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## **Reception of Vatican Council II Decrees and the Choice of Godparents in the Latin Church**

### ***Recepcija dekretov drugega vatikanskega koncila in izbira botrov v latinski Cerkvi***

*Abstract:* The nature of tasks facing godparents in the Catholic Church seems to substantiate the view that affiliation to a non-Catholic Church or community renders one incapable of being entrusted with the role of a godparent in the Catholic Church. Such possibility is not provided for in the Code of Canon Law. Considering numerous doubts concerning the matter, it is necessary to identify criteria to be used on the ecumenical plane when entrusting non-Catholics with the role of a witness or godparent. In view of the above, the goal of analyses performed for the purposes of this article was to identify norms in the legal system of the Catholic Church (in particular Latin Church) which provide for the possibility of Christians who are not members of the Catholic community to be admitted to the role of godparents or witnesses at baptism.

*Key words:* non-Catholics, godparent, Christian witnesses of baptism, ecumenism

*Povzetek:* Zdi se, da narava nalog, s katerimi se v katoliški Cerkvi soočajo botri, pogojuje pogled o neprimernosti vloge botra v katoliški Cerkvi pri tistih, ki pripadajo nekatoliški Cerkvi ali skupnosti. Te možnosti Zakonik kanonskega prava ne predvideva. Ob upoštevanju številnih zadržkov glede obravnavane zadeve je nujno potrebno prepoznati merila, ki naj se na ekumenski ravni uporabljajo pri zaupanju vloge priče ali botra nekatolikom. V luči omenjenega je cilj v tem članku opravljenih analiz prepoznanje norm znotraj pravnega sistema katoliške Cerkve (zlasti latinske Cerkve), ki dajejo kristjanom, ki niso pripadniki katoliške skupnosti, možnost oziroma dovoljenje za opravljanje vloge botra ali krstne priče.

*Ključne besede:* nekatoliki, boter, krščanska krstna priča, ekumenizem

In accordance with the ancient Church practice, the one who is to be baptized is accompanied by at least one sponsor. (Ecclesia catholica 1986a, No. 8) As a repre-

sentative of the community of faith, the godparent confirms the desire for ecclesial communion and faith in the baptismal candidate. In addition, the godparent also assumes responsibility for the Christian upbringing of the godchild. (Directorium 1993, No. 98)

Considering the nature of the tasks that lie before them, it is assumed that candidate godparents should be members of the Church or ecclesial community, in which baptism is celebrated. In the case of baptism performed in the Catholic Church, one of the basic conditions that must be met by candidates for this church function is belonging to the Catholic Church (Catholic Church 1994, No. 1650). In the current code of the Latin Church, this requirement was regulated by the legislator in c. 874§1 No. 3 CIC. We read in it, among other things: »To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must be a Catholic /... /.« (Ecclesia catolica 1983, c. 874§1 No. 3)

Is this an absolute requirement? It turns out that it is not. Along with the development of ecumenism, the legislator allowed the possibility of dropping its observance.

## 1. A non-Catholic sponsor or witness of the baptism exercised in the Catholic Church

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During the work of the Second Vatican Council, the special bond existing between the non-Catholic Eastern Churches (*Ecclesia orientalis*) and the Catholic Church was stressed. For this reason, in the Decree on Ecumenism of 1965, the Council Fathers made an ordinance that in appropriate circumstances, and with the consent of the ecclesiastical authority, the aforementioned Churches could participate in sacred rites (*communicatio in sacris*). (Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II. 1964, No. 15) We did not have to wait long for detailed indications. Two years later, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity published a directory dedicated to the implementation of the decrees of the Council on Ecumenism. This document included, among others, the norm according to which members of the Eastern Churches (*Ecclesia orientalis*), which were not in full communion with the Catholic Church, could be admitted for a just cause to undertake sponsor duties in the Catholic Church together with a Catholic godfather or godmother. The condition for admission was to secure the Catholic education of the baptized person and the assurance that the non-Catholic candidate was fit to be a sponsor. For the Catholic education of the person to be baptized, the Catholic sponsor was supposed to be primarily responsible. (Directorium 1967, No. 48)

