



**"FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."**

# HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Our Mission: "To proclaim and live the Orthodox Christian Faith in its fullness as faithful members of the Body of Christ."

Reverend Father John Touloumes, *Proistamenos*  
Reverend Father Radu Bordeianu, *Assistant Priest*



**Preparing for Your Wedding at  
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church  
985 Providence Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15237  
(412) 366-8700 | [office@HolyTrinityPgh.org](mailto:office@HolyTrinityPgh.org)**

This guide will help you prepare for your upcoming wedding at Holy Trinity Church. For additional questions please contact the Church Office at the phone number above or email [office@HolyTrinityPgh.org](mailto:office@HolyTrinityPgh.org).

## Items You Will Need for the Ceremony:

- ✓ Traditional Greek Orthodox Wedding Crowns (joined by a white ribbon)
- ✓ 2 Candles for the Bride and Groom (18" or so with white/ivory ribbons. See note below.)
- ✓ Silver tray for the wedding sacramental table
  - Small sandwich-size bag of white Jordan almonds (to be sprinkled on the tray)
  - Small sandwich-size bag of white rice (to be sprinkled on the tray)
- ✓ Wedding rings
- ✓ Civil wedding license (see note below)
- ✓ Ecclesiastical wedding license (see note below)

## Paperwork needed:

At your first meeting you should provide the following papers required to set a date:

- ✓ Baptism/Chrismation certificate of the Orthodox spouse(s)
- ✓ Verification of the baptism of the non-Orthodox spouse in a Christian community that baptizes in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (for example, the Roman Catholic and, traditionally, mainline Protestant churches such as the Lutheran and Episcopalian communities. Final decisions of the acceptance of these items are up to the Metropolis Registry through the parish priest.)
- ✓ Wedding Information Form: This can be found on the Holy Trinity website under Documents/Sacraments and should be filled out prior to the first meeting.

Leading up to the wedding date, the following licenses must be applied for and provided:

- ✓ Civil wedding license – must be applied for within 60 days of wedding and brought to the rehearsal. (If you live in Allegheny County, you can apply for your license [here](#).)
- ✓ Ecclesiastical wedding license – must be applied for through the church office more than 30 days in advance of the wedding.

## Setting a Wedding Date

A couple desiring to be married must contact the church office to schedule an appointment with the parish priest. Please schedule that meeting as soon as possible after the engagement, as events are often scheduled well over a year in advance on the Church calendar. Besides staying clear of other existing Church events, weddings may not be celebrated during the fasting seasons or the major feast days of our Church:

- Great Lent and Holy Week
- August 1-15 (Dormition of the Virgin Mary)
- August 29 (Beheading of St. John the Baptist)

- September 14 (Exaltation of the Holy Cross)
- December 13-25 (Christmas Fast)
- Great Feasts of the Lord, including the Eves and Feasts of Theophany (January 5 and 6), Pascha, Pentecost, and Christmas (December 24 and 25).

### **Premarital Preparation Sessions (Required)**

Good things in life are worth preparing for, and that is especially true for marriage. Our parish offers an annual “Journey of Marriage” seminar with monthly meetings on the first Monday of each month from October through May. These are required as preparation for your wedding in the Orthodox Church.

Sometimes due to the timing of an engagement and wedding it is not possible to complete the entire series prior to the wedding. In those cases, it is most beneficial to complete the remainder of the series after the wedding as newlyweds. If due to out-of-town residency or other issues prevent participation, please consult the priest for alternative solutions.

### **The Ceremony**

The beauty of an Orthodox Christian wedding service is preserved through the centuries-old collection of prayers, hymns, petitions, readings, liturgical actions and responses. Variations from the traditional wedding texts and order of service are not permitted. In addition, as a solemn liturgical offering of a sacrament, the wedding is always celebrated in an Orthodox Church.

Recognizing the pastoral needs of our parishioners and their non-Orthodox attendees at weddings, the service is offered almost entirely in English, with repeated hymns or phrases also offered in Greek. If you have a particular language request outside those standards, please consult the priest in advance.

The service lasts about 45 minutes, including a brief message to the couple at the end. This does not include time for the processional, recessional, or photographs.

**Important: Wedding service must start at their scheduled time.** Though we may make humorous comments about “Greek time,” in a parish of over 350 families, delays can create serious issues for other sacramental, liturgical or pastoral events on the same day. And catering venues do not usually take kindly to wedding parties showing up late. Please be respectful of others and be prompt on your wedding day.

### **Invitations**

Invitations should not be printed or sent until the date has been confirmed by the Church Office.

### **Service Booklet/Program Handout**

The Church has booklets with the complete text of the wedding service that may be distributed to attendees if requested and must be collected at the end. If the couple wishes to also provide a program, they are responsible for printing and distributing it. If in addition to listing the bridal party, family and greetings, the couple wishes to provide an explanation of the Orthodox wedding ceremony, a recommended text can be downloaded from the parish website under Documents/Sacraments. Look for “An Explanation of the Orthodox Wedding Service.” If there is a listing of the participants in the service, the clergy should be titled as “Clergy” or “Celebrant(s) and listed as “Reverend Father (First Name) (Last Name)” or “Reverend Deacon (First Name) (Last Name).”

