



Holy Apostles  
ORTHODOX CHURCH

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# The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony

## *A Guide and Information Packet for Couples Being Married in the Orthodox Church*

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Congratulations on your engagement, and thank you for the joy of preparing to celebrate your marriage at Holy Apostles. This packet walks you through everything needed in the months ahead: the preparation, the paperwork for both the Church and the State, and the steps that lead to your wedding day. The parish office is glad to help at any point along the way.

A fuller reflection on the meaning of marriage in the Orthodox Church is available on our website. This packet is the practical companion to it: what to do, and when.

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### What You'll Need

This is a roadmap of everything this packet covers. Items are explained in their own sections below.

- Regular meetings with the parish priest, beginning early in your preparation
- Six sessions of premarital counseling with an approved family therapist or counselor
- Confirmation of the eligibility of both the bride and groom to be married in the Orthodox Church
- A koumbaro or koumbara (your wedding sponsor), who must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing
- For an out-of-parish koumbaro, a Letter of Good Standing from their priest
- Archdiocese paperwork, prepared by the parish office from the information you provide, and signed by you before the wedding
- Your civil marriage license packet from King, Snohomish, or another Washington State county. This is obtained by you and includes a marriage license and additional forms. The parish will need the entire packet.
- A signed Facility Use Agreement for use of the church and/or hall
- If either of you has been married before, additional documentation is required; please speak with the priest

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## Our Timeline

*6 Months Before Date:*

### **Six months to a year before your wedding:**

- Contact the priest and open a conversation about being married in the Church.
- Start meeting with the priest and begin your premarital counseling.
- If you are not already an active member and steward of the church, please talk to the priest about how to deepen your involvement in the life of the parish.
- Familiarize yourself with the necessary paperwork, deadlines, and licenses.

*2 Months Before Date:*

### **Two months before your wedding:**

Finalize all documentation to ensure that your wedding will meet the criteria established by the Church and local civil authorities.

- Provide verification of the baptism and stewardship commitment of the Orthodox spouse(s).
- Provide verification of the baptism of the non-Orthodox spouse in a Christian community that practices Trinitarian baptism.
- Obtain your civil marriage license packet from the county (see *The Civil Marriage License* below). A Washington State marriage license becomes valid three days after it is issued and stays valid for sixty days. Please ensure your marriage license will be valid through your wedding day.
- Complete your Holy Matrimony Information Form (pp. 6 - 9 in this packet) and return to the parish office via email so that your *Archdiocese Affidavit for License to Marry* can be completed.

*45 Days Before Date:*

### **Forty-five days before your wedding:**

The parish must mail all your completed paperwork to the Archdiocese no later than 45 days before the wedding. By this date:

- Come to the parish and sign the completed *Archdiocese Affidavit*.
- Bring all eligibility documentation (baptismal records, etc.) to the parish.
- Bring your entire marriage license packet from the county to the parish. This contains forms the parish will fill out or send to the Archdiocese.

*Our Wedding Date:*

### **On your wedding day:**

- After the sacrament of holy matrimony, the couple, the priest, and two witnesses will sign the civil license.



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## Preparation

The path to an Orthodox marriage is more than setting a date. Ideally, a couple begins preparing about a year before the wedding: meeting regularly with the parish priest, completing at least six sessions of premarital counseling with an approved marriage therapist or counselor, and embracing the life of the parish through regular worship, engaged participation, and stewardship.

This is a season to prepare not just for a wedding but for a marriage, and to build the habits that will sustain a household of faith for a lifetime.

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## Who May Marry In The Orthodox Church

Marriage at Holy Apostles is celebrated for couples in which at least one spouse is an Orthodox Christian, baptized and/or chrismated in the Orthodox Church, and a member in good standing of the parish. If the other spouse is not Orthodox, they must be a baptized Christian from a tradition that baptizes in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Because marriage is a sacrament, and the couple not only pledge their love for each other but also their love for Christ, a wedding between an Orthodox Christian and an unbaptized person may not be celebrated in the Church.

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## Days Marriage Is Not Celebrated

Weddings are not celebrated during certain seasons or on great feasts of the Church year, including:

- The Ascension and Pentecost (moveable feasts, whose dates change each year)
- The Holy Transfiguration (August 6th)
- The Annunciation (March 25th)
- The Birth of the Theotokos (September 8th)
- The Presentation of the Theotokos to the Temple (November 21st)

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## The Archdiocese Paperwork

Marriage is a sacrament celebrated with the blessing of the Metropolis, and the parish must obtain permission before the wedding. To enable the office to prepare the *Archdiocese Affidavit*, we ask each member of the wedding couple to complete their section of the information form in this packet (pp. 6-9).

