

## THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

We as a parish rejoice in the love that you, as a couple, share for one another and the commitment that has been made to bring you to this day in preparation for your marriage. Your decision to be married in the Church is an indication that the Christian faith and the sacramental life of the Church are important to you. In the eyes of the Church, marriage is the sacramental union between a man and a woman that is used in the Bible as the image of God's faithful love for ancient Israel (Isaiah 54; Jeremiah 3; Ezekiel 16) and Christ's sacrificial relationship to the Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Jesus Himself, together with His mother the Theotokos and the disciples, attended and blessed a wedding in Cana of Galilee, performing a miracle which assisted in the celebration of that event (John 2:1-11). When we say that Christian marriage is a sacrament, we use that word to convey the depths of the bond you are about to enter into: a sacramentum in the ancient Roman Empire was the oath of loyalty unto death that a Roman soldier took to the emperor when entering the military. As Christians, the sacrament of marriage is *your* oath of loyalty unto death to each other and - as a couple - your oath of loyalty unto death to our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian marriage is intended to be a sign of God's presence and love in a fallen and broken world.

### SETTING THE DATE

A couple desiring to be married should contact the parish priest and plan to meet with him at least six months prior to the desired date so that scheduling conflicts can be avoided. According to the official policies of our Archdiocese and Metropolis, weddings may not be celebrated during the fasting seasons or the major feast days of our Church:

- ◇ December 13-25 (The Advent and Christmas season)
- ◇ January 5-6 (Epiphany)
- ◇ February 2 (the Presentation of the Lord to the Temple)
- ◇ Great Lent and Holy Week ( usually mid-February, the entire month of March and part of April)
- ◇ August 1-15 (the fast of the Theotokos)
- ◇ August 29 (the beheading of John the Baptist)
- ◇ September 14 (the Exaltation of the Cross)
- ◇ The Ascension
- ◇ Pentecost

This is in keeping with our ancient way of celebrating the Christian mystery in worship and exceptions can be made only rarely, in extreme circumstances, with the permission of the Metropolitan.

### THE COUPLE: SACRAMENTAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

Because marriage is a sacrament, weddings cannot be celebrated in a spiritual vacuum. This, therefore, **presupposes** that:

1. at least one of the couple to be married is an Orthodox Christian, baptized and /or chrismated in the Church, committed to Christ and His Church and an active steward for at least a year prior to the date of the wedding; and
2. the intended spouse, if not Orthodox, be a Christian baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as commanded by the Lord ( Matthew 28:19).

Because of the sacramental nature of the marriage bond (in which a couple not only pledge their love for each other but also their love for Christ) a wedding between an Orthodox Christian and a non-Christian may not be celebrated in the Church.

### **NECESSARY PAPERS AND DOCUMENTS**

The following documentation is needed to insure that your wedding will meet the criteria established by the Church and local civil authorities:

1. verification of the baptism and stewardship commitment of the Orthodox spouse (s);
2. verification of the baptism of the non-Orthodox spouse in a Christian community that baptizes in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (for example, the Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant churches such as the Lutheran and Episcopalian communities);
3. an ecclesiastical marriage license; and
4. a civil marriage license.

Please note that because of the separation of Church and state, two marriage licenses are necessary, one for the Church and one for the state. Also, please note that because a civil license carries a time limit of 60 days in Los Angeles County, your civil license should be secured **less than** two months prior to the desired date of the wedding.

### **IN CASE OF PRIOR MARRIAGE(S)**

If either of the parties has been previously married, the death certificate of the deceased spouse or the civil divorce decree issued by the state must be presented to the parish priest. If the prior marriage was celebrated in the Orthodox Church and ended in divorce, then an ecclesiastical divorce decree must also be presented.

### **THE WEDDING PARTY**

The “koumbaro” or “koumbara” - the sponsor who will participate sacramentally in the service by exchanging the ring’s and the crowns that form an integral part of the marriage rite - **must** be Orthodox and a steward of his/her parish. The “koumbaro” or koumbara”, if from another Orthodox parish, must provide a letter of introduction from his/her parish priest certifying his/her active stewardship in the Church. Other members of the wedding party need not be Orthodox

### **NECESSARY ITEMS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SERVICE**

Among the items necessary to celebrate one’s marriage in the Church are the following:

1. a pair of rings
2. a pair of “stefana” or wedding crowns; and
3. a pair of white candles.
4. Silver tray

## **MUSIC**

Although it is not essential to the celebration of this sacrament, organ music has become a customary part of the wedding service in America. The organist may play as guests enter the Church, a processional for the wedding party and the bride and a recessional at the conclusion of the service. The music played should honor the Christian faith and be drawn either from the hymns of the Church or from that tradition of classical music composed for the Roman Catholic and Protestant communities. The parish choir has an organist that may be available to play, Please consult the pastor if you have any questions concerning the organist.

The chanter, by tradition, is an integral part of the wedding service and normally chants at all weddings celebrated here at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church. If you would like to invite a chanter from another Orthodox parish to participate in your wedding, please consult with the pastor prior to extending an invitation.

Vocalists other than the chanter may sing prior to the beginning of the service, during or just before the processional. As with all music at the wedding service, it must clearly reflect our Christian heritage and must be drawn from the Scriptures or the hymns of the Church. Again, if there are any questions, please consult the pastor.

Fees for the services of the organist, chanter, and/or choir are your responsibility.

## **WEDDING COORDINATOR**

The celebration of your wedding is an important sacrament of the Church and blessing for you as a couple. In order to make your service beautiful and meaningful it is necessary for us to coordinate all actions of the service in the Church with the Priest, photographer, videographer and wedding party. We employ a wedding coordinator to help you and the Church remain organized up to the moment you become married. Our wedding coordinator is Pamela Hardaway and will assist you with the ceremony in the Church.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOTAPING**

Photographs of your wedding are permitted but should not in any way impede or distract from the celebration of the sacrament. Photographers should not be conspicuous and should not use a flash during the service. Flash may be used up to the beginning of the service and after the service. Photographers have up to one half hour to take pictures following the wedding service. Videographers may set up two cameras in the Church, one on the solea (the area where the service will take place) and one in the choir loft. Due to the solemnity of the service we ask that videographers remain in these positions and not to move around during the service.

## PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

In addition to meeting with the priest, who will discuss the sacramental nature of the marriage bond and the Christian understanding of marriage as it is expressed in the Scriptures and the marriage service itself, it is required that the couple attend a marriage preparation seminar. This seminar is hosted by the parish in the fall and spring. In cases where one of the spouses is not Orthodox, the couple should plan to attend one of the many educational classes held at the Assumption - Studies in the Faith, the Bible Study, in order to be firmly grounded in the Orthodox Christian understanding of life.

## A NOTE TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM

*To those spouses who are Orthodox:* there is no substitute for Jesus Christ in maintaining the dignity and sanctity of the marriage bond. For the celebration of your marriage in the Church to be real, you must live out, in subsequent years, the Christian commitment that you will make on the day of your wedding. *To those spouses who are not Orthodox:* you are always welcome here at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church. Please note that your marriage in the Church does not automatically grant you membership in the Orthodox Church. If you desire to become an Orthodox Christian this must be your decision, made after much prayer and thought, in consultation with the parish priest, and **never** for the sake of convenience. *To both of you:* the Lord and this parish are here to help, support and sustain you in your marriage bond and the life of faith to which we are called as Christians. May the Lord grant you both many years together in peace and oneness of mind and heart!