



SAINT NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese America + Ecumenical Patriarchate
760 West Wattles Road | Troy, MI 48098-4500
Phone: (248) 362-9575 | Fax: (248) 362-9578 | E-mail: office@stnicholastroy.org

Please read all of the information provided.

*If your plans change, please notify the
church office immediately at*

(248) 362-9575



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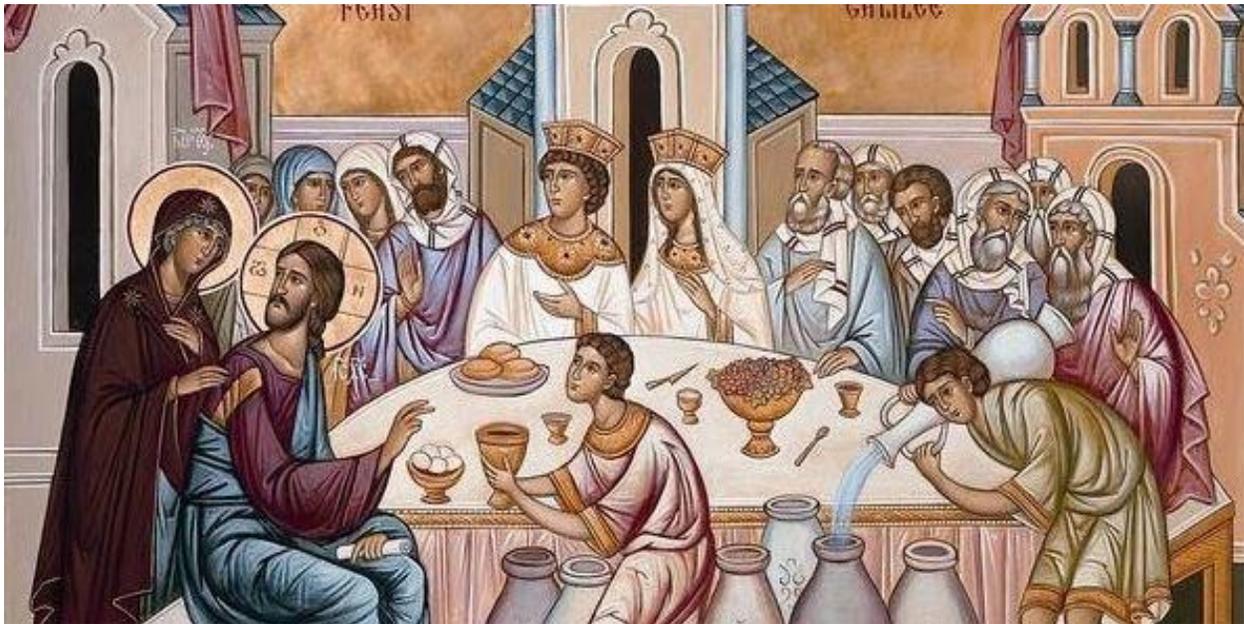
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THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

Your Marriage in the Greek Orthodox Church



CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU BOTH!

We congratulate you on your important decision to marry and to offer to God your love for each other in the sacrament of marriage.

*It is difficult to put into words the great mystery which is the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony (Marriage). You must both already have a strong sense of the **wondrous** manner of your becoming a couple and determining to marry in the Church. You have chosen wisely. When you offer your love for each other to God on the altar table, God will bless and increase it.*

Today, there are so many options available to people who want to formalize their commitment to one another. But, by determining to marry in the Church, you are inviting God to be a part of your marriage and depending on Him to help you to keep your marriage meaningful and precious to the very last day of your lives together. This emphasis on the synergy between God and you, the couple, is what makes the Orthodox Christian marriage so unique.

God will be with you in your marriage and, for this reason, we congratulate you as you prepare to receive this unique sacramental blessing! We are happy you chose our St. Nicholas Church here in Troy, Michigan, as the place for your wedding. We are here to assist you.



