

St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church

The Holy Mystery of Marriage



PROCEDURES FOR SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING
Planning Your Wedding Ceremony

INITIAL CONTACT

Initial contact is usually made by the couple, either by telephone or email. A wedding packet is sent electronically via email, or a hard copy in person. The couple completes the enclosed scheduling and information sheets (see FORMS A & B below) and returns them to Fr. Thomas as soon as possible. A folder is created into which all returning paperwork and pertinent documentation will be placed.

The Greek Metropolis of Atlanta requires that each couple should **immediately** schedule an online, Zoom “Pre-Marital Seminar: Journey of Marriage.”

Once you’ve selected the date of the seminar you would like to attend together, you must register for the seminar on the site at the link below. Advance registration is required so that administrators can properly plan for the seminar. After you register, workbooks and materials will be sent to you for the course. Please go here to choose your date and register: <https://atlmeteropolis.org/pre-marital-seminars-journey-of-marriage>

IMPORTANT NOTE: Throughout the course of months preceding the wedding, the couple should plan to meet in person with Fr. Thomas for a minimum of three (3) meetings.

SCHEDULING

Specifically, dates that weddings are not permitted are:

- September 14 (on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross),
- December 13-25 (during the Nativity Fast),
- January 5 and 6 (Theophany),
- During the fast of Great Lent and Holy Week, Pascha (Easter),
- on Pentecost, August 1-15 (during the Dormition Fast and Feast),
- and August 29 (Beheading of St. John the Baptist).

IMPORTANT CONDITIONS FOR MARRIAGE WITHIN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

(Please see the "Pastoral Guidelines" of the Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America): For the union of a man and woman to be recognized as sacramentally valid by the Orthodox Church, the following conditions must be met:

- 1) The Sacrament of Matrimony must be celebrated by an Orthodox Priest of a canonical Orthodox jurisdiction, according to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, in a canonical Orthodox Church, and with the authorization of the Archbishop or Metropolitan.

Before requesting permission to perform the marriage, a Priest must verify that:

- (a) neither of the parties in question is already married to another person, either in this country or elsewhere;
 - (b) the parties in question are not related to each other to a degree that would constitute an impediment [a degree less (or closer) than the third (3rd), or third cousins];
 - (c) if either or both parties are widowed, they have presented the death certificate(s) of the deceased spouse(s);
 - (d) if either or both of the parties have been previously married in the Orthodox Church, they have obtained ecclesiastical as well as civil divorce(s); and
 - (e) a civil marriage license has been obtained from civil authorities.
- 2) No person may marry more than three times in the Church, with permission for a third marriage granted only with extreme oikonomia (economy, i.e., ecclesiastical discretion).
 - 3) In cases involving the marriage of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians, the latter must have been baptized with a Trinitarian baptism, in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
 - 4) The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith.
 - 5) Candidates for marriage must be members in good standing in their home parish

IMPORTANT NOTE: Canonical and theological reasons preclude the Orthodox Church from performing the Sacrament of Marriage for couples where one partner is Orthodox and the other partner is a non-Christian. As such, Orthodox Christians choosing to enter such marriages fall out of Good Standing with their Church and are unable to actively participate in the sacramental life of the Church. While this stance may seem confusing and rigid, it is guided by the Orthodox Church's love and concern for its members' religious and spiritual well-being.

PROHIBITED MARRIAGES

The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:

1. First and second cousins (any combination) with each other.
2. Foster parents with foster children or foster children with the children of foster parents.
3. Godparents with godchildren or godparents with the parents of their godchildren, or godsiblings.

THE CIVIL MARRIAGE LICENSE

No wedding may be celebrated without the prior submission of a civil marriage license from Georgia, or in the case of those already civilly married, a copy of the issued civil marriage license of the County and State in which they were civilly married.

For those seeking a civil marriage license for the first time*, application for the marriage license should be made in person by the contacting the Local County Clerk of Probate Court, Marriage License Division.

