

*Saint Sophia*  
GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL



We welcome you to the Cathedral of Saint Sophia and look forward to assisting you in your journey towards Holy Matrimony. In the following pages you will find all the information needed to schedule and arrange your marriage. Please read the following pages in full and call to make an appointment with the Cathedral Clergy. By doing so we will be able to lock in on your wedding day knowing that the day is clear of any ecclesiastical restrictions and that there are not impediments to your marriage. Please note that no Wedding date will be calendared until all the information is received by the Cathedral Office.

I look forward to meeting you and to the Blessed day of your marriage.

In His Service,

Fr. Spiro D. Bobotas

## PROCEDURES FOR SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING

[1.] **INITIAL CONTACT:** Initial contact is made by the couple; The appropriate means to contact your priest is by appointment not by email. Upon meeting with the priest the couple will be asked to complete necessary papers and returns it to the Cathedral office as soon as possible. A folder is created into which all returning paperwork and pertinent documentation will be placed.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Throughout the course of months preceding the wedding, the couple should plan to meet in person with the officiating Cathedral clergy on a number of occasions. Typically, the first meeting is an opportunity for the couple and priest to: a) become more intimately acquainted, b) review the specific requirements and procedures of this wedding packet to ensure understanding and compliance (it **MUST** be thoroughly reviewed by the couple beforehand), c) discuss the particulars of the wedding ceremony and participation of the wedding party, and d) answer any questions and/or concerns the couple might have. The couple is required to participate in a pre-marital seminar set by the Metropolitan. This is a one day seminar that is given 3 times a year in the local area. The final meeting will discuss the couple's personal relationship in lieu of the seminar and the compilation of all pertinent civil and ecclesial documents, and the submission of the Application for an Ecclesiastical Marriage License to the Metropolitan of Atlanta

[2.] **THE SCHEDULING SHEET (FORM A):** The scheduling sheet (FORM A: found in this document) is to be filled by the couple and submitted to the Cathedral. Upon receipt it will be used to open a file and then reviewed by the Cathedral clergy, who will then schedule the date and time based on careful consideration of the Orthodox ecclesiastical calendar, including fast days, fasting seasons, major feast days of the Church, and previously scheduled services and sacraments. Specifically, weddings are not permitted: September 14 (Exaltation of the Holy Cross), December 13-25 (Nativity), January 5 and 6 (Theophany), Great Lent and Holy Week, Pascha (Easter), Pentecost, August 1-15 (Dormition Fast and Feast), and August 29 (Beheading of St. John the Baptist). Weddings are not permitted on Wednesdays or Fridays, Also, weddings are not scheduled during wider community events, such as the Saint Sophia Festival.

The Cathedral clergy will try to honor one of the three requested dates, beginning with the first. If none can be scheduled, the Cathedral clergy directly contact the couple in order to seek possible alternative dates and times.

**PLEASE NOTE: NO DATE** or time is considered final until approved by the Cathedral clergy. Therefore, **NO PLANS** should be finalized by the couple, including those involving the deposit or down payment of monies for reception venues, until final approval is given. Once the Cathedral clergy have approved the date and time, the wedding may be scheduled.

### [3.] **Affidavit for Marriage:**

The Affidavit for Marriage will be given to the couple by the Cathedral Clergy and must be filled out completely (Please see "IMPORTANT PRECONDITIONS FOR MARRIAGE WITHIN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH" below).

These duplicate forms are used by the Cathedral Clergy to prepare the Application for an Ecclesiastical Marriage License. After submission of this application to the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan in Atlanta, an ecclesiastical marriage license is issued. Upon completion of the sacrament,

the ecclesiastical marriage license will be signed by the Orthodox Sponsor (Koumbaros or Koumbara) and officiating clergyman, and then resubmitted to the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta to be entered into the permanent registry. Finally, the Metropolis issues an original *Ecclesiastical Certificate of Marriage* to the newly married couple.

**IMPORTANT PRECONDITIONS FOR MARRIAGE WITHIN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH** (Please see the “Pastoral Guidelines” of the *Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*): For the union of a man and woman to be recognized as sacramentally valid by the Orthodox Church, the following conditions must be met:

1. The Sacrament of Matrimony must be celebrated by an Orthodox Priest of a canonical Orthodox jurisdiction, according to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, in a canonical Orthodox Church, and with the authorization of the Metropolitan. Before requesting permission from the Metropolitan to perform the marriage, a Priest must verify that:

- a) neither of the parties in question is already married to another person, either in this country or elsewhere;
- b) the parties in question are not related to each other to a degree that would constitute an impediment [a degree less (or closer) than the third (3rd), or third cousins];
- c) if either or both parties are widowed, they have presented the death certificate(s) of the deceased spouse(s);
- d) if either or both of the parties have been previously married in the Orthodox Church, they have obtained ecclesiastical as well as civil divorce(s);
- e) a civil marriage license will be obtained from civil authorities.