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AS YOUR PREPARATIONS BEGIN: Once you become engaged and are initiating your plans to be married in our Holy Orthodox Church, it is wise to contact your parish priest and arrange a time to meet and discuss your future plans with him. Plan to meet with Father Paul **before** you set any dates or contractual plans with banquet halls, musicians, etc. It is best if you can meet with Father at least six (6) months prior to your intended wedding date; the earlier, the better. If you are receiving this packet from our Church, it is time to schedule a meeting with Father!

From six months prior to your wedding, you will begin meeting with our clergy in order to discuss your wedding plans, receive spiritual guidance, attend marriage preparation classes, and complete your Ecclesiastical Marriage Affidavit.

To schedule an appointment with Father Paul, please call the church at (248) 362 9575 and ask to speak directly to him. Every effort will be made to accommodate your schedule for these meetings, but please know that there may be times when you will need to be accommodating of Father's schedule as well.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT MARRIAGE IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Marriage in the Orthodox Church is the mystical union between a man and a woman, and the celebrant or the priest of this union is none other than Christ Himself who showed His love for marriage by performing His first miracle at the Wedding of Cana in Galilee. The service of the marriage emphasizes the role of Christ in the lives of the couple and encourages them to always make **Christ the center** of their lives together.

In our tradition, for a marriage to be valid in the eyes of the Church, the marriage must be sanctified by an Orthodox priest in a canonical Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church does not consider as valid marriage sacraments performed outside of the Church since the service may not have as its basis either the Trinitarian theology or the unique emphasis of our Church on Christ, Himself, as the Celebrant of the Marriage.

Those whose marriages are sanctified in the Orthodox Christian Sacrament of Marriage are permitted to serve as sponsors of other sacraments (to be a Koumbaro or Koumbara, a Nouna or Nouno). Also, they are free to be ordained or to serve in parish leadership or to teach in the Catechetical School. Those couples who are not married in the Orthodox Church need to have their marriage sanctified in the Orthodox Sacrament of Marriage before they may participate as sacramental sponsors.

Certain obstacles, impediments or proscriptions exist in reference to marriages in our Orthodox Church. We encourage you to take these proscriptions into serious consideration before planning your marriage. Please carefully consider the following:

Impediments to Marriage: If you are related to your intended by blood or by spiritual connection, you will not be permitted to marry in the Greek Orthodox Church. (Some examples include: parents with their own children, grandchildren, brothers-in-law with sisters-in-law, uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews, first cousins, godparents with their godchildren or godparents with the parents of godchildren).



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THINGS TO CONSIDER:

MARRIAGES BETWEEN ORTHODOX AND OTHER CHRISTIANS: Inter-Christian marriages are those in which one of the spouses is Orthodox and the other is from another Christian Tradition. There is no proscription against such marriages so long as the future spouse has been baptized in the Name of Holy Trinity: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If they have not been so baptized, we are happy to baptize them so that your marriage can proceed. If your spouse who is a non-Orthodox Christian one day chooses to join the Orthodox Church we will, of course, welcome them with open arms. Please contact your priest as to how that is handled.

MARRIAGES BETWEEN ORTHODOX AND NON-CHRISTIANS: Orthodox Christians are prohibited from marrying a person who is not a Christian. Religions which are not of the Christian tradition include: adherents of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Other Eastern religions, Cults or New-Age movements, as well as Mormon (Latter Day Saints), Christian Scientist, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Assembly of God, Unitarian and Pentecostal. If you find that you have determined to marry a person who is not a Christian, please consider sharing your faith with your beloved. It may be that they will elect to accept to also follow the Christian faith with you. We have often seen the Church grow through such bonds of love and one must not assume that such a relationship will be a permanent obstacle to marriage. However, if they are not baptized Christians, your marriage to them cannot take place in the Church. Nonetheless, it is always wise to speak to your priest in person about such circumstances as often solutions can be found. We will do everything we can to treat your beloved future spouse with dignity and respect so that they will always feel welcome in our community.

THE PARTICIPATION OF OTHER CLERGY AT YOUR WEDDING SACRAMENT: If an Orthodox Clergyman is invited to the sacrament, he must request and have the permission of the parish priest. Orthodox Clergy from other Metropolises or Jurisdictions must follow proper canonical protocol, i.e. receive permission both from their own Hierarch and from our Hierarch, the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Detroit.