## **Clergy**

Your wedding will be officiated by the head priest of the parish unless otherwise indicated. If you desire the assistant priest or deacon, that must be specifically requested in advance. Also, if you desire to have any other Orthodox clergy from other parishes or jurisdictions to participate, that must be cleared with the head priest well in advance. Proper papers of permission to serve must be received ahead of the ceremony if they are not clergy from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh. Non-Orthodox clergy are not permitted to participate in the service but may be offered a seat of honor at the front and may be invited to offer a prayer or blessing at the end based on the ecumenical guidelines from the Archdiocese. This must be cleared in advance by the head priest.

**Important:** If you desire to have any Holy Trinity clergy or their wives attend your reception, you must specifically send them invitations in advance as you do other guests. It should not be automatically assumed that the clergy will attend receptions, and it is not always possible based on the parish schedule.

## **Chanter**

Our parish chanter will be made available for weddings and should be offered a gratuity for his service. Any other chanting requests must be submitted in advance to the priest.

## **Stewardship/Fees**

By virtue of the Orthodox member(s) of the couple being a member in good standing at Holy Trinity Church, their stewardship pledge and offerings support all the ministries of the Church, including sacramental life. There are no fees for the use of the Church or for the services of the clergy for sacraments.

## **Music**

Organ music is permitted for processional and recessional music. No other instruments are permitted in the Church. Our sound system has a wireless 1/4" (6.35mm) headphone plug that can be connected to an organist's portable keyboard, resulting in a full, rich sound. Prerecorded music is not permitted. Traditional classical music only; no contemporary music. Please submit any questions on selections in advance. Our selection of approved organists is as follows:

Irene Maginas - 724-709-3931

Rich Pinkerton - 412-841-3937

Amanda Bruce - 412-853-5662

John Zelhart - 412-952-1800

## **Flowers**

The beauty and the scope of the traditional Orthodox Christian architecture, iconography and ecclesiastical furnishings create a beautiful environment on their own. Decorative flowers are, therefore, permitted in a limited sense but not necessary. If flowers are used, there are 8 pillars available to elevate them if needed.

Flowers and petals may not be strewn on the floor (with the exception of a small handful or two sprinkled in the main aisle by the flower girl(s) in the procession. Aisle runners of material or plastic are not permitted due to potential slippage on the tile floor. Any decorative arrangements on the chairs must be secured with non-destructive clamps and not tape. Decorations of any kind are not permitted on the iconostasis.

## **Photography/Videography**

Both photography and videography are permitted during the service, including flash if needed. All photographers and videographers are expected to dress modestly and appropriately to respect the church environment. Jeans, t-shirts and other very casual attire are not allowed. All photographers and

videographers are also expected to make their presence discrete and to avoid crossing in front of the congregation (except for the need to be in front of the center aisle to capture the processional) and should not in any way impede or distract from the celebration of the sacrament.

**Important:** Photographers and videographers are permitted on the main floor of the church only. No equipment or personnel are permitted on the “Solea,” which is the elevated platform at the front of the church where the service takes place. Photos and video may be taken from the sides of the Solea to get a view of the faces of the bride and groom and to capture certain moments such as the exchanging of rings and crowns or the drinking from the Common Cup. We do not have a balcony or choir loft.

### **Microphones**

The bride and the groom do not speak during the wedding service, as we do not have vows in the Orthodox Christian tradition. It is requested that you do not, therefore, mic either the bride or the groom. If a videographer requests a sound feed of the ceremony, it can be obtained by plugging a recording device into our audio system using a 1/8”(3.5mm) earphone plug. This will pick up all mics during the course of the wedding. This should be requested in advance.

### **Online Broadcast**

Holy Trinity offers HD (1920x1080 resolution) broadcast of live services every Sunday. Sacraments are not broadcast unless requested. If a live broadcast of a wedding is desired, a specific request must be made to the priest prior to the service. If broadcast, a copy of the video may be requested following the ceremony.

### **Candles**

Candles for Orthodox weddings are available from many sources, including local monasteries and online.

**Important:** At Holy Trinity Church the HVAC vents point directly toward the center of the Solea where the bride and groom stand. During hot or cold seasons when heat or air conditioning is continuously running, this may accelerate the burn rate of candles, resulting in wax dripping on the hands or clothes of the bride and groom. This is especially true of candles made of paraffin wax; not so much for pure beeswax. A safe way to protect against this is to have candles that have a layer of tulle (netting) that the bride and groom will place their hands under when holding the candles. If wax drips, it will then be caught in the tulle and not on the hands or clothes of the couple.

