4. What qualities do you look for in a godparent for your child?

### *Godparents:*

1. What feelings do you have as you prepare to serve as a godparent?
2. What hopes do you have for yourself and your godchild?
3. What is the most important thing you want to give to your godchild? What other things might he or she need from you?
4. What concerns do you have about your ability to be a good godparent?

## Teaching Segment

*(Begins approximately 18:49 into program.)*

## Summary

Author and educator Elizabeth Bookser Barkley is both mother and godmother. She has reflected on the meaning of those roles in her booklet *Handing on the Faith: When You Are a Godparent*. In this teaching segment, she compares the growth of a child's faith to that of a plant. Key points from her teaching follow.

**I. On the day of Baptism, the seed of faith is planted and a relationship between the child and her godparents begins.**

**II. Godparents and Christian witnesses must help the seed of faith grow until it blossoms and bears fruit in the child's life.**

*(Group leaders may want to use the following summary to help participants understand the Rite of Baptism.)*

**III. The godparents are present and involved in the Rite of Baptism.**

- A. The involvement of the godparents in the ceremony symbolizes the responsibility borne by the whole community: to support the child in accepting the call to “put on Christ.”
- B. The celebrant greets parents and godparents.
- C. The parents announce their child's name and intention to train him in the practice of the faith.
- D. The minister asks the godparents: “Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?”
- E. The minister signs the child's forehead with a cross, claiming her for Christ, and invites parents and godparents to do the same.
- F. Those assembled pray for the child: “Lead him by a holy life to the joys of God's kingdom” then add: “Make the lives of her parents and godparents examples of faith to inspire this child.”
- G. At the baptismal font, the minister reminds parents and godparents that they must make it their “constant care to bring him up in the practice of the faith.”

- H. Parents and godparents renounce sin and profess their faith.
- I. Godparents may assist the parents as the minister immerses the child in water, anoints her with chrism, and clothes her in a white garment.
- J. The godparents may be asked to light the child's candle from the Easter candle as the minister prays that the child walk in the light of Christ.

**IV. After the ceremony, the real work of parents and godparents begins: Nurturing the growth of the child's faith.**

- A. Godparents must be firmly grounded in their faith.
- B. Godparents must be willing to share faith with their godchild.

**V. Keeping in touch is key to making the role of godparent meaningful.**

- A. This is affected by physical distance and the personalities involved.
- B. It's the responsibility of godparents to foster the growth of this relationship.
- C. Making time for a godchild tells her she is important to you.
  - 1. When the child is very small, this is more a gift to the parents than to the child.
  - 2. As the child grows, a godparent's presence is important in sharing special events and times together.
  - 3. Parents can keep godparents informed of important events so that godparents may participate in other aspects of the child's life.

**VI. Godparents must try to make a “faith connection” with their godchild.**

- A. Godparents may feel uncomfortable “talking God” with a young person.
- B. Our belief in the Incarnation helps us understand that when we are together, sharing in everyday life experiences, we celebrate God’s presence.
- C. Making faith connections with adolescents may be challenging but is very important.
- D. Godparents can keep in contact with godchildren through cards, gifts, phone calls and e-mail.
- E. It’s good to remember special occasions and events, especially the anniversary of Baptism.
- F. Confirmation and Eucharist are also opportunities for connecting.
- G. Some families acknowledge the godparent through participation in later sacraments, such as Matrimony.

**VII. A godparent’s commitment is lifelong, a reminder of Jesus’ ongoing presence in the Church through the Holy Spirit.**

- A. As Christ promised that we would remain in him, as branches connected to a vine, godparents promise a life-giving connection.
- B. A godparent’s own fidelity to Christianity offers their godchild a personal version of the promise Jesus made: that if we remain rooted in him, we will bear much fruit.

## **Suggestions for Use**

This segment will be useful in helping both parents and godparents come to a better understanding of the role of godparent. While each godparent and godchild relationship is unique, this segment offers some suggestions from which all such relationships can benefit.

Parents and godparents are partners, responsible for working together to support a child's growth in faith. This segment may be shown to parents and godparents at baptismal preparation sessions. The following or similar questions may help viewers reflect and share.

## **Questions for Sharing**

### *Parents:*

1. How do you plan to nurture the seed of faith planted in your child at Baptism?
2. What part of the Rite of Baptism is especially meaningful to you? Why?
3. What are you looking for in a godparent for your child?
4. How will you help your child's godparents make this relationship meaningful and lifelong?

### *Godparents:*

1. How do you plan to nurture the seed of faith planted in your godchild at Baptism?
2. What part of the Rite of Baptism is especially meaningful to you? Why?
3. How will you keep in touch with your godchild through the years?
4. How comfortable are you with the idea of making a "faith connection" with your godchild? What does this mean to you?

## **Musical Reflection Segment**

*(Begins approximately 27:51 into program.)*

### **Summary**

The program concludes with a prayer composed especially for godparents and Christian witnesses accompanied by music and images, invoking God's help for godparents of children so that they each may be God's instrument, assisting another on the journey of faith.

The text of the prayer is included on page 25. Those using this video may reprint the prayer to distribute to godparents. *(Please include copyright information.)*

### **Suggestions for Use**

This segment may be used on its own as a prayer or as part of a longer prayer experience. An outline of a sample prayer service follows.

1. Open the prayer with the following or similar words:  
*Loving God, you call us here to prepare to serve you and your Church as godparents. As we take on the role of guide for others, we realize our own need for guidance from your Holy Spirit. Help us to share your love and faithfulness in our actions toward these children. May our efforts help them develop a closer relationship with you and your Church. Amen.*
2. Scripture: John 15:1-17
3. Reflection on Scripture: Invite the godparents to reflect on what it means for one's faith to bear fruit. Invite each to share one way that their faith is fruitful.
4. Introduce the music video segment with the following or similar words: *We trust that God will*

*help us as we nurture the seed of faith planted in our godchildren at Baptism. Let's raise up our godchildren, their parents, the parish community and ourselves, as we offer this music video prayer. View the music video segment.*

5. Close by joining hands and praying the "Our Father" and then offering each other a sign of peace.

## **RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY**

**1) Scripture references:** Mark 10:13-16; John 15:1-17; see the *Rite of Baptism* for other related scripture texts.

**2) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references:** Sacraments of Initiation 1212-1419; Baptism 1213-1284; Importance of Godparents 1253-1255; The Duties of Christian Parents 2221-2231; Christian Holiness 2012-2016; and Moral Life and Missionary/Witness 2044-2046.

**3) Available from St. Anthony Messenger Press:**

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## **Prayer for Godparents**

Dear Lord,

Thank you for the gift of my godchild. Thank you for entrusting to me the privilege of sharing your love with this child. Help me, through your Holy Spirit, to be an example of loving kindness, attentiveness and support for this beautiful child of yours.

Help me to be a companion on my godchild's journey of faith. Give me the strength to fulfill my commitment to keep the light of Christ burning brightly and the flame of faith alive in my godchild's heart.

Allow me to take the energy and spirit that is felt on that holy day of Baptism and continue to pour it out on my godchild year after year, season after season.

Transform my simple, consistent presence in my godchild's life into a relationship that helps nurture faith.

Help my godchild to understand Christ's words as he says, "I am with you always," and allow those words to resonate, take root and bring comfort throughout a lifetime.

Give me the understanding to know how best to help and support these parents in their task of bringing up this child in your light.

Help me to constantly say "Yes" to my commitment as a godparent. Be with me as I try to be a tangible reminder to my godchild that no matter what challenges come in the years ahead, you are always there.

Amen.

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Leader's Guide written by:

Joan McKamey

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28 W. Liberty St.  
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