



TWELVE HOLY APOSTLES GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

632 East Second Street, Duluth, MN 55805 • Telephone: (218) 722-5957

Web: www.12holyapostles.org • E-mail: frdunstanlyon@mail.goarch.org

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

A. Preliminary Items

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 marriage. Your indication to be married in the Church is an indication that the Christian faith and the sacramental life of the Church are important to you. As Christians, the sacrament of marriage is your oath of loyalty to each other and—as a couple—your oath of loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ.

On behalf of our community at Twelve Holy Apostles, I wholeheartedly congratulate you and your fiancé and I wish God's richest blessings upon you and your families as you are in the process of joining your lives together for His glory.

There are a few other requirements that must be met in order for someone to be married at Twelve Holy Apostles

THE COUPLE: SACRAMENTAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

Because marriage is a sacramental 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. 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. Additionally, because marriage is a sacrament in the Church and a part of one's salvation, the Orthodox Christian must be regularly attending services.
2. The intended spouse, if not Orthodox, must be a Christian baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as commanded by the Lord (Mathew 28:19).



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NECESSARY PAPERS AND DOCUMENTS

At least six months before the wedding, the couple will meet with Fr. Dustin to fill out an *Affidavit for License to Marry from the Metropolitan*. At that meeting, the following documentation is needed:

1. For Orthodox Christian(s): a certificate of Orthodox Baptism or Chrismation from your parish (if you were baptized in a community other than Twelve Holy Apostles).
2. For a non-Orthodox Christian: your Baptism certificate showing that you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. A check for \$200 made out to “Twelve Holy Apostles” (This fee is passed on the Metropolitan of Chicago to cover administrative fees.)

*****Please note, you will also need to apply for a civil marriage license from a Minnesota County before the wedding day*****

PREMARITAL CLASSES

In the months leading up to marriage, Fr. Dustin requires the couple to attend premarital classes. During these classes couples will prepare for their journey together by introducing God's purpose for marriage, discussing some of the challenges they will encounter along the way, and learning practical advice for preparing for a life together. These classes will help couples explore their own relationship as they consider married life.

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 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.

SETTING THE DATE

A couple desiring to be married should contact the parish priest and plan to meet with him at least 6 months prior to the desired date so that scheduling conflicts can be avoided. According to the official policies of our Archdiocese and Metropolitan, weddings may not be celebrated during the fasting seasons or the major feast days of our Church:



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- December 13-25 (The Advent and Christmas Season)
- January 5-6 (Epiphany)
- February 2 (the Presentation of the Lord)
- Great Lent and Holy Week
- 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
- Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year

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 WEDDING PARTY

The “koumbaro” or “koumbara”—the sponsor who will participate sacramentally in the service by exchanging the rings 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 Good Standing” from his/her parish priest certifying his/her active stewardship in the Church. Other members of the wedding party need not be Orthodox (Groomsmen, Bridesmaids, Flower Girls, Ring Bearer, Crown Bearer, Ushers).

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. Our church does not have an organ or an organist. If you choose to invite an organist, it is your responsibility to do so and their responsibility to provide an organ (keyboard) and their own music. The chanter, by tradition, is an integral part of the wedding service and normally chants at all weddings.

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY

Photographs and videos of your wedding are permitted but should not in any way impede or distract from the celebration of the sacrament. Photographers should be inconspicuous and should not use a flash during the service. Videographers may set up cameras in the Church, if



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needed, on the solea (the area where the service will take place) and one in the narthex (front entrance of the church).

B. Items Required/Things to Plan

1. **Affidavit for License to Marry from the Metropolitan:** this is paperwork filled out with the priest at least 6 months before the wedding.
2. **Civil Marriage License** (to be provided to the priest prior to the rehearsal). Please check with your local civil authorities (any county in Minnesota) for the requirements.

*****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*****

3. **Wedding bands/rings** (may bring at rehearsal)
4. **Marriage crowns or “stefana.”** They are placed on your heads during the wedding ceremony. They may be purchased or you may make them yourselves. The crowns are joined with a 3’ white ribbon. You may bring at rehearsal for practice. They may be placed on a silver tray if used as part of the wedding procession. Tray can be adorned with rice and Jordan Almonds (an odd number of them is the tradition)
5. **Two white candles** about 18” - 24” in length for the couple to hold during the service
6. **Organ music** is optional (the church does not have an organ or a player)
7. **Floral arrangements** may be set up one hour prior to the ceremony. Pew arrangements or bows may be used, provided they are attached in a way that does not mar the wood and they must be removed following the ceremony.
8. **A runner** may be used.
9. **Photographs & video** of ceremony are permitted, as long as they do not impede or distract the sacrament. (Those involved should consult with the priest prior to the ceremony.)



