



## THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS

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[www.goholycross.org](http://www.goholycross.org)

### Guidelines When Planning Your Marriage

Marriage may be solemnized in the Orthodox Church when at least one of the principals is of the Orthodox faith. When one of the principals is not, he or she must be of the Christian faith and have been baptized in a church professing the Trinitarian doctrine, that is by water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It is not required that the individual become Orthodox; on the other hand, he or she does not become Orthodox merely by being married in the Orthodox Church. Should the individual wish to join the Church, a period of instruction will be necessary leading to Confirmation. A valid Baptism may not be repeated.

However, it is expected that all those solemnizing their marriage in the Orthodox Church for the first time should be active, pledging stewards attending Divine Services, the Pre-Marital Counseling sessions, and the Studies in the Faith course, "A Survey of the Orthodox Church" that is offered twice a year. If these requisites are not met, the clergy reserve the right to postpone the Sacrament until such time as they are fulfilled. Note: The time and dates for the pre-marital sessions and the study classes will be scheduled and posted in the *Sunday Bulletin* and the Church website.

#### SCHEDULING

The date and time for the Sacrament should be arranged with one of the Priests as far in advance as possible. The latest a Sacrament may be scheduled is at 4:00 PM. An initial meeting with both principals will be arranged with one of the priests to confirm the date and discuss the Sacrament once all paper work has been submitted. No Sacrament will be confirmed until this time.

#### THE SPONSOR

The Greek word for the Sponsor in Marriage is "paranympchos" and is both masculine and feminine. In other words, the Sponsor, the person whose functions it is in the ceremony to exchange the rings and/or the crowns, may be a man or a woman. The Sponsor must, however, be of the Orthodox faith, free of any impediment as regards Church law, and a practicing member of the Church. For example, a married person not married in the Orthodox Church would be ineligible. Other members of the bridal party are not required to be of the Orthodox faith.

## STEWARDSHIP:

### - FOR THE BRIDE AND THE BRIDEGROOM:

The marriage normally takes place in the bride's Church, unless she is not Orthodox. She (or her fiancé) must be a steward of the Church of the Holy Cross. If she (or her fiancé) has not been an active steward through participation in Divine Services and/or offering her time, talent, and treasury to the Church for at least **one year prior** to the wedding, attendance at Divine Services is mandatory and a *minimum* pledge commitment is required equivalent to the parish's average yearly Stewardship pledge, \$1600.

### - FOR THE SPONSOR:

The "paranympchos", whether man or woman, if not an active, pledging steward of Holy Cross, will be required to fulfill the minimum Stewardship commitment i.e., participation in Divine Services, participation in the "Study Class," and a pledge commitment of the average Stewardship pledge (currently, \$1600). If a member of another Parish, he or she must request the Priest of that Parish to forward a letter to Holy Cross attesting that he or she is an active steward in good standing and is free of any canonical impediment to act as Sponsor.

## REQUIRED FOR THE CEREMONY:

- \* Baptismal certificates should be brought to the first meeting with the priest
- \* Civil Marriage License (to be given to the Priest at the rehearsal)
- \* The wedding bands
- \* The marriage crowns, or "stephana"
- \* Two white candles 18"-24" in length

## MUSIC

The Church's organist should be contacted directly and early in the planning (Ms. Karen Hutchinson 650-576-2190). No secular music or other instruments are permitted. The organist may suggest alternatives from traditional and classical literature.

The Holy Cross Choir is available to sing the hymns and responses during the wedding ceremony, and various Orthodox hymns before the ceremony (alternating with the organist), pending availability of the choir on the given date. If the choir is desired, contact the choir director directly and early in the planning (Mr. Chris Canellos, 650-867-2019).

## FLORAL DECORATIONS

The chancel area of Holy Cross is very colorful; flowers are limited to two large arrangements on stands at either side of the icon screen. Pew arrangements or bows may be used provided they are attached in a way that does not mar the wood and are removed after the ceremony (they must be removed following the Sacrament). For reasons of safety, a white runner down the center aisle may not be used.

## PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

Flash pictures, before the beginning and at the conclusion of the service may be taken. Otherwise, pictures taking during the service are NOT permitted, except by a professional photographer, who will use available light, not flash, and may position himself in the choir loft. Group photographs may be taken with flash after the ceremony for a period not to exceed 15 minutes.

Videotaping may be permitted by prior consent of the Priest. Only one camera may be used, positioned in the choir loft, using available light. A second un-manned camera may be placed on the solea with the guidance of the priest. Both photographer and video operator must remain in one position throughout the service.

## WEDDING PROGRAM

If you are providing a program on the Sacrament of marriage, the "Rite of Marriage in the Orthodox Church" text is recommended. It may be found on our website or may be sent to you via email.

## CHURCH ETIQUETTE

- ❖ An invitation for your reception should be sent to both priests (in case of scheduling changes) to ensure the participation of the clergy.
- ❖ Please remember that the Church is first and foremost a house of worship. It is therefore requested that there be no gum chewing, loud talking, clapping, or other inappropriate behavior that interferes with the prayers and worship of others.
- ❖ For reasons of safety, rice and birdseed, etc. may NOT be thrown at the bridal pair.

If you have any questions, please contact Father Peter at  
(650) 591-4447 or [frpeter@goholycross.org](mailto:frpeter@goholycross.org)  
Otherwise, general questions may go to the church office  
at (650) 591-4447 or [office@goholycross.org](mailto:office@goholycross.org)

*(updated 02/20/2025)*