*Those couples already civilly married, whether here in Georgia or in another state, must provide a photocopy of their civil marriage license. This photocopy may be delivered to St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church either by postal mail, or email (see above). Also, the couple must fill out "Supplemental Marriage Form 165". Either the newly obtained Georgia Civil Marriage License or the photocopy of the civil license of those already married, must be received by Fr. Thomas no later than thirty (30) days before the date of the wedding in order for the sacrament to proceed as scheduled. Also, at this time, the third and final meeting between the couple and officiating priest will take place, and application will be made to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of New York for an Ecclesiastical Marriage License.

No application for an ecclesiastical marriage license can be made without prior submission of a civil marriage license.

CANDIDATES FOR MARRIAGE & KOUMBARI

Candidates for marriage and their sponsor (koumbari) must be parishioners in good standing.

This means, According to Article 18 of the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR)

- They are canonically Baptized & Chrismated
- They are 18 years of age or over
- They live According to the tenants of the Orthodox Faith
- They faithfully attend Divine Liturgy & participate in the Sacraments of the
- They contribute toward the progress of the Sacred Mission of the Church
- They remain current in their stewardship obligation to the Church
 - they've filled out a stewardship form and made a financial commitment to supporting the ministries of the Church.
 - (The priest may wave this under special circumstances)
- They cooperate in every way toward the well-being of the Church

THE ORTHODOX SPONSOR (Koumbaros or Koumbara)

The Orthodox Sponsor (Koumbaros or Koumbara) must be a Parishioner in Good Standing:

1. If married, be married in the Orthodox Church.
2. If divorced, must have received an ecclesiastical divorce.
3. If the Sponsor is not a member of St.Paul's Greek Orthodox Church, they must obtain a letter from the priest of their home parish affirming membership in good standing of that parish. This letter may be delivered to St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church either by postal mail, or email (see above) and must be received no later than thirty (30) days before the scheduled date of the wedding.

NECESSARY ITEMS FOR THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Traditionally, the Sponsor provides some of the items for the wedding. However, in contemporary practice, the couple or a family member provides most, if not all, of them:

1. The WEDDING RINGS for both Bride and Groom.
2. The STEFANA, or Orthodox Marriage Crowns.
3. Two WHITE CANDLES of medium size. *
4. A SILVER TRAY for the gospel book and crowns. *
5. White Jordan almonds (small amount), traditionally strewn on the silver tray. **

*Typically, the candles are decorated with ribbons, tulle, or trimming of some kind. LAMBATHES, or other large candles, are unwieldy with and not recommended

**The marriage crowns (stefana), candles, silver tray, and Jordan almonds will be returned to the couple immediately following the completion of the sacrament.

IMPORTANT GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. **BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES:** The prospective Bride and Groom **MUST** provide photocopies of their individual baptismal certificates, and in the case of a non- Orthodox Christian, a baptismal certificate indicating a Trinitarian baptism with water, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The baptismal certificates **MUST** be received by the parish office no later than thirty (30) days before the date of the wedding, for the scheduled third and final meeting between the couple and the officiating priest, when application to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese for an Ecclesiastical Marriage License will be made. They may be sent via postal mail, fax, or email (see above). No application for an ecclesiastical marriage license can be made without prior submission of the baptismal certificates.
2. **BRIDAL AND BRIDESMAID ATTIRE:** Please be reminded that the Sacrament of Marriage takes place within the sacred space of the parish. The Bride and Bridesmaids are expected to select gowns or dresses with utmost consideration to modest attire within the sacred space of the church. Shawls (or other styles of shoulder covering) are recommended, if shoulders are bare.
3. **WEDDING REHEARSAL:** Typically, the rehearsal date and time is scheduled many months in advance, usually concurrently with the scheduling of the wedding ceremony. The Bride, Groom, and entire wedding party (including ushers not also serving as groomsmen) **MUST** arrive on time. There is much to review and practice, and everyone should be prepared to pay close attention and avoid excessive talking. On average, the wedding rehearsal requires one full hour.