2. No person may marry more than three times in the Church, with permission for a third marriage granted only with extreme *oikonomia* (economy, i.e., ecclesiastical discretion).

3. In cases involving the marriage of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians, the latter must have been baptized with a Trinitarian baptism, in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian in the Orthodox Church does not thereby become a member of the Orthodox Church, and may not receive the Sacraments, including Holy Communion, or be buried by the Church. This includes serving on the Parish Council, or voting in parish assemblies or elections.

To participate in the Church’s life, one must be received into the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism or, in the case of persons baptized with water in the Name of the Holy Trinity, following a period of instruction, by Chrismation.

Also, canonical and theological reasons preclude the Orthodox Church from performing the Sacrament of Marriage for couples where one partner is Orthodox and the other partner is a non-Christian. As such, Orthodox Christians choosing to enter such marriages fall out of good standing

with their Church and are unable to actively participate in the sacramental life of the Church. While this stance may seem confusing and rigid, it is guided by the Orthodox Church's love and concern for its members' religious and spiritual well-being.

4. The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith.

**Prohibited Marriages:**

The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:

1. Parents with their own children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren, or godchildren of the same godparents.
2. Brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.
3. Uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews.
4. First and second cousins (any combination) with each other.
5. Foster parents with foster children or foster children with the children of foster parents.
6. Godparents with godchildren or godparents with the parents of their godchildren.

[4.] **THE CIVIL MARRIAGE LICENSE:** No wedding may be celebrated without the prior submission of a civil marriage license from the State of Florida , or in the case of those already civilly married, a copy of the issued civil marriage license of the County and State in which they were civilly married.

**Miami Dade Clerk of Courts  
Marriage License Bureau**

In order to become legally married in the state of Florida both bride and groom must apply for a marriage license in person. There is no residency or citizenship requirement to apply for a Florida marriage license.

After a marriage license has been obtained, the marriage ceremony can be performed. The marriage ceremony must be performed within 60 days of the issuance of the license. After the marriage ceremony, the party who performed the ceremony should return the license to the Marriage License Bureau.

**Requirements:**

When applying for a marriage license both bride and groom must apply in person. If one or more of the applicants are [minors](#), under 18 years of age, additional requirements apply.

All applicants must present the following:

- One (1) valid identification is required with the applicant's picture, signature, and date of birth, a Driver License issued by any state in the U.S., Passport, a U.S. Military ID, Alien Registration Card, or State of Florida ID issued by DMV are acceptable. Anyone issued a Social Security Card must provide their number.
- All U.S. citizens and residents must provide their Social Security Number.
- Non-U.S. Citizens may provide one of the following valid Identifications: Alien Registration Card, US State issued Driver's License, or Passport if they do not have a Social Security Number.
- If either applicant has been previously married, the exact date of the last divorce, death or annulment must be provided. If the divorce took place in Miami-Dade County go to the [Family Online Case Search](#) and view the docket link for final judgment date which is date of divorce.

\*Those couples already civilly married, must provide a photocopy of their civil marriage license. This photocopy may be delivered to Saint Sophia Cathedral either by postal mail, fax, or email (see above). Also, the couple must fill out “Supplemental Marriage Form 165” (page 14 below). Either the newly obtained Florida civil marriage license or the photocopy of the civil license of those already married, must be received by the Cathedral Office no later than thirty (30) days before the date of the wedding in order for the sacrament to proceed as scheduled. Also, at this time, the third and final meeting between the couple and officiating priest will take place, and application will be made to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of New York for an Ecclesiastical Marriage License.

#### **[5.] PARISHIONER(S) IN GOOD STANDING:**

“Good standing” refers to both ecclesiastical and financial status. The Uniform Parish Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (Article 18, Section 1) define a parishioner as: “Every person who is baptized and chrismated according to the rites of the Orthodox Church. The religious, social and moral duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox Faith to his/her life and to: adhere to and live according to the tenets of the Orthodox Faith: faithfully attend the Divine Liturgy and other worship services; participate regularly in the holy sacraments; respect all ecclesiastical authority and all governing bodies of the Church; be obedient in matters of the Faith, practice and ecclesiastical order; contribute towards the progress of the Church’s sacred mission; and be an effective witness and example of the Orthodox Faith and Traditions to all people.” Furthermore, “a parishioner in good standing must: be eighteen years of age or over; be current in his or her stewardship and other financial obligations to the Parish,” and “cooperate in every way towards the welfare and well-being of the Parish.”

#### **[6.] FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF PARISHIONERS IN GOOD STANDING:**

If one in the couple has been a steward of the Church one year prior to the wedding and are current in their stewardship there is no usage fee for the wedding

#### [7.] FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF NON-PARISHIONERS:

If neither party is a Steward of Saint Sophia Cathedral at the time of their initial contact a letter from their parish priest needs to be submitted stating that they are stewards of said church and a \$1000.00 Cathedral Sanctuary Usage Fee is to be submitted to the Cathedral of Saint Sophia. This fee helps enable the cathedral to continue its mission.\*

All financial obligations to the Parish must be recorded by the Cathedral office no later than thirty (30) days before the date of the wedding in order for the sacrament to proceed as scheduled. \*

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** In cases of extreme financial hardship, and upon confidential consultation with the Cathedral clergy, necessary adjustment to the above Parish financial obligation fee schedule can be made. No couple will be refused the sacrament of marriage based solely on their inability to totally fulfill Parish financial obligations.

#### [8.] THE ORTHODOX SPONSOR (Koumbaros or Koumbara):

The Orthodox Sponsor (Koumbaros or Koumbara) must:

1. Be a baptized Orthodox or chrismated Christian.
2. Be eighteen years of age or older.
3. If married, be married in the Orthodox Church. Please note, according to Orthodox Canon Law, only ONE individual is permitted to act as Sponsor. The ONLY exception to this canonical rule is the case of a MARRIED COUPLE who are BOTH Orthodox Christians, and who are thus defined by the Church through the sacrament of marriage as ONE individual.
4. If divorced, **MUST** have received an ecclesiastical divorce.
5. Be a member of an Orthodox Church in good standings, (Please see the “Pastoral Guidelines” of the *Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*: “The Sponsor (Koumbaros or Koumbara) must provide a current certificate of membership proving him or her to be an Orthodox Christian in good standing with the Church”). If the Sponsor is **not** a member of Saint Sophia Cathedral, she/he must obtain a letter from the priest of his/her home parish affirming membership in good standing of **that** parish. This letter may be delivered to Saint Sophia Cathedral either by postal mail, fax, or email (see above) and must be received no later than thirty (30) days before the scheduled date of the wedding.

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** 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 the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, 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 sponsor. Also, non-Orthodox Christian and

persons of other Faiths may be members of the wedding party but may not exchange the rings or crowns.

[9.] **NECESSARY ITEMS FOR THE WEDDING CEREMONY:** Traditionally, the Sponsor provides at least some of the following items for the wedding (in contemporary practice however, the couple, or a family member, provides most, if not all, of them):

1. The wedding rings for both Bride and Groom.
  2. The STEFANA, or Orthodox Marriage Crowns.\*
  3. Two white candles of medium size, typically decorated with ribbons, tulle, or trimming of some kind. LAMBATHES, or inordinately large candles, are unnecessarily difficult to work with, and as such, are not recommended.\*
  4. A silver tray for the gospel book and crowns.\*
  5. White Jordan almonds (small amount), traditionally strewn on the silver tray.\*
- \*The marriage crowns (stefana), candles, silver tray, and Jordan almonds will be returned to the couple immediately following the completion of the sacrament.

#### **IMPORTANT GENERAL INFORMATION:**

1. **BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES:** The prospective Bride and Groom **MUST** provide photocopies of their individual baptismal certificates, and in the case of a non-Orthodox Christian, a baptismal certificate indicating a Trinitarian baptism with water, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The baptismal certificates **MUST** be received by the Cathedral office no later than thirty (30) days before the date of the wedding, for the scheduled third and final meeting between the couple and the officiating priest, when application to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese for an Ecclesiastical Marriage License will be made. They may be sent via postal mail, fax, or email (see above).
2. **BRIDAL AND BRIDESMAID ATTIRE:** Please be reminded that the Sacrament of Marriage takes place within the sacred space of the Cathedral Sanctuary. The Bride and Bridesmaids are expected to select gowns or dresses with utmost consideration to propriety of attire within the sacred space of the church. Shawls (or other styles of shoulder covering) are recommended, if shoulders are bare.
3. **WEDDING REHEARSAL:** Typically, the rehearsal date and time is scheduled many months in advance, usually concurrently with the scheduling of the wedding ceremony. The Bride, Groom, and entire wedding party (including ushers not also serving as groomsmen) **MUST** arrive on time. There is much to review and practice, and everyone should be prepared to pay close attention and avoid excessive talking. On average, the wedding rehearsal requires one full hour.
4. **OFFICIAL SEATING OF PARENTS:** Traditionally, immediately before the start of the processional, the parents (and sometimes the grandparents) of the couple are officially seated, escorted by groomsmen. To save time, the couple should decide in advance of the



wedding rehearsal which groomsmen are to serve as escorts and whom each will escort and seat.