Considering the development of ecumenism and the fact that non-Catholics of the Eastern rites were admitted to the function of sponsor in the Catholic Church, the Secretariat of State established a »substitute« of the sponsor function for other non-Catholics. (Peters 2008, 94–98) In the Directorium 1967 (No. 57) there

was a norm permitting the admission of Christians who were not in full communion with the Catholic Church (with the exemption of members of the Eastern Churches, because it is they who were mentioned in No. 48 of this document) together with the Catholic sponsor to be a Christian witness of the baptism.<sup>1</sup> In this case, for the Catholic education of the baptized, only the Catholic sponsor was made responsible. The motives for this norm, as written in it, are »blood or friendship ties«. According to Cueno (1988, 84), the function of the »Christian witness«, referred to in the quoted norm, is a family rather than ecclesiastical function, although the participation of the non-Catholics in the belief in Christ is recognized.

In 1969, under the special order of the Holy Father, the Congregation for Divine Worship announced reformed rites of the baptism of infants. (*Sacra Congregatio pro Cultu Divino* 1969) In the »General Introduction« to them, in No. 10.3 (*Ecclesia catholica* 1969a, No. 10), indications of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council and the norms 48 and 57 of the *Directorium* 1967 on the role of non-Catholics in the Catholic baptism were included (*Secretariat for Christian Unity* 1970). The regulations explicitly allowed non-Catholics, if there was such a wish of their parents, to be a sponsor or witness of the baptism of those who were baptized in the Catholic Church. Detailed solutions were to be sought in the law regulating the principles of ecumenism.

By the way, it should be noted that in the second edition of the *Ordo baptismi parvulorum in Praenotanda Generalia*, No. 10 (Latin text) there was no mention that witnesses could be admitted to this role at the request of their parents. (*Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.6) This condition cannot be found in the Ecumenical Directory of 1993. (*Directorium* 1993, No. 98) In spite of this liberalization of the regulations, the Polish Episcopate Conference in subsequent translations into the national language of the *Praenotanda Generalia* did not resign from this condition. (*Kościół katolicki* 1987, No. 10.6; 1994a, No. 10.6)

In 1983, Pope John Paul II promulgated the Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church. In c. 874§2 CIC, the norm was written: »A baptized person, who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community, is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and only as a witness of the baptism.« There was a lively discussion among canonists about the interpretation of the said norm. Some even thought that after the promulgation of the codex there was a regression in the ecumenical field, and that now in the Latin Church, the Eastern rite non-Catholics could no longer be sponsors, but only witnesses of the baptism (Cuneo 1988, 85–86). Confusion and doubts were created by a loophole in the Code of Canon Law. It did not make the distinction between ecclesial communities and the Eastern Churches, which was introduced in *Directorium* 1967 in No. 48 and 57. (Provoost 1985, 49) The proper interpretation of canon 874§2 CIC is facilitated by the

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<sup>1</sup> There have been cases in Church history, when non-Catholics were witnessing at the baptismal ceremony. It seems, however, that the role of witness they could then perform was not the same as the function of Christian baptismal witness introduced after the Second Vatican Council. (*Sacra Congregatio Sancti Officii* 1763)

explanation given in the *Acta Commissionis*, which the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity refers to in footnote No. 98b to the *Directorium* 1993 (Pontificia Commissio ad novissimum Schema Codicis Iuris Canonici Recognescendo 1983, 182). According to the information in it, the expression »ecclesial communities« recorded in c. 874§2 CIC does not include Eastern Churches. This means that the absence of reference in c. 874 CIC – to sponsors who are members of the Eastern non-Catholic Churches – does not close the possibility of their performing the sponsor function in the Catholic Church and that the norm laid down in the *Directorium* 1967, No. 48, is still binding. Explaining the doubts related to the interpretation of c. 874§2 CIC, it should be noted that its terminology indicates that the norm prescribed in it does not refer to the faithful of the Eastern non-Catholic Churches. This is because the term »ecclesial community« (*communitas ecclesialis*) is distinguished by the legislator from the term »Eastern Church« (*Ecclesia orientalis*) (Cuneo 1988, 86).