SCHEDULING A WEDDING (FORM A)

Groom's Name (First, Middle, Last):

1st Marriage Yes No (If no, how many times have you been previously married?): _____

Religion of Baptism (If Protestant, what denomination?): _____

Present religious tradition (same as above or other?): _____

Phone #: (home): _____ (cell): _____ (work): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Will this be your permanent residence once married? Yes No

Email: _____ (other email): _____

Bride's Name (First, Middle, Last):

1st Marriage Yes No (If no, how many times have you been previously married?): _____

Religion of Baptism (If Protestant, what denomination?): _____

Present religious tradition (same as above or other?): _____

Phone #: (home): _____ (cell): _____ (work): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Will this be your permanent residence once married? Yes No

Email: _____ (other email): _____

Requested Dates and Times:

1. Year: _____ Month: _____ Day: _____ Time: _____

2. Year: _____ Month: _____ Day: _____ Time: _____

3. Year: _____ Month: _____ Day: _____ Time: _____

COUPLE'S INFORMATION SHEET (FORM B)

PROSPECTIVE GROOM'S INFORMATION

Full Name _____

Residence _____

Permanent residence once married? Yes No

Age _____ Date of Birth _____

Place of Birth _____

Date of Baptism _____

❖ A copy of your Baptismal Certificate is required

Religion at Baptism _____

If Chrismated into Orthodoxy, date _____

Occupation _____

Father's Name _____

Father's Country of Birth _____

Father's Religion _____

Mother's Name _____
First Name & Maiden Name

Mother's Country of Birth _____

Mother's Religion _____

Have you ever been married? Yes No

If Yes:

Orthodox Church Other Faith Civil Marriage

(Also, if the answer is Yes, please fill out form 165)

If you were born in a foreign country, at what age did you arrive in the United States? _____

Date of Arrival _____

Are you related to the intended Bride by blood?

By Blood: Yes No

Are you related to the intended Bride by marriage?

By Marriage: Yes No

If related by blood or marriage, how? _____

PROSPECTIVE BRIDE'S INFORMATION

Full Name _____

Residence _____

Permanent residence once married? Yes No

Age _____ Date of Birth _____

Place of Birth _____

Date of Baptism _____

❖ A copy of your Baptismal Certificate is required

Religion at Baptism _____

If Chrismated into Orthodoxy, date _____

Occupation _____

Father's Name _____

Father's Country of Birth _____

Father's Religion _____

Mother's Name _____
First Name & Maiden Name

Mother's Country of Birth _____

Mother's Religion _____

Have you ever been married? Yes No

If Yes:

Orthodox Church Other Faith Civil Marriage

(Also, if the answer is Yes, please fill out form 165)

If you were born in a foreign country, at what age did you arrive in the United States? _____

Date of Arrival _____

Are you related to the intended Groom by blood?

By Blood: Yes No

Are you related to the intended Groom by marriage?

By Marriage: Yes No

If related by blood or marriage, how? _____

SUPPLEMENTAL MARRIAGE FORM 165

This form is to be completed by persons who have been widowed or previously married, either in the Orthodox Church, another Church or Faith, or civilly. If both the Bride and Groom have been previously married, then each is required to fill out this form.

PLEASE NOTE: Even if you have never been previously married, if you are presently civilly married to each other, you are still required to complete this form. An Orthodox Christian is identified as the "APPLICANT," and a non-Orthodox Christian as the "SPOUSE." If both are Orthodox, either can be identified as applicant/spouse.

APPLICANT'S FULL NAME: _____

How many times has s/he been married: _____

SPOUSE(S) NAME(S) 1. _____

2. _____

Spouse(s) Religion: 1. _____

2. _____

Date of Marriage: 1. _____

2. _____

Place of Marriage: 1. _____

(City and State)

2. _____

(City and State)

Performed by whom: 1. _____

(Orthodox Priest, other Clergyman or Civil Official)

2. _____

(Orthodox Priest, other Clergyman or Civil Official)

If the above marriage(s) has been dissolved, complete the information below. Please submit a photocopy of the Death Certificate(s), or the Civil Divorce Decree(s), or the Ecclesiastical Divorce Decree(s), to Sts. Markella & Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church as part of your Application for Marriage folder.

MARRIAGE DISSOLVED BY:

Death: 1. _____

2. _____

Civil Divorce: 1. _____

2. _____

Ecclesiastical Divorce: 1. _____

2. _____