

Wedding Guidelines & Information
Assumption Greek Orthodox Church
(Effective 8/1/2014)

"A great mystery is being celebrated. How is it a mystery? They come together, and the two are made one. They have not become the image of anything earthly, but of God Himself. They come in order to be made one body; behold the mystery of love!"
(St. John Chrysostom, Homily 12 on Colossians)

Marriage is much more than a merely private transaction between two individuals; it is an event in which Jesus Christ Himself participates through the presence of the sacramental minister, the priest, and that of the praying community, the church. In view of this "ecclesial" dimension of marriage, therefore, a wedding must be performed within the context of the Orthodox Church in order for the Church to recognize and affirm the validity and authenticity of the marriage.

I. Requirements Prior to the Wedding

Church Membership:

One or both members of the engaged couple must be a member in good standing of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church and be a pledging Steward for the current year. More importantly, the couple should be attending services on a regular basis. Preparing for a wedding can be a very trying time for couples. It is a time when remembering the mystical reason for the occasion often becomes obliterated by arrangements being made. This is an opportunity to begin a lifelong commitment to actively living ones' Christian faith.

Previously Married Couples:

If one of the spouses has been previously married and divorced, he/she must present a copy of the civil divorce decree. Furthermore, if a previous marriage took place in the Orthodox Church, the divorced spouse must also have received a "Decree of Ecclesial Divorce" document and submit the original along with the marriage application. Please be advised, the process of an ecclesial divorce can take a few months.

Interfaith Marriages:

The Orthodox Christian Faith blesses interfaith marriages under the following conditions:

- The non-Orthodox Bride/Groom must be a Christian who has been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. A copy of the certificate is required.
- The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church.

Choosing a Sponsor or Koumbaros/Koumbara?

In the wedding ceremony the Orthodox Church requires a Sponsor (koumbaros - male, Koumbara - female). The Sponsor is the one who stands as witness on behalf of the Orthodox Church during the ceremony. Hence, it is imperative that this person be an Orthodox Christian; there are no exceptions to this rule. The Sponsor exchanges the rings and the crowns during the ceremony. By participating in the sacrament in this manner, the sponsor is making a pledge to be a guide and support to the marriage.

The Role of the Sponsor

By custom, the Sponsor is the one who (if spouses agree) may eventually baptize the first child of the couple. Usually one Sponsor exchanges both the rings and the crowns. If there are two sponsors, one may exchange the rings and the other the crowns.

Requirements to Serve as a Sponsor

- The koumbaros/koumbara must also be a member in good standing of the Orthodox Church.
- If he/she belongs to another Orthodox parish, the priest must receive a letter of good standing. from the parish priest.
- If he/she is married, the marriage must have been blessed by the Orthodox Church; if divorced (after marriage in the Orthodox Church) an ecclesiastical divorce must already have been issued.

Best Man & Maid of Honor

Couples may still designate a Best Man and Maid of Honor who are not members of the Orthodox Church. If this is the case, the Sponsor stands next to the groom or bride.

Reserving and Setting a Wedding Date with the Church

Reservations for Wedding dates are made at a scheduled appointment with the priest by the person being married. Do not reserve hotels or print invitations without confirming with the priest that the date is available. Due to the time required for pre-marital preparation at least 3-4 months are needed to complete the required program in order to be married in the Church.

II. Items Needed for the Wedding Day:

The couple may decide which of the following items are to be provided by the Sponsor or themselves:

- Two Wedding Rings (always provided by the spouses)
- The Crowns or Stephana. Typically, provided by Koumbaro or Koumbara
- Two decorated candles (usually come with the Stephana)
- A wedding tray filled with koufeta (Jordan almonds). The Church can provide a tray if needed.

III. Prepare & Enrich Pre-Marital Requirement

<https://www.prepare-enrich.com>

In order to provide the engaged couple with every opportunity to enjoy all the blessings of married life, participation in the Prepare/Enrich program is a requirement. PREPARE/ENRICH is a customized couple assessment completed online that identifies a couple's strength and growth areas. It is one of the most widely used programs for premarital counseling and premarital education. Based on a couple's assessment results, Fr. Andrew or Deacon Drew will provide 4-8 feedback sessions in which the facilitator helps the couple discuss and understand their results as they are taught proven relationship skills.

IV. Documents Needed for the Ecclesial License to Marry

At the first consultation with the priest you will apply for the ecclesial license to marry. The following items are required to complete the application to be married in the Church.

- **Baptismal certificates/dates for the Bride and the Groom.**
- **If the Bride or Groom was previously married in a civil service, a copy of the civil divorce must be presented.**
- **If the Bride and Groom are already civilly married, a copy of the Certificate of Marriage must be presented.**
- **If the Bride or Groom was married before in the Orthodox Church, they must present the original ecclesial divorce certificate.**

V. Civil Marriage License (Arizona Only)

Couples are also required by law to obtain a civil marriage license from the city in order for a priest to marry them in a Church. Once you have obtained the license please

submit it to the Church office as soon as possible. The License will be signed at the conclusion of the Wedding ceremony by the Priest, the Bride and Groom and two witnesses. You may be required to provide a driver's license as proof of age. Both parties must be present to obtain a marriage license.

Civil Marriage Licenses can be obtained from the Northeast Regional Court Center (602) 506-3360. It is located at 18380 N. 40th Street, Suite 120, Phoenix, AZ, 85032. They are open Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM. A \$76.00 fee is required payable in the form of check or money order to: "The Clerk of the Superior Court."