5. **FORMAL INVITATION OF CLERGY:** In the instance when the family wishes to invite the Cathedral clergy to a wedding reception following the sacrament, a formal invitation is to be sent to the parish office. If scheduling and prior commitments permit, the Cathedral clergy are at times able to attend. However, a verbal invitation offered either a few days earlier, or on the day of the wedding itself, will not be honored.
6. **CO-CELEBRATION OF VISITING CLERGY:** It is sometimes the case that a couple has a prior relationship with clergy of another Greek Orthodox parish within the Greek Archdiocese, or of another Orthodox jurisdiction, either here or abroad. The couple may invite a priest (Orthodox) from another parish to participate in the sacrament, but it is the couple's express responsibility to notify the Cathedral clergy well in advance, as well as to remind the guest clergyman that he must also contact us, well in advance of the wedding day. Ecclesial documentation properly identifying the canonical status of the priest, issued by his presiding bishop, must be presented to the Cathedral clergy before permission to concelebrate the sacrament can be granted. As with all other documentation, this must be submitted no later than thirty (30) days before the date of the wedding in order for the sacrament to proceed as scheduled.
7. **FINAL PAPERWORK AND DOCUMENTATION:** Once the sacrament has been Completed, the ecclesiastical marriage license is signed by both the Orthodox Sponsor (Koumbaros or Koumbara) and officiating clergyman and then resubmitted to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese to be entered into the permanent registry. Finally, an original *Ecclesiastical Certificate of Marriage* is issued by the Metropolis to the newly married couple. This document must not be lost, misplaced, or carelessly damaged in any way, since another cannot be issued in the future.
8. **[8.] ON THE DAY OF YOUR WEDDING:**
  1. **ARRIVAL TIME:** The Groom and Groomsmen are to arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of the wedding. The Bride, and Bridesmaids **MUST** arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time of the wedding. Please do **NOT** forget the stefana (crowns), silver tray, candles, and other necessary items!
  2. **FOOD AND BEVERAGES WITHIN THE CATHEDRAL:**

With the exception of bottled water, food and beverages of any kind are expressly forbidden. Most especially, the introduction and consumption of alcoholic beverages in the church building or grounds, is a most disrespectful violation of the sacred space of the Cathedral Sanctuary and will be met with confiscation and serious reprimand.
  3. **ORGANIST:** **The only** accompanying instrumentation permitted in the Cathedral during a wedding ceremony is the organ. Those couples desiring the services of the Organist, may contact us for their contact information.



4. **CHANTER:** Saint Sophia Cathedral provides a chanter for the sacrament as available
5. **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY:** Photographs and/or video of the wedding ceremony are permitted. The photographer(s) and/or videographer(s) **MUST** arrive forty (30) minutes before the scheduled starting time of the wedding in order to present themselves to the Cathedral clergy for consultation and instruction this ensures the proper dignity and solemnity of the sacrament. Finally, a maximum time limit of 20 minutes is allocated for picture taking after the completion of the wedding ceremony. This strict Cathedral policy **MUST** be respected and adhered to.
6. **FLORIST AND FLORAL CONSIDERATIONS:** Flowers are not a required item for the wedding ceremony. However, many couples choose to provide flowers as decoration. For those who wish to do so, we recommend two floral arrangements for either side of the main altar. Some couples also choose to decorate the pews (either all, every other, or several front pews, on both sides of the center aisle) with either pew bows or flowers. Pews may be decorated, but **WITHOUT** adhesive tape, tacks, nails, staples, or any attachment that might damage the pews in any way.
7. **EXITING THE CATHEDRAL:** The throwing of rice, bird seed, koufeta, paper confetti, or solid objects of any kind, are expressly **FORBIDDEN**. We would recommend bubbles...

## **SCHEDULING A WEDDING (FORM A)**

**Groom's Name (First, Middle, Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Marriage ☐ Yes ☐ No (If no, how many times have you been previously married?): \_\_\_\_\_

Religion of Baptism (If Protestant, what denomination?): \_\_\_\_\_

Present religious tradition (same as above or other?): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: (home): \_\_\_\_\_ (cell): \_\_\_\_\_ (work): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Will this be your permanent residence once married? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (other email): \_\_\_\_\_

**Bride's Name (First, Middle, Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Marriage ☐ Yes ☐ No (If no, how many times have you been previously married?): \_\_\_\_\_

Religion of Baptism (If Protestant, what denomination?): \_\_\_\_\_

Present religious tradition (same as above or other?): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: (home): \_\_\_\_\_ (cell): \_\_\_\_\_ (work): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Will this be your permanent residence once married? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (other email): \_\_\_\_\_

**Requested Dates and Times:**

1. Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sponsors Name** \_\_\_\_\_

(needs to be an Orthodox Christian in Good Standing)



We have read the above information and will submit the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner.