

Wedding Preparation Form

Important Information

Congratulations on your engagement! As you may be aware, certain criteria must be in order before the sacrament of marriage can take place. The following material is taken from the official Registry information according to our Holy Archdiocese.

For the sacramental union of a man and a woman to be proper in the eyes of the Church, the marriage must be conducted in the Orthodox Church. For such an ecclesiastical marriage to be valid, the following must be adhered to:

1. No impediment to marriage may exist.
2. A **civil marriage license** must be obtained from civil authorities.
3. An **ecclesiastical marriage license** must be obtained from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese or Metropolis (completed six weeks prior to the wedding).
4. The sacrament of marriage must be celebrated by an Orthodox priest according to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church.
5. The priest must belong to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. However, marriage performed in another Orthodox jurisdiction in communion with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese is also recognized as valid by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.
6. The priest must receive authorization for the marriage from his Metropolis bishop.
7. Before requesting permission from the Metropolitan for the marriage the priest must verify; **A.** that the parties in question are not already married either in this country or elsewhere. **B.** that the party or parties who are members of another parish obtain a certificate of membership from the parish to which they belong. **C.** that if either or both parties are widowed, that he or she present the death certificate of the deceased spouse. **D.** that if either or both of the parties have been divorced and/or remarried, whether or not the remarriage was recognized by the Church, that they present the appropriate certificates.
8. No more than a total of three marriages will be allowed by the Church.
9. When one or both of the parties are divorced, they must obtain an ecclesiastical divorce as well in order to marry again in the Church.
10. In the case of an interfaith marriage, the non-Orthodox partner must be a Christian who has been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. A marriage cannot take place in the Orthodox Church between an Orthodox Christian and a non-Christian.
11. In the case of an interfaith marriage between an Orthodox Christian and a non-Orthodox Christian, the marriage must be celebrated by an Orthodox priest in the Orthodox Church according to the Orthodox tradition.

12. The Sponsor (koumbaros or koumbara) must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing with the Church. A person who does not belong to a parish, or who belongs to parish which is not in communion with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, or who if married, is not married in the Orthodox Church cannot be a Sponsor. Non-Orthodox persons may be members of the rest of the wedding party.

INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

The Orthodox Church blesses interfaith marriages under the following condition:

The non-Orthodox partner must be a Christian who has been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.

An Orthodox Christian who has been married outside the Church and who wishes to be reconciled to the Church is encouraged to request from his or her local Orthodox priest that his or her marriage be blessed in the Orthodox Church.

A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian does not automatically become a member of the Church, and is therefore not permitted to receive Holy Communion or other sacraments of the Church.

PROHIBITED MARRIAGES

Certain cases exist whereby marriages are prohibited. They include:

- FIRST GROUP: Parents with their own children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren.
- SECOND GROUP: Brothers-in-Law with sisters-in-law.
- THIRD GROUP: Uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews.
- FOURTH GROUP: First cousins with each other.
- FIFTH GROUP: Foster parents with foster children or foster children with the children of foster parents.
- SIXTH GROUP: Godparents with godchildren or godparents with the parents of godchildren.

In addition to the above registry guidelines, the following items should be taken into account:

A. The articles and forms necessary for the sacrament of Marriage:

- Wedding rings
- Stefana (crowns)
- Decorated wedding candles
- Wine Chalice
- Koufeta (Jordan almonds- traditional)
- Tray (traditional)
- Civil wedding license
- Ecclesiastical wedding license (priest receives from the Metropolis)
- Sponsors from another Orthodox community must have their parish priest send Father Demetrios what is called a "Member of good-standing" letter prior to the wedding date. (see details below)

- B. Time for pre-marriage and post-marriage counseling with the priest should be arranged in order to insure a solid foundation for the new couple's life together

ELIGIBILITY OF SPONSORS

If the Sponsor is not a current member of the Annunciation Cathedral, then he or she should ask their parish priest to provide a letter indicating that they are a member in good standing in their home community. He should also provide their Parish membership or pledge envelope number in the letter, and then mail it directly to Father Demetrios Gardikes at The Annunciation Cathedral, 555 North High Street; Columbus, Ohio 43215. This letter must be received at least one week prior to the date of the sacrament.

According to the official Registry information of the Archdiocese, a person who wishes to be a sponsor for the sacrament of marriage in the Church must be an Eastern Orthodox Christian who is a member of an Eastern Orthodox parish and who is in good standing with the Eastern Orthodox Church. A person who has not been married in the Orthodox Church may not become a sponsor, until their marriage is blessed by the Orthodox Church. Also, members of the Church who are divorced must receive an Ecclesiastical Divorce before becoming a sponsor. Please check with me if you have any questions or concerns in this regard.

MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING

The Holy Orthodox Church does not charge a fee for the celebration of any Holy Mystery. However, there are financial obligations the Church must meet in order to provide the opportunity to celebrate your scheduled Holy Mystery. For this reason, the Church will accept a good will donation from non-current stewards and out-of-towner (see (a) and (b) below) of \$ 500 to offset facility costs. Clarification:

- a) Non-Current Stewards: parishioners who have not made a stewardship pledge and are not on the church mailing list or who are not current with their present or past stewardship commitments according to the UPR (current year and year prior). If you are not yet Stewards, ask one of the priests, parish council members or call the office during the week day and seek how to become stewards of Christ's Church and become in good standing.
- b) Out-of-Towners or Non-Members (Orthodox Christians living out of town): parishioners from other Orthodox communities requesting to celebrate a Holy Mystery at the Church.

Again, if your family has not yet become stewards, plan to attend the Annunciation Cathedral and raise your family here, ask and we will simply instruct you to fill out a stewardship card with any amount that you and your spouse decide and can afford. We all simply try to support Christ's Church and its expenses with what we can afford in good faith. While we all should give to the church systematically and from the heart, it is never an obstacle to participate in the sacraments.

Although exceptions do exist, married couples and those who are single and living outside their parent's home must make their own fair share pledge to be considered members in good standing.

ECCLESIASTICAL PAPERWORK PROCESS

An “Affidavit for License to Marry” is sent to the Metropolis at least six weeks prior the wedding. Pertinent materials will be enclosed with the Affidavit according to the couples history and situation, such as Baptismal Certificates and/or if one or both of the couples are divorced and/or if one or both of the couple are from another country. If you have any questions, please call Father Demetrios at 614-593-6370. May the blessings of the Lord be with you as you prepare for this great day.

SCHEDULING THE SOCIAL HALL

Due to the great demand for our Social Hall, please mention this to the priest so when scheduling that sacrament so that he might coordinate the availability with the Social Hall. Once scheduled, the priest will put you in contact with the Social hall coordinators.

PHOTOGRAPHS DURING THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

To insure proper dignity and solemnity during the Holy Mystery, please discuss the Priests’ picture taking policy before the service begins. Photographs and video recording are permitted as long as they do not impede or distract from the Holy Mystery. There are certain places a photographer is not permitted.

SOME DOES AND DON'TS

- 1) Decorations for the Church must be discussed with the Priest prior to the wedding rehearsal.
- 2) If the bridal party is wearing a shoulder-less dress, they should wear a shawl or some type of wrap.
- 3) There are no musical instruments permitted in the Church.
- 4) Bride, Groom and all members of the wedding party shall not drink before the wedding. Besides and most importantly, one is standing before our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In addition, the Bride and Groom must be in their right mind in order to marry
- 5) Rice, birdseed, bubbles, off-color--red flower peddles and anything else may not be thrown or used inside the Church. Rice may not be used outside the Church.

6) THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

- a) Persons attending the wedding rehearsal must be prompt to the time scheduled. If there are possible delays the priest must be notified in advance. The couple may want to tell their wedding party to arrive fifteen minutes before the wedding rehearsal begins.
- b) No drinking before the wedding rehearsal.
- c) The articles and forms necessary for the sacrament of Marriage must be brought to the wedding rehearsal (page 2 above), excluding the Sponsor’s “Member in good standing letter”, which should have been receive by Fr Demetrios at least one week prior to the date of the wedding schedule.

7) THE WEDDING DAY

The Wedding party may take pictures prior to the wedding ceremony. Please pre-arrange with Father Demetrios so the Church will be open.

- a) If pictures will not be taken before the wedding, the groomsmen and/or ushers must be present in the Church at least 45 minutes before the wedding.
- b) Those persons being ushered down the aisle (grandparents, parents, ring-bearers, flower-girls, bride and her bridesmaids) must arrive and be in the back of the Church 15 minutes before the scheduled time of the wedding.
- c) The Sponsors must be available after the wedding ceremony to sign the appropriate forms.

AFTER THE HONEYMOON!

Call Fr Demetrios to arrange for a post marriage counseling meeting.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call at 614-593-6370. May the blessing of the Lord be with you during this busy, but wonderful time.

With Pastoral Love in Christ,

The Reverend Father Demetrios Gardikes, Dean
The Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral