

*Saint John Greek Orthodox Church
11455 Metro Parkway
Sterling Heights, MI 48312
Rev. Nicholas Kyritses*

*TEL: (586)-977-6080
FAX: (586)-977-6081
E-MAIL: parish@stjohngoc.net*

Dear Bride and Groom,

Congratulations! Please fill out the following enclosed forms and return them to the church as soon as possible. These are needed to prepare the official ecclesiastical papers for your wedding.

You will need to call the church to make an appointment to stop in and sign the original Forms. Just give us a call between 8:30 am and 2:30 pm Monday through Friday.

Remember, you will also need to set up a date and time for your rehearsal.

Thank you for your cooperation!

In Christ,

Fr. Nicholas Kyritses

ST. JOHN MARRIAGE FINANCLA OBLIGATIONS

The following is a list of financial obligations once you book your wedding day.

BRIDE AND GROOM:

A. IF THEY ARE MEMBERS OF ST JOHN:

Both the bride and groom must be stewards in good standing at St John Church with a **minimum** annual stewardship of **\$360.00 each**. **Less than \$1.00 per day**.

If one of them the bride or groom is member of **another Greek Orthodox parish**, a letter must be presented from his or her parish priest indicating that she or he is a steward in good standing (sacramentally and financially)

B. IF THEY ARE MEMBERS OF ANOTHER ORTHODOX PARISH:

If **both** the bride and/or groom are members of another parish and they want to use St. John Church, a letter must be presented from their parish priest indicating that they are stewards in good standing (sacramentally and financially).

A fee of **\$500.00** will be collected for the usage of St. John Church.

BEST MAN AND MAID OF HONOR (Koumbaroi):

A. IF THEY ARE MEMBERS OF ST JOHN:

Both the Best Man and Maid of Honor (**Koumbaroi who will exchange the rings and the crowns**) must be in good standing at St John Church with a minimum annual stewardship of **\$360.00** for individuals and **\$720.00** for families. **Less than \$1.00 per day for each**.

B. IF THEY ARE MEMBERS OF ANOTHER GREEK ORTHODOX PARISH:

A letter must be presented from their parish priest indicating that the Best Man and Maid of Honor (**Koumbaroi**) are stewards in good standing (sacramentally and financially).

PLEASE NOTE: Consent of the parish council is needed if any of these financial obligations cannot be met. Parish Council generally meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

CANTOR: It is customary to personally give a gratuity of **\$100.00** directly to the cantor.

JANITOR: It is customary to personally give a gratuity of **\$100.00** directly to the Janitor

ORGANIST: If you plan on having organ music at the ceremony, please contact the church office at (586)-977-6080 for the contact information of the church organist that will perform. You will pay the organist fee directly to St. John's organist.

CIVIL LICENSE: A civil license must be obtained. Since a civil license has a time limit, please make sure that it is dated properly. Check with your local authorities for requirements for a civil license. Bring the license to the church office 10 days prior to your wedding so that we may type up the necessary information. **(PLEASE DO THIS IN A TIMELY MANNER!)**

WEDDING INFORMATION SHEET

Please PRINT clearly

Date of Wedding: _____

Time of Wedding: _____

GROOM

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:(Cell) _____

E - Mail _____

BRIDE

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:(Cell) _____

E - Mail _____

BEST MAN (KOUMBAROS)

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:(Cell) _____

E - Mail _____

MAID OF HONOR (KOUMBARA)

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:(Cell) _____

E - Mail _____

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN TO THE CHURCH ADDRESS ABOVE ALONG WITH ANY FEES OR STEWARDSHIP. THE DATE AND TIME OF THE WEDDING CANNOT BE SECURED UNTIL ALL FEES OR STEWARDSHIP ARE FULFILED.

SIGNATURE of RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Print

Date _____

MARRIAGE IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

SETTING THE DATE: Careful planning is needed when setting the date for your marriage. Dates when a marriage cannot be performed are during Lenten periods and various Feast Days of the Church calendar. Contact your parish priest as soon as possible to ensure a conflict free date. A marriage cannot be performed on the following days:

- December 24, 25 (Christmas)
- January 5, 6 (Epiphany)
- February 1, 2 (Presentation of Christ)
- August 29 (St. John the Baptist)
- September 14 (Exaltation of the Holy Cross)

Marriages will not be performed the day before and on the moveable Feast Days of Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost. Marriages are not performed during the 40 days of the Great and Holy Lent, Holy Week, the Lent and Feast of the Theotokos (August 1-15) and the Christmas Feast (December 13-25). The sacrament of Holy Matrimony can be performed on the above dates only in an extreme emergency and by dispensation of the Bishop.

WHO MAY MARRY: A marriage in the Orthodox Church is performed only for Christians, one of whom must be an Orthodox Christian. The other party must have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. A marriage between an Orthodox Christian and non-Christian or an individual not baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity cannot be celebrated in the Orthodox Church.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION: You are urged, if you are an Orthodox Christian, to receive the sacrament of Confession and the sacrament of Holy Communion as preparation for your marriage. By doing so you will bring a new vitality, a spirit and bond to your marriage that will enhance and deepen your lives. If you are not an Orthodox Christian, you are urged to contact your parish and partake in a spiritual preparation, which will grant you a renewal, thus enabling you to prepare for your wedding.

PAPERS, DOCUMENTS, CERTIFICATES: The following documents are required prior to the Orthodox ceremony:

- A certificate of baptism from your parish (if you are from a community other than that where the ceremony will take place). If you are not an Orthodox Christian your Baptismal Certificate will verify that you were baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.
- Verification that you are a member in good standing with your local parish.
- If you were born outside the United States and came to this country after your 18th birthday, a certificate verifying that you are single and eligible to marry should be obtained from your home parish priest, signed by the Bishop of the Diocese.
- A Civil License must be obtained. Since a civil license has a time limit, please make sure that it is dated properly. Check with your local authorities for requirements for a civil license.

- *An Ecclesiastical License, which gives the Parish Priest Episcopal authority to conduct the marriage in a Greek Orthodox Church, is also required. It is obtained through your Parish Priest from the Diocesan Bishop.*
- *If either of the parties has been previously married, a civil divorce certificate or the death certificate of the deceased spouse must be presented to the parish priest. If the marriage was in the Orthodox Church, an original Ecclesiastical Divorce Decree must be presented. If you are not an Orthodox Christian, it is recommended that you check with your church to determine what is needed to assure your good standing, as you remarry.*

THE BRIDAL PARTY: *Every couple that is being married in the Orthodox Church must have a Paranympfos/Paranympfy who must be a member in good standing of the Orthodox Church. This individual must be chosen very carefully for he/she is very important in the strict interpretation of the church. The Paranympfos/Paranympfy is not the same as the Koumbaros/Koumbara (the best man/maid of honor), although they may be the same individual in the wedding.*

In other Christian celebrations of marriage, the best man/maid of honor is considered only a legal witness to the ceremony. The Paranympfos/Paranympfy is an ecclesiastical witness, the person who in many instances, is given the privilege of baptizing the first child as a Godparent. He/she is also the person you turn to for advice in your lives.

The Paranympfos/Paranympfy may be separate from your best man/maid of honor, or they may be the same person. The role of the Paranympfos/Paranympfy is an active one. He/she exchanges the rings and the crowns and holds the ribbon as you walk around the ceremonial table together as husband and wife. Traditionally, the Paranympfos/Paranympfy purchases the wedding crowns, the silver tray, the almonds, and the wine goblet used during the ceremony. He/she also covers the expenses for the wedding service itself, such as the cantor and the organist. These obligations are traditional and vary. Check with your parish priest for the customs in your community.

If the Paranympfos/Paranympfy is from another parish, he/she must bring a letter of introduction from his/her priest. The Paranympfos/Paranympfy MUST be an Orthodox Christian. A person whose marriage has not been blessed in the Orthodox Church will not be allowed to serve in a sacramental and canonical capacity in the wedding.

It is a beautiful sight to have a bridal party with attendants, groomsmen, and ushers. If such is your plan, know that they do not have to be Orthodox Christians, EXCEPT for the Paranympfos/Paranympfy. Those whom you select for the bridal party must agree to observe the practice of the Greek Orthodox tradition. There is no restriction as to the age of the participants in the bridal party.

THE BRIDAL DRESS AND ATTENDANTS' GOWNS: *Care must be taken in selecting the bride's dress. Since the crowns are an integral part of the wedding ceremony, hats should not be worn and head-pieces must not interfere with the proper placing of the crowns on the bride's head. The bridal dress should also exercise a decorum befitting a Church ceremony.*

THE RINGS: *The very nature of an Orthodox Christian wedding ceremony makes it a double ring ceremony. Rings should be brought to the wedding rehearsal. Please note that disposable rings are not acceptable.*

CROWNS, STEFANA, WEDDING WREATHS AND CANDLES: Crowns, stefana and wedding wreaths are words used interchangeably. They are placed on your heads during the wedding ceremony. They may be purchased or you may wish to make them yourself.