In the case of a marriage between an Orthodox Christian and a Roman Catholic, it should be noted that the Roman Catholic Church recognizes the validity of the Orthodox Sacrament if the sacrament is performed in an Orthodox Church and proper dispensation has been secured by the Roman Catholic spouse prior to the sacrament. Customarily, when such dispensation is secured, a Deacon or Priest of the Roman Catholic Church is often assigned to serve as witness of the Orthodox ceremony thus allowing the Roman Catholic Christian to remain in the good graces of his/her Church. At the conclusion of the Orthodox sacrament, the Roman Catholic Deacon or Priest has the blessing to read a suitable prayer and/or blessing and offer his pastoral thoughts.

If a non-Orthodox clergy is invited to be present at an Orthodox sacrament the Orthodox priest should be advised of these plans in advance. The non-Orthodox clergyman may not take part in any of the prayers, readings or liturgical actions of the Church service. However, at the conclusion of the Orthodox sacrament, with the permission of the priest, he/she may be acknowledged, invited to read a suitable prayer and/or offer his pastoral thoughts.

Finally: An Orthodox priest may not perform an Orthodox wedding outside of an Orthodox church. He may, however, attend as your guest.



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LOGISTICAL POINTS OF IMPORTANCE

SELECTING A DATE FOR THE WEDDING: While you will speak with the priest before setting any dates, it may be helpful to know the times and seasons when Wedding Sacraments are prohibited in the Orthodox Church. They are as follows:

- ❖ Great Lent, Holy Week and Pascha (Easter)
- ❖ Pentecost Sunday
- ❖ August 1-15 (Dormition of the Holy Mother)
- ❖ August 29 (Beheading of St. John the Baptist)
- ❖ September 13-14 (Exaltation of the Holy Cross)
- ❖ Mid Advent through Epiphany (Dec. 13 – Jan 6)
- ❖ On the Eves or Feastdays of our Lord or of the Theotokos

PARISH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: Every Orthodox individual 21 years of age or older and self-supporting is expected to be a member/steward in good standing of his/her parish church. If either future spouse is from a parish other than where the wedding is to be performed, a signed statement issued by his/her parish priest verifying his/her good standing is required. A non-Orthodox party need not fulfill this requirement.

THE SPONSOR (KOUMBARO/KOUMBARA): Only an Orthodox Christian ecclesiastically in order with the Church and currently a contributing member of his/her parish may participate at a wedding sacrament as a Sponsor (Koumbaro or Koumbara) by exchanging the rings and crowns. The Orthodox Sponsor must present a signed statement issued by his/her parish priest verifying that they are a member in good standing no later than one (1) month (30 days) prior to the wedding date. The Orthodox Sponsor traditionally provides the wedding crowns (*stephana*), (2) lambades/candles specially decorated in white as well as a silver tray for the sacrament. Please include a small bag of rice and white Jordan almonds to decorate the silver tray with the *stephana*. According to our Greek Orthodox Tradition, the Sponsor (Koumbaro/Koumbara) is to serve as the Godparent of your first child, so please choose someone who knows and practices their faith.

NON-ORTHODOX ELEMENTS AND MUSIC: Non-Orthodox elements may not be added or incorporated into the established Orthodox Church sacrament. Personal vows authored by the bridal couple, musical instruments (the only exception being the church organ), and secular ballads are prohibited from the sacrament as they detract from the marriage sacrament.



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FEES

Church Fee	Cantor	Cleaning/Sanitizing	Live Stream (optional)
**See below	\$125	\$150	\$50

** Church fee is \$500, but is waived if you are a member of St. Nicholas in good standing for a minimum of 1 year with a \$500 minimum pledge.

RECEPTION: Please consider our Event Center for your Makaria operated by our caterer Ernie's Mediterranean Restaurant. Our Church website has a form you may complete electronically or you may directly contact Sam at (586) 286-8435 or via email at sales2@erniesmi.com.

