NOTES ON A MARRIAGE

Marriage is the Sacrament where two people, husband and wife, become one. They start a new life and family together in front, and with the blessing, of God and the Congregation of the people of God, in their Church. At the time of their wedding from the one side they receive the abounding blessings of our Lord to their new family and from the other they receive the religious, social and legal recognition, as well as the prayers of their Church. Marriage therefore is sacred, as blessed and confirmed by the Lord and an opportunity to grow in faith and sacrifice.
The Sacrament of Marriage is not magic! The Holy Spirit does not suppress our freedom but rather liberates us from our limitations as humans. Sacrifice is an important element of Christian Marriage because sacrifice means love and this is the essence of this sacrament: absolute love that leads to self-sacrifice ourselves for the other one; marriage is not the place of rights and privileges but rather the place where we give up all that is ours for the other.

An important element of the new life, which is underlined by the decision to get married in the Church, is that the new life should be a Christian life. Christian life, is the understanding of the Marriage and family as holy but also as a maintained relationship with the Church. In that aspect, it is important to keep our family as a good and thankful member of the church. We need to remember to be thankful for our blessings and give back to the Church of God in thanksgiving for our talents, our time and our treasures so that the Church of God cannot only be operational but rather able to proclaim the Gospel and the Divine Grace without limits.

With these in mind, please note the following canonical, legal and practical notes:
1. The couple to be married must be a member in good standing and a supporting member of our Church prior to the day in which they will sign the affidavit for license from the Archdiocese. If they were not stewards/members the previous years they must become stewards/members with a minimum stewardship contribution of $400 to the Church.

2. If one of them is not a member in our Church, then he/she needs to provide from his/her parish a letter that he/she is in good standing with the Church and Free to get Married (certificate of freedom to get married).

3. Couples that are members in another recognized Orthodox Church must become stewards/members of our Church.

4. The church office will not reserve a wedding date unless the couple or one of them is already a member/steward of the Church.

5. The Koumbaros (Sponsor) must be a person baptized as an Orthodox Christian and still a member in good standing and a supporting member in a recognized Parish of the Archdiocese. A person who does not belong to a parish, or who belongs to a parish under the jurisdiction of a bishop who is not in
communion with our Archdiocese (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America), or who, if married, has not had his or her marriage blessed by the Orthodox Church, or, if divorced, has not received an ecclesiastical divorce, cannot be a Koumbaros (Sponsor). Non-Orthodox persons may be members of the wedding party, but they cannot exchange the rings or crowns or participate any other way (reading etc.).

6. Marriages are not performed on fast days or during the fasting season or on the feasts of the Church as indicated: September 14, December 13-25, January 5 and 6, Great Lent and Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, August 1-15 and August 29, as from the Archdiocesan guidelines.

7. **Don’t reserve a hall** for the reception and don’t print invitations prior to having the confirmation from your Priest about the date and time of wedding.

8. For the reception following the sacrament you must remember that if you want the Priest to be present and to bless the dinner, then you have to invite him ample time ahead and not the last minute. He should be seated at the newlywed’s parents table.

9. The proper form to address Fr. Nicholas on the invitation and whenever it is required is: **Rev. & Mrs. Nicholas Dassouras**

10. **Pre-Marital Seminar & Meetings** – Our District requires all couples to participate in a pre-marital Seminar prior to the wedding. The Church office will give you all the necessary information. Prior and following the seminar you should schedule a meeting with the Priest.
Special Notes

• In the case that the bride or the bridegroom is not an Orthodox Christian, the non-Orthodox partner must be a Christian who has been baptized, in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The couple must commit, in this case, to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and nurturing them in accordance with the Orthodox faith. The Church cannot bless the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian. A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian does not thereby become a member of the Orthodox Church.

• Liturgically important is the role of the Koumbaros (Sponsor) and not of the best man whose role is mere decorative, a part of the wedding party.
• Under no circumstance can a non-Orthodox Christian Priest participate liturgically in the sacrament, except as a friend of the family, sitting together with the congregation.
• If either or both parties have been previously married in the Orthodox Church they must present the ecclesiastical as well as civil divorce certificate. And if either or both parties are widowed, they need to present the death certificate of the deceased spouse.

• No person may marry more than three times in the Church, with permission for a third marriage granted only with extreme oikonomia (dispensation).

• Please inform the photographers and/or videographers to be respectful during the service, not to run around the Solea area (the elevated part of the nave where the Sacrament is taking place), and absolutely not to turn their backs to the Altar area or the Priest at the Solea.

• If you plan to have a rehearsal in the Church, reserve the time a few weeks prior to the date and not the last minute. Remember that going to Church for rehearsal, does not mean that the Church is still not a sacred place; therefore, dress with respect. Especially, during summer time (no shorts, bareback or tight clothing are permitted).

• Usually the Church is open on the day of the Sacrament ½ hour prior to the Sacrament. In order to make different arrangements (for the florist, musician etc.) please call the church office.
A month prior to the date of the Sacrament

1. The Koumbaros (Sponsor) must be a member/steward of our Church or bring a certificate of “Good Standing” from another recognized Greek-Orthodox Church.

2. At least four weeks prior to the wedding, keep in mind that you have to complete the forms for the license from the Archdiocese and one week prior, you must bring to the Priest, the city license. Please call the office @ (203) 849-0611 to schedule it.

3. Chanter & Custodian. All Weddings require a chanter who sings the Holy Hymns during the Sacrament and the custodian who makes all necessary preparations prior to the Sacrament, assists the Priest during the Sacrament and cleans the Church after the Sacrament. Both should be given a minimum honorarium of $75.00 (total of $150) which must be made payable to them (the Church will provide you their names). Usually the honorariums are the responsibilities of the Koumbaros. Honorarium for the priest is at the family’s discretion.
The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together. Men will take up arms and even sacrifice their lives for the sake of this love. St. Paul would not speak so earnestly about this subject without serious reason; why else would he say, “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord?” Because when harmony prevails, the children are raised well, the household is kept in order, and neighbors, friends, and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both of families and states, are thus produced. When it is otherwise, however, everything is thrown into confusion and turned upside-down.

–St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians 5:22-23*

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, and irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.”

C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*