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10. **Flowers, birdseed, bubbles** can be used to celebrate the couple *outside* the church. Rice is not encouraged.
11. A **wedding rehearsal** to familiarize both parties and their bridal party on church traditions and wedding procedure (scheduled with the priest).
12. A **recent confession** (scheduled with the priest).

C. Program Description

*****The following is the sequence of the wedding service. You may use this to make programs as needed for your guests*****

Introduction

The Sacrament of Marriage in the Orthodox Church sanctifies the union of a man and a woman who are brought into a communion of love for mutual companionship and fulfillment. This blessed union is not expressed through vows, but through a shared and committed relationship with the risen Christ. Therefore, the couple, the clergy, and the laity pray that this Christian marriage be sanctified and preserved by God in the image of Christ's perfect union to the Church.

The wedding ceremony in the Orthodox Church is an ancient and meaningful service that has been celebrated in its present form for centuries. The service is abundant with symbols that reflect marriage: love, mutual respect, equality and sacrifice.

The ceremony consists of two parts which are distinct and separate from each other: **The Service of the Betrothal** and **The Crowning of the Couple**.

Everything in the ceremony has a special meaning and significance; especially the repetition of each act three times to symbolize and to invoke the mystical presence of the Holy Trinity.

The Betrothal and the Exchange of Rings

The theme of this part of the service is faithfulness, which is expressed in the symbolism of the rings.

During the exchange of rings, the priest blesses them and holds them in his right hand, and making the sign of the cross over their heads, he betroths the servants of God, the bride and the groom. The rings are placed on their right hands, for it is the right hand of God that blesses, it was the right hand of God to which Christ ascended, and it is also to the right that those who will inherit eternal life will ascend.



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The koumbaro (sponsor) then exchanges the rings three times. The exchange signifies that in married life, the weakness of one partner will be compensated by the strength of the other, the imperfections of one, by the perfection of the other.

The Ceremony of the Crowning

The second part of the ceremony begins with the chanting of Psalm 128 and consists of prayers, the crowning, readings from the New Testament, the offering of the common cup, the ceremonial walk and the removal of the crowns. At the conclusion of the prayers, the priest joins the hands of the couple. The hands are kept joined until the end of the service to symbolize the union and oneness of the couple.

The Candles

The bride and groom are given candles to hold during the service. The candles symbolize Christ, “the light of the world”.

The Joining of Hands

The priest joins the right hands of the bride and groom while saying a prayer asking God to unite them in oneness of mind and heart. The bride and groom keep their hands joined throughout the rest of the service to symbolize their unity as a couple in God.

The Crowning

This is the focal point of the ceremony. The crowns (or “stephana” in Greek) are joined by a ribbon that symbolizes the unity of the couple and the presence of Christ who blesses and joins the couple. The priest takes the crowns and blesses the Bride and the Groom in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and then places them on the couples head. The koumbaro (sponsor) interchanges the crowns three times as a witness to the union. The crowns themselves are a symbol of ‘martyrdom,’ since the couple, out of love, are to sacrifice for each other.

The Scripture Readings

The writings of both Saint Paul to the Ephesians (5:20-33) and Saint John the Evangelist (2:1-12) are the two most revealing sections of the New Testament relative to the Mystery of Marriage. The first reading relates marriage to the mystery of Christ and the Church, while the second details the presence of Jesus at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

The Common Cup

The Gospel reading describes Christ’s first miracle, the changing of water into wine at a marriage celebration in Cana of Galilee. There He converted the water into wine and gave it to the newlyweds. In remembrance of this blessing, wine is given to the couple. This is the “common cup” of life denoting the mutual sharing of joy and sorrow.

The Ceremonial Walk—Dance of Isaiah

In this procession, the priest, holding the Gospel, leads the bride and groom around the table three times. The couple is accompanied by the sponsor, who will walk with them throughout the joys and sorrows of life. As the bride and the groom take their first steps as a married couple, the church, in the person of the



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priest, leads them in the way they must walk. The way is symbolized by the circle at the center of which is the Gospel and the cross of our Lord.

The Removal of the Crowns

At the conclusion of the ceremonial walk, the priest removes the crowns from the couple's heads and beseeches God to grant to the newlyweds a long, happy, and fruitful life together. He then lifts up the Gospel and separates their joined hands reminding them that only God can separate the couple from one another.

The Wedding Favors

The sugar coated almonds (koufeta), were placed on the tray with the crowns/stefana. The white symbolizes purity. The egg shape represents fertility and the new life which begins with marriage. The hardness of the almond represents the endurance of marriage and the sweetness of the sugar symbolizes the sweetness of future life. The odd number of almonds is indivisible, just as the Bride and Groom shall remain undivided.