STATE MARRIAGE LICENSE: Anyone marrying in the State of Michigan must secure a State of Michigan Marriage License. The application for such a license is made at the County Clerk's Office of the county in which one of the parties resides. Michigan requires the prospective bridal couple to attend a lecture on AIDS or present a doctor's certificate before issuing a license. Do not get the State License too far in advance of the wedding, as it is valid for only ONE MONTH (30 days) from the time of its issue. As soon as you receive your State license, please bring it to the church so that all papers are in order and ready for the necessary signatures on the day of your wedding.

REHEARSALS: A wedding rehearsal may be scheduled by calling the church office (248) 362-9575 and speaking to Father Paul. Use of the church for such purpose shall be limited to ONE HOUR. It is the responsibility of the bridal party to be punctual and to conduct themselves in an adult and respectful manner while in the church. Please maintain appropriate attire (*semna rouha*/ *σεμνά Ρούχα*) for both the rehearsal and the marriage sacrament. A sense of modesty must be maintained in the Sanctuary, God's Holy House, reflecting a proper decorum. The purpose of the rehearsal is to acquaint the bridal party with the order of procession, their places in front of the Altar, the order of the service and the exciting of the church.

ORGANIST AND MUSIC: The organist for your wedding is your choice. You may contact Martin Mandelbaum at (248) 546-3363, Edmund Price at (248) 225-0954 or Michael Malis at (313) 980-7708. The preferred musical instrument for accompaniment at your wedding is the church organ, exceptions must be discussed with the parish priest beforehand. Only traditional and/or classical music of a regal nature are allowed for the processional and recessional. In the event a soloist is asked to sing during the sacrament, only the Lord's Prayer or hymns directly from the Orthodox Marriage sacrament are permitted as selections for the soloist. PLEASE do not request other songs or hymns to be sung that are not a part of the Liturgical Service. We ask that you compensate the *Ierospalti* (chanter) for his/her service. An honorarium of \$125 has been established by the Parish Council.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO TAPING: Photographs and video taping of the sacrament are permitted, provided that the persons hired or assigned consult with the officiating clergy BEFORE the sacrament and their activities are not such as to detract from the solemnity of the sacrament. Group pictures may be taken in designated areas of the church only IF NO OTHER CHURCH SERVICE FOLLOWS THE WEDDING. Church use for this purpose is limited to ONE HOUR. Regulations regarding the activities of photographers and video producers are enclosed with this information. Please make certain that you read these guidelines and that the photographer and videographer receive this information and follow the guidelines.



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FLOWERS: Floral arrangements and a white runner (90 feet) are usually used in the church. You must provide your own runner. The florist should be reminded not to attach or install any arrangements that may damage church property. There are sixteen (16) rows of pews in the Church. Guidelines for the florist are included in this package. Please read them and make certain your florist receives this information and follows the guidelines.

ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH MARRIAGES: In the case of an interfaith marriage, the visiting clergy will be acknowledged after the conclusion of the Orthodox Marriage Sacrament. Invited Orthodox Priests must make a formal, written request to our Metropolitan in order to join the sacramental celebration.

All paperwork, verifications, civil licenses, financial obligations, etc. must be completed (30) thirty days prior to the marriage date.



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GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS/REQUIREMENTS PRIOR TO THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES OR TRANSCRIPTS OF BAPTISM: Both future spouses need to present their Baptismal Certificates to the Parish Priest. (Those whose baptisms are recorded at St. Nicholas need not meet this requirement as your baptism is recorded in the parish registry). A Non-Orthodox Christian marrying an Orthodox Christian must have a certificate of baptism from their Church, and they must have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. (Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Unitarian, etc., are not considered to have valid baptisms because they are not Trinitarian Churches.) If one of the spouses chooses to be baptized and or chrismated into the Orthodox Faith, we will happily receive them after an appropriate catechism has been completed and once they have demonstrated their own personal and sincere commitment to the Orthodox Christian faith and her traditions.