VI. Preparation for the Sacrament

The Bride and/or Groom who are of the Orthodox Faith are encouraged to participate in the sacraments of Holy Confession and Holy Communion the week before the wedding.

Sexual Relations Prior to Marriage

Marriage in the Orthodox Church is a sacrament and Jesus Christ is the celebrant. He is being asked to bless your marriage and life together. As with any sacrament one's life must be lived according to the teachings and gospel of Christ; this includes abstinence before marriage. As part of preparing for the wedding day, couples engaging in sexual relations are asked to cease. Sexual abstinence is a spiritual discipline that married couples use to deepen their faith in Christ by dedicating themselves to prayer.

Living Together

The goal of the Orthodox Church is to give each married couple the best opportunity for a blessed and fulfilling marriage; hence, the Church can never condone living together prior to the marriage. Statistics gathered by secular professionals clearly show that there is a HIGHER divorce rate among couples who have lived together prior to their weddings than those who have not!

VII. Frequently Asked Questions

Invitations to the Reception

No invitations should be printed until the date and time have been confirmed with Fr. Andrew.

If you wish to have the Fr. Andrew and his Presvytera (wife) Andrea attend your reception, please send them an invitation in advance. Father's home address is: 13388 N. 91st Place, Scottsdale, AZ 85260.

Church Fees

As long as the couple has been a steward of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church the year prior to the wedding and current stewards, there is no fee for the wedding. Parishioners not stewards the previous year must become current stewards and provide \$750.00 to Assumption Greek Orthodox Church.

Parishioners from other Orthodox jurisdictions need to provide \$1,500 to Assumption Greek Orthodox Church and provide a letter of good standing from their home parish. This payment is due at the signing of the wedding papers.

Priest

Fr. Andrew conducts the wedding rehearsal and the Prepare/Enrich sessions. It is at your discretion to provide an honorarium for the priest.

Chanter

All weddings require a chanter who should be given a minimum honorarium of \$75.00 made payable to the chanter.

Organist

An organist is available who would play as guests arrive and the processional and recessional for the ceremony. Chuck Sedgwick may be contacted at (602) 541-4079 or email at cnsedgwick@gmail.com. Couples need to contact the organist directly and make arrangements with him. A \$150 fee made payable directly to the organist.

Music Options for your Wedding

Other options for music during wedding processional & recessional:

- A CD can play classical wedding music (only traditional wedding music is allowed) over the sound system
- A "string quartet"
- The Chanter can sing a traditional hymn

Additional instrumental music or vocal soloists are permitted.

Purchasing Crowns & Candles for the Wedding

You can contact Presvytera Andrea (480) 699-0985, or consult the internet to order the Stephana and Candles.

Location of the Wedding Sacrament

Weddings are not permitted to take place at any venue other than the Church i.e. at a home, resort, hotel or local park. When an Orthodox Church is available it must be used for the ceremony.

Flowers in the Church

Floral decorations are allowed on the pew ends or in front of the sanctuary. The florist must contact the Church Office and make arrangements for the Church to be opened prior to the ceremony. One hour prior to the wedding is the usual time given. Flower girls are allowed to use ONLY silk rose petals in the Church. If real petals are used and professional tile cleaning services are needed the wedding party will be held responsible and all related costs.

Runners

Some runners come with a tape that requires professional tile to repair the marble flooring in order to remove it. If the florist uses mistakenly uses this tape and professional tile cleaning services are needed the wedding party will be responsible for all related costs.

A runner may be used as long as it is removed at the conclusion of the ceremony. The length needed is 54 ½ feet.

Photographer

Flash photography is allowed, however, most professional do not need to use a flash at Assumption. A videographer is also allowed, however, they must not have bulky and oversized stands and equipment. You do not want your wedding to look like a movie set. The photographer should be instructed to speak with Fr. Andrew concerning restrictions just prior to the ceremony.

Bridesmaids' Dresses

A sense of modesty must be maintained in the Sanctuary. Every wedding takes place in God's holy house and requires a corresponding sense of decorum.

Groomsmen & Ushers

Non-Orthodox persons may act as ushers or bridesmaids at an Orthodox Wedding, but the koumbaros/koumbara must be an Orthodox Christian, as stated earlier.

Length of the Wedding Ceremony/Arrival Time

The wedding ceremony is approximately 40 minutes long. Weddings are scheduled 2 1/2 hours apart. Each wedding party will have up to one hour prior to the scheduled wedding time for access to the Church.

Non-Orthodox Clergy

Non-Orthodox clergy presence is permitted under the following conditions:

- The Orthodox wedding ceremony does not permit the active participation of non-Orthodox clergy during the ceremony.
- At the conclusion of the Orthodox ceremony, the guest clergyman, will be properly acknowledged and may give his benediction and blessings to the couple.

Vows

The first part of the wedding ceremony is the betrothal or the "Service of the Promise" in which the couple's commitment to each other is being sealed with their commitment to Christ. There is not an exchange of vows as part of the marriage ceremony at Assumption.

Non-Orthodox Spouses

A Christian from another church who desires to marry an Orthodox Christian does not automatically become a member of the Orthodox Church. If they would like to become a member of the church please speak with Fr. Andrew. If they have been baptized in the name of the Trinity they are received through the sacrament of Chrismation.

Dates

Days when marriages are not permitted:

January 5 and 6 - The Eve of Epiphany

Great Lent and Holy Week

August 1 - 15 - Fast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary

August 29 - Feast of the Beheading of John the Baptist

September 14 - Feast of the Cross

December 13 - 25 - Christmas Fast

All Holy Days of our Lord