

## **"AGAPE" Wedding Committee**

Wedding Rehearsals  
Wedding Day Assistance

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### Members:

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*"In the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, Paul talks of love and respect. The husband should love his wife and be prepared to give his life to protect her as Christ gave his life out of love for the church. The wife should respect her husband as the church honors and respects Christ."*

The wedding committee's mission is to assist and guide couples through church procedure for the sacrament of marriage, in accordance with Orthodox tradition. The committee attends the rehearsal and the actual day of the wedding to assist and instruct the bridal party and the attending guests on the protocol in the church. The committee's prime function is to attend to the bride and groom to make them comfortable so that their wedding day is a time to remember with much joy and happiness with a minimum of *stress*.

At the rehearsal, the wedding committee will direct the bride and groom and their bridal party as to the proper order of entrance into the church and the proper exiting of the church. Father Andrew Eugenis will instruct and explain the sacrament of marriage.

On the day of the wedding, the committee members will be at the church an hour before the wedding party arrives to ensure that all necessary needs are met and in place. The items on the small table at the solea are a silver tray, two candles, and the stephana (and koufeta and rice if traditional to the family).

If the bride and groom prefer, the groomsmen can accompany their guests to their seats, groom's side of the family to the right and bride's side of the family to the left. When all guests are seated, all groomsmen, best man, koumbaro, and groom will line up at the right side of the church. Grandparents and the mother of the bride, if not already there, will meet in the narthex with the bride, the father of the bride, and the bridesmaids.

Order of entrance: (can be changed to Bride's preference)

Grandparents of Groom

Grandparents of Bride

Mother and father of the groom

(if parents are divorced, they enter separately with an escort)

Mother of the Bride with escort

If traditional to the family, an older child can carry in the stephana on the tray

Ring Bearer

Bridesmaids

(The groomsmen will meet the bridesmaids in front of the church and escort them up the step to the solea and then bow towards the altar and then go to their places)

The Maid or Matron of honor

(The koumbaro will escort her up to the solea and bow towards the altar)

Flower girl enters before the bride

After the flower girl enters, the back doors will be temporarily closed by committee members

Father Andrew will ask all those who are present to stand, and the wedding march will begin

The doors will open and the bride escorted by her father will march down the aisle (a mother can escort the bride or both father and mother)

When the service is completed, the priest will have the couple honor and embrace their parents at their pews

After the priest announces them as husband and wife, the bride and groom come down the aisle, followed by the wedding party, and then family and friends

If there is a receiving line at the church, the order is:

Bride and Groom

Parents of the Bride

Parents of the Groom

The wedding party can also be a part of the receiving line if the couple wishes, or if weather permitting, can be outside on the steps.

(The order of the receiving line can be changed at the digression of the bride and groom)

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

**No runners are permitted in the church**

**No large stand-alone candles (lampathes) are allowed on the solea, but there are exceptions if the lampathes have already been purchased or they are a gift to the couple. (Two smaller white candles are placed on the tray with the crowns for the sacrament).**

**No live garland to be used on pews down the center aisle**

**No string instruments can be used without permission of Father Andrew, other than the harp**

**No throwing of koufeta during the ceremony**

**No rice can be thrown outside the church after the ceremony**

**Permitted are rose pedals, bird seed, or bubbles, to be distributed by family members or members of the bridal party**

**No doves are permitted**

**No cell phones allowed in the church during the ceremony**

**No water filled glass vases in church**

**Photographer should be advised of the importance of capturing the following highlights of the ceremony:**

- 1. Blessing of Rings**
- 2. The Crowning (Stefana)**
- 3. Common Cup**
- 4. The Ceremonial Walk**

**It is customary to offer a gratuity to the priest, chanter, and person who cleans after the ceremony**

## **The Wedding Ceremony Explained**

The following information of the wedding service can be printed in the form of a wedding program (not mandatory) that can be distributed by family members or the groomsmen when the guests arrive at the church.

### ***The Wedding Ceremony***

Holy matrimony is a sacrament of the Eastern Orthodox Church in which a man and woman solemnly vow before Christ, the priest, and the congregation to be true to each other for life. The ceremony is steeped in ritual and symbolism. The wedding service is conducted around a small table on which wedding crowns, the book of Gospels, two wedding rings, a cup of wine, and two white candles have been placed.

### ***Blessing of the Rings***

The rings are blessed by the priest, who touches the foreheads of the Bride and Groom with them. The rings are put on the right hands, and the Koumbaro exchanges the rings three times. The exchange signifies that in married life the weakness of one partner will be compensated for by the strength of the other, the imperfections of one by the other. Each will be enriched by the union.

### ***The Candles***

The Bride and Groom each hold a lighted candle during the service. The candles remind the couple of the light of Christ who is with them throughout the sacrament and their coming life together.

### ***The Joining of the Right Hands***

The couple joins right hands as the priest appeals to make them one in flesh and spirit and grant them the joy of children. Their hands are kept joined through the service to symbolize the “oneness” of the couple.

### ***The Crowning (Stefana)***

The crowning is the climax of the wedding service. The crowns--or Stefana--are the signs of glory and honor with which God crowns the Bride and Groom during the sacrament. The Bride and Groom are crowned as king and queen of their home, which they will rule with wisdom, justice, and integrity. After the priest places the Stefana on the heads of the Bride and Groom, the Koumbaro exchanges the crowns three times as witness to the sealing of the union.

### ***The Readings***

The designated reading from the scriptures is from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians where Paul talks of love and respect. (Priest will read)

### ***The Common Cup***

Just as wine was drunk at the wedding in Cana, the Bride and Groom share a common cup of unconsecrated, symbolizing the sharing of all that life will bring—the joys, sorrows, live, and pain.

### ***The Ceremonial Walk***

The priest leads the couple, hands joined, in a circle around the holy table as they take their first steps as husband and wife. The circling around the table signifies the promise of the husband and wife to preserve their marriage bond until death parts them. The ceremony is concluded with the priest invoking God's blessings and removing of the crowns.

### ***Proclamation of Husband and Wife***

At the end of the ceremony, the priest removes the crowns and charges the newlyweds to go forward in peace. The Bride and Groom are proclaimed husband and wife at the conclusion of the service.