### **The Common Cup/Wine**

The Church will provide a Common Cup (from Jerusalem) for use during the wedding service. It will also provide traditional red sacramental wine. Sometimes the couple, their koumbaro(a)(oi) or another family member or friend will provide a common cup for use in the ceremony that can then be taken home by the couple for posterity. This would be a glass or metal goblet, not a champagne or other contemporary style (For an example only, see here: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/Boo5EIWXDA>). Sometimes families who have been to holy sites such as Cana in the Holy Land or monasteries in Greece will want to provide special wine as a blessing to the couple. These things are optional and the priest should be notified in advance about them.

### **Bridal Party Attire**

**Grooms/Groomsmen:** It is customary for the groom and groomsmen to be dressed in suits and ties.

**Bride/Bridesmaids:** When choosing a bride’s dress, headpieces must not interfere with the proper placing of the crowns on the brides’ head, as the wedding crowns are an integral part of the wedding ceremony. Also, the bridal gown and attendant’s dresses should also exercise a decorum and modesty befitting a Church ceremony, especially remembering that the ceremony takes place in the house of God in front of the holy

icons. It is preferred that dresses with bare shoulders use a cape or shoulder cover during the ceremony. At the reception, the bridesmaids may dress as the couple desires.

### **Recessional**

Bird seed, rice, confetti, petals and other tossed materials are not permitted inside or outside the church. Some couples have used bubbles, handheld ribbon wands, etc.

### **Preparation Rooms for Bridal Party**

We have two preparation rooms for the Bride/Bridesmaids and Groom/Groomsmen: The Fireside Room for the Bride/Bridesmaids and the Conference Room for the Groom/Groomsmen. About 30 minutes before the wedding starts the groom is to take his place in the Sacristy through the entrance to the right side of the altar. He may have the best man or koumbaro/sponsor keep him company there until the processional begins.

### **Koumbaro(a)(oi)/Sponsor(s)**

The couple must have a practicing Orthodox Christian to serve as sponsor(s) (Greek: “Koumbaros” = male; “Koumbara” = female; “Koumbaroi” = couple.) at the wedding and who will serve as spiritual support and guide to the couple in their married life. He or she must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing including: Baptism/Chrismation in the Orthodox Church; active membership in an Orthodox parish (including financial stewardship); 18 years of age or older; if married, in the Orthodox Church; if divorced, reception of an ecclesiastical divorce in addition to the civil divorce. If the sponsor is from another Orthodox parish, he/she/they must present a letter signed by their parish priest attesting to their good standing well in advance of the wedding. The sponsor(s) may have a dual role as a member of the bridal party (such as best man or maid/matron of honor), or he/she/they may hold only the role of sponsor. During the ceremony the sponsor(s) will exchange the rings and crowns and process around the wedding table with the newly-married couple. In the event that the sponsor is married to another Orthodox Christian, both may participate in the ceremony as koumbaroi/sponsors. The spouse who exchanges the crowns will be the one to sign the wedding license and be officially listed as the sponsor. Non-Orthodox Christians and non-Christians can be given honored roles (such as in the bridal party) but cannot serve as the sponsor.

**Important:** To preserve everyone’s dignity, it is best to consult the parish priest about your choice of a sponsor before inviting the person in the rare event that there is a qualification issue that needs to be resolved in order for the person to stand as a sponsor. It is an awkward situation to invite someone to that honored role only to discover there is an impediment that prevents them from doing so.

### **The Rehearsal**

Rehearsals are usually held the day before the wedding, usually around the early dinner hour. All the bridal party and any family members in the procession should attend.

**Important:** It is most helpful to bring a list of the procession and bridal party to the rehearsal so the priest can conduct the rehearsal efficiently.

### **After-Wedding Photos**

Wedding parties often remain in the Church for photographs following the wedding. This is permitted to take place on the Solea. Lighting umbrellas may be used. Please remember that you are still in a sacred space and all conversations and actions should be respectful of that. In no case is food or drink allowed in the Church.

### **A Note to Non-Orthodox Spouses**

We are so glad you are here to receive this wonderful blessing. A wedding in the Orthodox Church is offered as a timeless blessing on your life together and with the prayers for you to share in the liturgical life and ministries of the Church for all your marriage, including bringing your children for baptism. Though you are invited and welcomed to participate in almost every aspect of parish life, marriage in the Church does not automatically make you an Orthodox Christian. Even though only Orthodox Christians in good standing are permitted to receive the Sacraments (such as Holy Communion), we welcome anyone to worship and fellowship with us, including you as you have married into the community.

What if you desire to eventually join your spouse in the Orthodox Faith as a practicing Orthodox Christian? Please know that no one should feel compelled to join the Orthodox Church and this must be a free choice of yours guided by the Holy Spirit for a lifetime commitment. If you freely desire to learn more about the Orthodox Church and/or wish to join, please consult our priest. We welcome you to explore, learn and explore your calling to join the Body of Christ, His Holy Church.

May the blessings of the Lord will be with you as you prepare for this great event.

In Christ.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fr. John', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Father John Touloumes

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