Ten years after the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church, another Ecumenical Directory was proclaimed. The norms concerning non-Catholic sponsors or witnesses at the Catholic's baptism and the analogous role of Catholics in Churches and non-Catholic communities recorded in it did not differ significantly from the prevailing law. (*Directorium* 1993, No. 98)

Part of the norm recorded in the *Directorium* 1993, No. 98b – regarding the role of a non-Catholic Eastern Churches at the Catholic's baptism – was in the later published Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. (*Ecclesia catolica*. 1990) In c. 685§3 CCEO was written: »For a just cause, it is permitted to admit the Christian faithful of another Eastern non-Catholic Church (*Ecclesia orientalis acatolica*) to the function of a sponsor, but always together with a Catholic sponsor«.

## 2. The conditions that a Christian baptismal witness must meet

If Christian non-Catholics can act as a baptismal witness or sponsor (if they belong to the Eastern rite), the question arises whether they also have to meet the requirements of c. 874 CIC. In order to answer this question, one should refer to the norms published in c. 874 CIC; *Directorium* 1967, No. 48; *Directorium* 1993, No. 98 and No. 10 of the »General Introduction« to the *Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum* (*Ecclesia catolica* 1986a, No. 10), in which the legislator allowed non-Catholics to take on the function of sponsor or witness.

Number 10 of the »General Introduction« consists of an introductory sentence (declaring who may be admitted to accept the task of sponsor) plus six points, in which the legislator sets out the conditions to be met by the candidates for sponsors. In the sixth point there is the permission for admitting non-Catholic Christians as baptismal witnesses. It contains also a reference to special regulations for the Eastern Churches, among others, *Directorium* 1993, No. 98b, where it is men-

tioned that the eastern rite non-Catholic may be sponsor in the Catholic Church. The manner of listing these six conditions (points) – if we adopt a broad interpretation of the norm enshrined in No. 10 of the »General Introduction« – allows one to conclude that witnesses are also obliged to meet the conditions listed therein as long as it is possible. Since that law restricts the free exercise of the rights of witnesses, according to c. 18 CIC, it cannot be interpreted broadly. Thus, it should be acknowledged that points 1-5 do not bind non-Catholic witnesses, because the permission for the selection of witnesses listed in section 6 is an exception to the norm laid down in No. 10.1–6, and not only in No. 10.6 of the »General Introduction«.

In the Polish translation of the Renewed Rite of Baptism for Children, the Polish Bishops' Conference added in No. 10.6 that baptismal witnesses should adhere to the faith in Christ (Kościół katolicki 1987a, No. 10.6; Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 1975, No. 5), which was in accordance with the *Directorium* 1967, No. 57. By the way, it should be noted that in later translations of the rites into Polish this requirement was still repeated, although it was no longer included in *Directorium* 1993. (Kościół katolicki. 1994a, No. 10; 2001a, No. 10). In the second edition of the typical *Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum* it was then also omitted and replaced with the requirement of belonging to a non-Catholic community. (Ecclesia catolica 1986a, No. 10)

Returning to the interrupted train of thought, it should also be noted that in the pastoral instructions published by the Polish Bishops' Conference, after the translation of the Rite of Baptism for Infants into Polish, the Polish bishops noted in No. 5: »The conditions for admitting a baptismal witness are as mutatis mutandis when admitting Orthodox godparents«. Considering the norms set by the Polish Bishops' Conference, Christian baptismal witnesses should be admitted to this role if: a) the child's parents wish so for justified reasons, b) raising a child in the Catholic faith is assured, c) the first godparent is a Catholic (male or female), d) the candidate has been baptized in the Church or non-Catholic community whose faith (s)he professes, and has completed the 15th year of age. (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 1975, No. 5)

In c. 874 of the CIC, the permission to be a witness at the non-Catholic Christians' baptism was placed in a separate paragraph (second), not referring to the first paragraph of that canon, in which the conditions to be met by sponsors were announced. The lack of reference is a clear sign that the legislator does not require from the witnesses mentioned in c. 874§2 CIC to meet the conditions referred to in c. 874§1 CIC. This is because the »Christian witness of baptism« is the »substitute« of the sponsor function. Because there are no duties on him/her, apart from possible witnessing to the baptism, (s)he does not have to have any other qualifications, apart from those necessary, so that (s)he can, if needs be, attest appropriately.

It is noteworthy that in the *Directorium* 1967, No. 48, 57 and *Directorium* 1993, No. 98, there was no requirement for candidates for Christian baptismal witnesses

to be able to perform this task. In the case of godparents coming from the non-Catholic Eastern Churches, the dicastery of the Roman Curia, responsible for ecumenical activity, made such a condition very clearly »de idoneitate patrini constet« (Directorium 1967, No. 48), »à condition qu'on ait suffisamment pourvu« (Directorium 1993, No. 98b).

Among the canonists, however, there are different opinions. As Peters (2008, 94–95) points out, one can find such scholars who – considering the principles of ecumenism and the *Directorium* 1993, No. 98a – demand a Christian witness to be bound by family or friendly ties with the person to be baptized or with his/her legal guardians and give a good example. While the first condition can be read out directly from ecumenical directories:

»Attamen, propter cognationis vel amicitiae rationes, Christianus diversae Communionis /... /« (Directorium 1967, No. 57),

»se basant sur le baptême commun, et à cause des liens de famille ou d'amitié, un baptisé qui appartient à une autre Communauté ecclésiale peut être admis comme témoin du baptême« (Directorium 1993, No. 98a),

the second – giving a good example – is no longer so obvious if the document of the Holy See is considered.

Concluding this part of the considerations, it should be noted that, although c. 874§1 of the CIC does not apply to the admission of persons to the role of Christian witnesses of baptism – which is mentioned in c. 874§2 CIC – however, considering other norms of canon law, applicable to persons admitted to this function, they must:

- Be properly designated by a competent person. In the current Polish translation of the »General Introduction«, No. 10.6 to the rite of baptism for children and adults, it has been written that the admission of a non-Catholic to the role of baptismal witness is made at the explicit request of the parents of the person to be baptized. This indication seems to have only a pastoral value, because otherwise it would deprive people mentioned in c. 874§1 No. 1 CIC of the right to designate a witness, namely the one to be baptized, those replacing parents, pastors or ministers (in the absence of parents or guardians of the person to be baptized). In *Praenotanda Generalia*, No. 10.6 (Latin text) there is no mention of the admission of a non-Catholic to the role of a baptismal witness at the explicit wish of parents (Ecclesia catolica 1986a, No. 10.6).
- Be admitted by a competent person (probably it means the one who has the power to allow sponsors to accept their commitments. (Ecclesia catolica 1986a, No. 10.6)
- Have appropriate qualifications so that, if necessary, they can certify that the baptism has taken place. Therefore, »children and people who are mentally insane or at the moment unconscious as well as deprived of both sight and hearing, cannot act as a witness«. Bearing in mind the pastoral reasons, it is fitting that in specifying the minimum age of the witness one is guided by the norms defining the age of godparents. (Góralski 2006, 239)

- Believe in Christ. This requirement was added by the Polish Bishops' Conference in the »General Introduction«, No. 10.6. It seems to be well founded in a pastoral way. Since, due to their baptism – based on the common baptism (Directorium 1993, No. 98a) – the non-Catholics are admitted to the role of baptismal witnesses, they should be guided by the duties resulting from their received baptism.
- Not be the father or mother of the person who receives baptism. Since the Christian witness is a kind of substitute for the sponsor function, this requirement, logically speaking, should also be applied to Christian baptismal witnesses.
- Be bound by family or friendship ties to the person to be baptized or his legal guardian. (Directorium 1993, No. 98a). It is difficult to see other reasons than those indicated in the Ecumenical Directories of 1967 and 1993, for which a non-Catholic would be a Christian witness to the baptism.

### 3. The conditions that a non-Catholic must meet to be a sponsor

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After explaining the conditions to be met by Christian baptismal witnesses, it is time to consider what criteria Eastern rite non-Catholics must meet to be admitted to fulfil the function of sponsor in the Catholic Church. As has already been indicated earlier, the Code of Canon Law of 1983 does not contain any norms for the admission of these persons to the sponsor function. They were to be found in the Ecumenical Directories of 1967 and 1993 and in the »General Introduction« to the rites of baptism.