VERIFICATION OF SINGLE STATUS: Because the Sacrament of Marriage has a spiritually binding status in the Orthodox Church we are required to verify that the both the future husband and future wife are free to marry, meaning that they are not presently married to anyone else. For this reason, we ask for the following:

That a prospective bride or groom from another parish within the Metropolis of Detroit present a letter duly signed by his/her parish priest verifying his/her single status (*eleftherogamias*). If from a parish in another Metropolis/Diocese, this letter must bear the signature of the Metropolitan/Bishop and seal of that Metropolis/Diocese. Non-Orthodox parties are exempt from this requirement.

If either of the parties was previously married in the Orthodox Church, he/she must present his/her original ecclesiastical Writ of Divorce.

If either of the parties was previously married in a church of another denomination or by a civil official, a copy of the civil decree of divorce must be presented.

If either of the parties is Orthodox and arrived in the United States when 18 years of age or older, he/she must present verification of single status (*Veveosis Eleftherogamias*) from the Metropolitan/Bishop of the Metropolis/Diocese in which he/she was born. A certificate from the local clergyman or the parish president does not suffice.

A widow or widower must present a death certificate of his/her deceased spouse.

VERIFICATION OF PARISH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: A CURRENT MEMBER of St. Nicholas must have submitted a signed stewardship card of financial commitment for the current year and have paid a minimum of \$500.00 towards their pledge at least 30 days before the Sacrament takes place. A NEW MEMBER to the parish of our St. Nicholas Church must submit a signed stewardship card with a minimum amount of \$500.00 to be paid immediately in order to secure the date for the wedding. You can verify your parish membership status by contacting the Church office. Exceptions to these standards can be given only in cases of financial hardship and at the discretion of the Parish Priest.

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING: The purpose of the day is to unite you, the future spouses, in the Sacrament of



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Holy Matrimony through the blessing and presence of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a royal celebration, both joyous and reverent, conducted with beauty and grace appropriate to this sacred Sacrament.

SACRAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Rings for both the bride and groom are needed for the service. Traditionally, the rings are placed on the right hand in the Orthodox wedding. Please have your rings sized to fit the right hand. The tray with the crowns and candles should be handed to the sexton of the church at least one (1) hour prior to the start of the wedding for placement on the sacramental table. If a youngster is assigned the duty of carrying the crowns, only the candles need be given to the sexton.

- Occupancy of the Church by the bridal party and guests is allowed one hour before the wedding ceremony and one hour after the ceremony for picture taking, provided that no other service is scheduled to follow.
- The bride and her bridesmaids should gather in the bridal room located to the right of the narthex (church lobby).
- Ushers should be assigned the task of seating the guests.
- The bridal party should be instructed to behave in a respectful manner during the procession, ceremony and picture taking.
- No food or beverages are allowed in the church or the bridal room.

NO ONE IS ALLOWED IN THE SANCTUARY AREA (ALTAR), with the obvious exception of the clergy.

Scattering/tossing of rice, candy or birdseed in the church or on the church grounds is prohibited.



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GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS:

You have been selected as the photographer or videographer of an upcoming wedding at the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Troy, Michigan.

A wedding in the Orthodox Church is a sacramental act and a solemn occasion. Therefore, appealing to your sense of professionalism and propriety, we ask that you be as discreet and unobtrusive as possible while photographing or recording in the church. You must consult with the officiating priest PRIOR to the ceremony and BEFORE you begin photographing, recording or setting up any equipment in the church.

Photographers and videographers are not to use flash or spot/flood lights once the Holy Sacrament begins. The Sacrament of Marriage is holy, and an important spiritual event. We wish for everyone to have beautiful pictures of this special day, however, let us refrain from making the Sacrament a theatrical production.

Once the Holy Sacrament begins, only the photographer and videographer should take pictures. Friends and relatives are asked to refrain from picture taking except on the entrance and exit of the wedding party.

NO ONE with the exception of the clergy is to enter the sanctuary area (the altar).