The crowns are to be joined with a white ribbon. Consult your Parish Priest for the dimensions of the ribbon and for other questions you may have. It is permissible to wear the crowns your parents had at their wedding ceremony. White candles are also necessary for the ceremony, which should be brought to the rehearsal.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Photographs and video recordings of your wedding ceremony are permitted as long as they do not impede or distract from the Sacrament. The photographer should not be conspicuous about what he/she is doing. The priest should be consulted prior to the ceremony and will inform them of the procedures to be allowed. Cameras used by family and friends should be discouraged. If you do not have an official photographer, then one person should be designated to take the pictures.

FLOWERS: Floral decorations are permitted in the church for your wedding. Your parish priest will let the florist know where the flowers may be placed so they do not interfere with the service.

WHITE RUNNERS: Some churches have a white runner while others do not. It is best to check with your parish to see if one is available. If not, the florist usually provides one if asked.

CANTOR: The Cantor is the person who responds to the petitions and prayers offered by the Priest. He comes to the ceremony early, assists the Priest in preparing the church and in rare instances conducts the wedding rehearsal. Traditionally, a **gratuity** should be given to him.

ORGANISTS, MUSIC AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: Although it is not essential, organ music has become part of the wedding ceremony. The organist may play as the guests enter the church and as they depart. The church organist is paid a fee for their service. The music should be in the tradition of our religious heritage. The Diocesan Bishop must approve any other music. Cocktail songs, rock and roll and the like are not permitted. Instruments other than the organ are not permitted with exception by extenuation and then only with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop. Singers other than the cantor (who sings only the responses) are not permitted to sing, except by special permission from the Diocesan Bishop. Again, songs not in the tradition of our Church are not permitted. Hymns of the Church are permitted, but must be submitted beforehand for approval to the Parish Priest. The fee for the organist should be brought in a separate envelope, properly labeled, to the rehearsal. The fee charged is arranged between the organist and the wedding couple.

LANGUAGE: English and Greek may be used in any combination upon consultation with the Parish Priest. If there is a party from another Orthodox jurisdiction that would like the use of another language it is, of course, permitted.

VISITING PRIESTS: Guest clergy may participate in a wedding in the Orthodox Church if the Parish Priest of where the wedding will take place extends an invitation to them. It is absolutely acceptable if he is an Orthodox Christian Clergyman in communion with our Archdiocese. However, if they are non-Orthodox clergymen, the following are to be observed:

1. *They do not take part in any of the prayers, readings or liturgical parts of the Service.*
2. *They will be given a designated position on the solea of the church or in the first pew.*
3. *At the conclusion of the Sacrament, they may be acknowledged, read a suitable prayer and address brief word of good wishes to the couple and guests.*

LENGTH OF SERVICE: *The length of the wedding ceremony is approximately 40 minutes. Depending on the length of the processional and recessional, you should plan for about one hour from beginning to end.*

Non-Orthodox elements may not be added to or incorporated within the Orthodox Wedding Ceremony. These include religious songs and prayers from other traditions, poems, recitations, musical numbers, etc. All that is allowed is that which is relevant and proper to the sacrament of marriage as prescribed by the Church. Care should be taken to avoid actions, songs, music, recitations and the like which take away from the profound meaning and teaching that is taking place in the Sacrament. If there is any doubt as to what is permitted and what is not, the Diocesan Bishop should be consulted through the Parish Priest.

The Sacrament of Marriage is to be conducted in an Orthodox Christian Church. The practice of celebrating an Orthodox Christian Sacrament in a non-Orthodox house of worship or in the church of the non-Orthodox party is not permitted except in extenuating circumstances and only with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop.

THROWING OF RICE: *The throwing of rice, almonds or confetti in any part of the church proper is prohibited. Such behavior does not lend itself to the dignity of the ceremony and detracts from the sacredness of the occasion. Rice may be thrown as the couple exits the church and heads to the car.*

RECEIVING LINE: *Some couples prefer to have their receiving line at the end of the ceremony, in the narthex of the church. Others prefer a receiving line at the reception. It is your decision.*

REHEARSAL: *A rehearsal is usually held a day or two prior to the wedding ceremony. It familiarizes everyone in the wedding party with the ceremony and what is expected on the day of your wedding. The rehearsal should be planned with the priest.*

A NOTE TO THE NON-ORTHODOX: *Conversion to the Orthodox Christian Faith is not a requirement. If you desire to become an Orthodox Christian, this matter needs to be addressed separately and apart from the wedding. It should not be a conversion for the sake of convenience, nor should it be to make someone happy. The decision should be made following thought and prayer.*

You should also know that your marriage in the Orthodox Christian Church does not automatically grant you membership into the Church. You are always welcome to attend the services with your Orthodox partner, but you are not permitted to participate in the Sacraments. Since you are being married in the Orthodox Christian Church, you are expected to baptize and raise your children in the Orthodox Christian Faith. This should be discussed with the Parish Priest.