

Planning Your Orthodox Christian Wedding at the Assumption Church

Your wedding date and rehearsal are made with the clergy through our church office. Upon setting the date, we will send you a wedding packet with additional information. Enclosed will be a **Stewardship Card** and a **Wedding Affidavit Form** that needs to be completed and submitted to our church office promptly.

Make an appointment to meet with our priest shortly after setting the date of the wedding. Bring a copy of your baptismal certificates, documents of previous marriage(s) (if applicable), and any other documents that the clergy may need to process your application for marriage. This will be the first of several meetings with the priest. He will introduce the procedures, forms, and timeline required until the wedding day and familiarize you with the wedding service. He will discuss any concerns and questions you may have. These meetings will focus on the wedding day, but more importantly, on Orthodox Christian marriage and the role of the Church in nourishing and nurturing it.

Please be aware that if the prospective Orthodox bride or groom is civilly divorced, he or she must first obtain an ecclesiastical divorce before marrying in the Church. This process may take several months, so it is recommended that it be expedited as soon as possible with the guidance of the priest. If the prospective bride or groom is widowed, he or she must provide proof of death of the previous spouse.

Immigrants entering the United States after they have reached their 16th birthday must have a certificate stating that they are free to marry. This certificate must be a document produced and signed by the hierarch of the immigrant's home Metropolis. Certificates from other clergy or civil authorities are not acceptable.

It should be brought to the priest's attention early if the non-Orthodox partner wishes to become an Orthodox Christian. Separate meetings will be held with the priests for proper catechism. Also, as the wedding day approaches, the Orthodox couple should plan to meet with their spiritual father for Confession. Marriage is the beginning of a new life. The sacrament of Confession can greatly initiate our new life in Christ as husband and wife.

There are a few additional matters that a couple needs to be aware of:

- At the rehearsal, during and after the wedding, the utmost reverence must be observed in church;
- The couple is responsible for securing an organist if they would like one. The church office may recommend one upon request;
- No musical instruments other than the organ are permitted in the church;
- Only music that is customarily done is allowed, other music is permitted only at the discretion of the clergy;
- Visiting Orthodox clergymen must observe the necessary protocols with their respective Metropolitans involved and our priest. Participation of non-Orthodox

clergymen must be discussed with our priest. These and other matters will be discussed during the couple's pre-marital meetings.

There are two licenses involved in marriage, the ecclesiastical (church) and civil. At least three months before your wedding, you will complete and sign an "Affidavit for License to Marry." This is your church wedding application. It is signed and mailed by the priest and submitted to the Metropolis. Within a month of the wedding, the Metropolis sends the priest the ecclesiastical wedding license. The priest will obtain the appropriate signatures on the day of the wedding and will then send the signed copy to the Metropolis. Within a month, the couple will receive their formal Greek Orthodox wedding certificate.

As for the civil license, please know that the wedding service cannot take place unless this document is in the hands of the priest before the wedding day. Within one month of your wedding, you should obtain your civil license and submit it to the church immediately. On the day of the wedding, your church and civil licenses will be signed by the priest and witnesses; the couple will also sign the civil license. The civil license includes three originals. One copy will be given to the couple and the remaining two will be mailed by the priest to the county clerk. The couple's copy will serve as their official civil wedding license.

The following items are needed or customary for a wedding at the Assumption Church:

- The Bridal couple and Koumbaro(a)/sponsor must be in good sacramental and financial standing with a canonical Orthodox Church. If married, their marriage must have been blessed in the Orthodox Church. If not a parishioner of Assumption, a letter from one's home parish should be sent to our church well in advance of the date stating their good standing.
- The church license
- The civil license
- The wedding rings
- The wedding crowns
- The wedding candles (two decorated candles attached with a white ribbon)
- A silver tray (Jordan almonds, rice, and rose petals are also customary, but not essential.)
- Fee for the organist and an honorarium for the chanter
- A bottle of wine is optional. Acceptable wines are Byzantion, St. John Commandaria, or Roussos wines. Some prefer to use a personalized chalice for the common cup. This too is optional
- A runner is optional, but if preferred, it should measure 100 feet.

Written by: Fr. Michael Varlamos