You are at liberty to photograph or tape during the processional and recessional from any area of the church OTHER THAN THE SOLEA (the marble-tiled area where the sacrament is performed) or the altar area (sanctuary). Once the sacrament begins, you may position yourself in a designated area on one of the sides of the solea or in the loft (balcony) of the church. You are requested to limit your activities to these areas only. Photographers must dress appropriately for this formal occasion. Your shoulders should remain covered and casual clothing is not appropriate.

The main parts of the ceremony and time lapses between each segment of the ceremony are as follows:

About 10 minutes into the ceremony...

Blessing and exchange of rings by the Witness

about 10 minutes later...

Blessing and exchange of crowns by the Witness

about 8 minutes later ...

Blessing and partaking of the Common Cup by the Bride and Groom ... immediately followed by...the threefold procession around the ceremonial table.

A further courtesy is extended by allowing you the use of the church for additional photographing or video-recording after the service, PROVIDING NO OTHER SERVICE IS SCHEDULED TO FOLLOW. You may use the solea steps for your work, but NOT THE STEP leading to the sanctuary and altar. Such use of the church is LIMITED TO ONE HOUR ONLY, following which time everyone will be asked to vacate the premises. While photographing or video recording after the service, we ask that a respectful demeanor is maintained by all.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you require further information, please feel free to contact the church office during the week at (248) 362-9575 between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.



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GUIDELINES FOR FLORISTS:

You have been selected as the florist for an upcoming wedding which will take place at the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church. We request that you take note of the following particulars:

We normally allow the florist to come into the church to decorate one hour before the sacrament.

There are sixteen (16) rows of pews in the church. Attaching any ribbons or floral arrangements on the pews with adhesives, tape, thumbtacks, etc., can damage church property and, therefore, is not allowed. Should any damage be incurred, you will be charged for repairs to the property.

Floral decorations and candles may be placed on the solea (the marble-tiled area where the sacrament takes place), provided that enough room is left for the bridal party and for the procession of the couple around the sacramental table.

With the exception of the priests, NO ONE is allowed to enter the altar (the highest elevation where the altar table is located). If there are floral arrangements for the altar table, please seek the assistance of the priest or deacon.

Corsages and flowers for the bridal party should be delivered to the Bridal Room next to the lobby of the church where the bridal party gathers prior to the ceremony.

The center aisle of the church is 75 feet long. A 90' runner may be used. Please tack down the runner where the carpet meets the marble tile at the solea. If real flowers are being used by the flower-girl, a runner is necessary. There are sixteen (16) rows of pews in the church.

All floral arrangements/decorations must be removed after the sacrament unless previously arranged with the priest.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you require further information, please feel free to contact the church office during the week at (248) 362-9575 between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Sincerely,

Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church



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WEDDING INFORMATION

RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO CHURCH OFFICE ALONG WITH YOUR CIVIL LICENSE

PROPOSED Wedding Date & Time _____

Name of Groom _____ Phone # _____

Baptized? YES NO Denomination of Baptism _____

Name of Bride _____ Phone# _____

Please print your name as you wish it to appear on the Civil Marriage License.

Baptized? YES NO Denomination of Baptism _____

E-mail contact _____

Residence of newlyweds _____

City/State/Zip _____

Name of Orthodox Sponsor/Witness/Koumbaro/Koumbara _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Phone () _____

Name and location of parish church to which the witness belongs:

Name of Parish _____ City/State _____

Membership # _____

Name of Second Witness _____

REVIEW OF PAPERWORK NEEDED FOR YOUR WEDDING:

- **Wedding Information Sheet** (immediately above and required for affidavit)
- **Baptismal Certificates** of both Spouses (if baptized at St. Nicholas, we need the year of the baptism only, as the sacrament will have been recorded in our registry)
- **State License**, dated within 30 days of the sacrament.
- **Verification of Church Membership of at least one party/partner** (this means being a steward in “good-standing” either at St. Nicholas or another Orthodox Church. If you are a member of St. Nicholas, there is no Church usage fee)

¹ Once the church office has received your completed Wedding Information sheet, they will get back with you to lock-in a date and time.



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associated with the wedding).

- **Verification of Church Membership of sponsor** (from any Orthodox Church).
- **If divorced, necessary documents** (speak with priest for more information).