In the first edition of the *Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum* of 1969, in *Praenotanda Generalia*, No. 10.3, the legislator included a provision, according to which detailed solutions regarding the issue of non-Catholic baptismal witnesses and sponsors in the Catholic Church should be sought in the law established for ecumenism. (Ecclesia catolica 1969a, No. 10.3; Secretariat ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam 1967, 597–599) This law was published two years earlier in the *Directorium* 1967. In the No. 48 of the document, issued by the Secretariat for Christian Unity, it was written that for a just cause it is allowed to admit members of Eastern Churches not being in full communion with the Catholic Church (*Ecclesiae orientalis*) to sponsor persons to be baptized in the Catholic Church. The condition was – apart from the existence of the above-mentioned »just cause« – that, besides the non-Catholic sponsor, the baptized person would also have a Catholic godparent, the Catholic education of this baptized person was secured, the non-Catholic candidate was suitable to be a godparent. (Directorium 1967, No. 48)

Additionally, it should be noted that in the *Directorium* 1967, No. 48, the requirement of consent by the non-Catholic from the child's parents in order to fulfil the function of a sponsor was not recorded. It was documented in *Praenotanda Generalia*, No. 10.3 *Ordo baptismi parvulorum* of 1969.

In the instruction of the Polish Bishops' Conference of 1975, to help priests implement the norms of universal law, the bishops wrote: »the faithful of the Orthodox Church may be designated a sponsor if: a) the child's parents wish so for justified reasons, b) raising the child in the Catholic faith is assured c) the first sponsor designated is a Catholic (a man or a woman), d) the candidate was baptized in the Orthodox Church, whose faith (s)he professes, and has completed the 15th year of age.« (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 1975, No. 5)

The specification in point 5c of the Polish Bishops' Conference instruction that the first sponsor is to be a Catholic corresponds to the *Directorium* 1967, No. 48 and later the *Directorium* 1993, No. 98b, where it is written that the duty of watching over the Catholic education of the baptized person rests primarily with the Catholic godparent.

At this point it is worth mentioning that among canonists there are also those who believe that diocesan bishops, on the basis of authority granted to them in c. 87§1 CIC, can for the right reason dispense from the requirement in c. 874§1 No. 3 CIC, according to which both godparents should be Catholics, allowing both sponsors of the one to be baptized in the Latin Church to be members of the Eastern non-Catholic Churches. (Vere 2000, 95–96) Although the dispensation seems theoretically possible, it is difficult to imagine the existence of such a just cause or spiritual benefit for which it would be possible to grant a dispensation. Admitting one faithful of the Eastern non-Catholic Church to the function of sponsor, with the reservation that the other godparent is a Catholic, according to the Ecumenical Directory, is already done for a just cause (*Directorium*, No. 98b). In addition, the admission of two godparents from the Eastern non-Catholic Church may violate another condition enshrined in the Ecumenical Directory, namely that the Catholic education of the recipient of baptism must be protected. According to the will of the legislator, when the non-Catholic of the Eastern Church is admitted to fulfil the function of sponsor, watching over the Christian education rests primarily with the godfather (or godmother) who is a member of the Catholic Church. On the one hand, this provision protects the non-Catholics from obliging them to do something that would be against their convictions, and on the other hand – more importantly – secures the baptized person from the danger of proselytizing.

In the second edition of the *Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum* of 1986, number 10 of the »General Introduction« was rewritten, so that the matter concerning non-Catholic godparents and Christian witnesses of baptism was regulated in separate sentences. The sentence regarding sponsors in the Polish language version of the rites sounds similar to the Latin version: »As to the separated brethren of the Eastern Churches, special provisions for the Eastern Churches must be taken into consideration.« (*Quoad orientales seiunctos, si casus ferat, attendatur ad peculiarem disciplinam pro Ecclesiis orientalibus*) (*Ecclesia catolica* 1986a, No. 10.6) Special regulations, which were referred to before 1993, were to be found in the *Directorium* 1967, No. 48. Since the publication of the new Ecumenical Directory in 1993 by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, number



10 of the »General Introduction« refers already to the *Directorium* 1993, No. 98b. Analyzing the norm stipulated in the latter, we see that the conditions that must be met by members of the non-Catholic Eastern Churches (Églises orientales orthodoxes) in order to be admitted to take on the tasks of sponsors are the same as those prescribed in the *Directorium* 1967.

Noteworthy is the condition regarding the suitability, qualification, and hence, the suitability of a member of the Eastern Church to be admitted to accept sponsor's obligations in the Catholic Church. In the *Directorium* 1967, No. 48, the words »de idoneitate patrini constet« speak about it, and in a later document of 1993 (*Directorium* 1993, No. 98b): »que l'idonéité du parrain soit reconnue«. This condition is not very precise. Its fulfilment will certainly be determined by the person who designates and admits a sponsor to accept the obligations arising from the accepted function.

However, the question arises if the persons have to meet some other requirements besides the conditions laid down in the *Directorium* 1993, No. 98b? Considering the manner of recording the norm in No. 10 of the »General Introduction« to baptism rites and an analogous norm in c. 685 CCEO, one can come to the conclusion that non-Catholic sponsors must additionally meet the same conditions that are fulfilled by Catholic godparents; if it is possible in their case. The law regulating the possibility of choosing godparents among non-Catholics was written by the legislator as an exception to the part of the norm stipulating that sponsors must be Catholics (*Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.6; CCEO, c. 685§1 No. 2), and not as an exception to the whole norm regulating the conditions that must be met by sponsors. The regulations so drafted suggest that in the case of members of the Eastern non-Catholic Churches applying for the function of sponsor in the Latin Church, they must:

- Be designated by the one receiving the baptism or by the parents, or someone who replaces them, and when they are not present, by the parish priest or the minister of baptism. (CIC, c. 874§1 No.1; *Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.1)
- Have the qualifications required for this. (CIC c. 874§1 No.1, *Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.1; *Directorium* 1993, No. 98b)
- Have the intention to perform this task. (CIC, c. 874§1 No.1; *Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.1)
- Have completed the 15th year of age (on the territory of the Polish Bishops' Conference); unless the parish priest or minister is of the opinion that a just cause recommends admitting an exception. (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 1975, No. 5; CIC, c. 874§1 No. 2; *Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.2)
- In the understanding of the Catholic Church, be a member of the Eastern non-Catholic Church. (CIC, c. 874§1 No. 3; *Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.6)
- Lead a life according to faith in Christ and corresponding to the function they are to perform. (CIC, c. 874§1 No. 3 CIC; *Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.3)
- Not to be the father or mother of the person to be baptized. (CIC, c. 874§1 No. 5; *Ecclesia catholica* 1986a, No. 10.1)

Moreover, there must:

- Be the assured upbringing of the baptized person in the Catholic faith. (Directorium 1993, No. 98b)
- Be a Catholic designated as the first sponsor – male or female. (Directorium 1993, No. 98b; Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 1975, No. 5e)
- Be the just cause. (Directorium 1993, No. 98b)

## 4. Conclusion

The admission by the highest legislator of non-Catholics to perform the function of a baptismal witness, and – in the case of the faithful of the Eastern non-Catholic Churches – to be a sponsor, is a major event at the level of ecumenical activity. Norms regulating this matter in the legal system of the Latin Church, enshrined in CIC, c. 874§2:

»A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism«,

and in the *Directorium* 1993, No. 98b:

» /... / il est permis pour une juste raison d'admettre un fidèle oriental au rôle de parrain en même temps qu'un parrain catholique (ou une marraine catholique) au baptême d'un enfant ou d'un adulte catholique, à condition qu'on ait suffisamment pourvu à l'éducation du baptisé et que l'idonéité du parrain soit reconnue«,

should not be treated as an alternative to the general rule that the godparent may only be a Catholic, but as an exception to it. This means that the law written in them is subject to strict interpretation (CIC, c. 18). In its implementation, it is not allowed to put up a sign of equality between Catholics who do not fulfill the conditions to be admitted to the sponsor function and the non-Catholics. Thus, the former may not be allowed to perform the functions of a Christian baptismal witness or sponsor on the rights of members of non-Catholic communities, which were granted to them in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council.

## Abbreviations

- AAS** – Acta Apostolicae Sedis. 1909– /... /. Roma: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis.  
**c.** – canon  
**CCEC** – Ecclesia catolica 1990 [Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium].  
**CIC** – Ecclesia catolica 1983 [Codex Iuris Canonici].  
**Directorium 1967** – Secretariat ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam. 1967. Directorium ad ea quae a Concilio Vaticano Secundo de re oecumenica promulgata sunt exsequenda. 14.05.1967. AAS 1967, No. 59:574–592.

**Directorium 1993** – Pontificium Consilium ad Unitatem Christianorum Fovendam. 1993. Directorium oecumenicum noviter compositum. 25.03.1993. AAS 1993, No. 85:1039–1119.

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