Please return the saved, completed form to the parish office by email at [office@holyapostlesgo.org](mailto:office@holyapostlesgo.org), or print and return by mail or in person. Once the office has prepared the official Archdiocese forms from the information you provide, you will both sign them.

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## The Civil Marriage License

Two licenses are needed: one for the Church (above) and one for the State. You obtain the civil marriage license yourselves. A Washington marriage license may be obtained from any county auditor and is valid for a wedding anywhere in the state, so you may apply at whichever county is most convenient. The two counties nearest to the parish are King County and Snohomish County. Fees vary and are listed on each county's website.

You will be given a packet, which will include the license, and a number of additional forms. The license itself becomes valid three days after it is issued and remains valid for sixty days. Please bring or mail the entire marriage license packet and all its forms to the parish office no later than forty-five days before your wedding. The original license is sent with your Archdiocese paperwork and returned to the parish in time for your wedding day. The additional forms will be filled out by the parish or the priest and filed with the relevant agencies.

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## The Koumbaro or Koumbara (Sponsor)

Your wedding sponsor, the koumbaro (male) or koumbara (female), takes part in the service itself, helping in the exchange of the rings and the crowns. Receive the priest's blessing before asking someone to stand as your koumbaro or koumbara.

A koumbaro or koumbara must meet the following requirements of the Church:

- Be an Orthodox Christian in good standing.
- Be a registered steward of an Orthodox parish.
- If married, must have been married in the Orthodox Church.
- If married in the Orthodox Church but now divorced, must have obtained an ecclesiastical divorce decree.

If the sponsor is not a member of Holy Apostles, they must provide a **Letter of Good Standing** from their own parish priest, sent to the parish office at [office@holyapostlesgo.org](mailto:office@holyapostlesgo.org). Other members of the family and party need not be Orthodox.

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## Items to Bring for the Wedding

The following are brought by the couple:

- A pair of wedding rings
- A pair of stefana (wedding crowns)
- A pair of white candles
- A silver or gold tray and cup; the parish can supply these if needed

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## Use of the Church

Weddings at Holy Apostles, like all events held in our facilities, require a signed Facility Use Agreement arranged through the parish office. This is separate from your sacramental and civil paperwork. Use of the parish property may also include a use fee, a deposit, and proof of liability insurance for any vendors. The office will provide the agreement and talk to you about your specific situation and any additional requirements.

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## Honoraria and Gratuities

It is a gracious custom to offer honoraria as a gift of thanks to those who serve at your wedding, such as the chanter and choir. Honoraria are entirely discretionary and are gifts of gratitude to those who give their time and care to the celebration. They are not fees for the sacrament, which is always freely given. It's customary for your koumbaro to present any honoraria on your behalf on the day of your wedding.

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## Music

The music of the wedding service follows the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church. Other music is welcome at your reception.

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## Scheduling & Questions

To schedule your wedding or to ask any questions about the sacrament, please contact our parish priest. The date is set together with the priest. No date is final until it has been confirmed with the priest. For all paperwork questions, please email or phone the parish office.

Parish Priest  
Fr. Tom Tsagalakis, Protopresbyter  
fr.tom@holypostlesgo.org  
206-801-7036

Parish Office  
Alice Hopkins, Administrative Assistant  
office@holypostlesgo.org  
206-486-5212

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# Holy Matrimony Information Form

## *To prepare the Archdiocese Affidavit for License to Marry*

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This form gives the parish office the information needed to prepare your official Archdiocese paperwork (the *Affidavit for License to Marry*). You will not fill out the affidavit yourselves. The office prepares it from what you provide here. The prospective bride and groom will both sign it before it's sent to the Archdiocese.

The future groom and future bride should each complete their own section. Please **print clearly** if filling this form out by hand, and double-check that every answer appears exactly as it should. Spelling of names and locations should match other official documents. Please return this form to the office about two months before your wedding (see the Timeline on page 2).

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### The Wedding

#### Location of Wedding

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*Parish name, city, state, country*

#### Officiating Priest

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*Title and name*

#### Date of Wedding

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*Month / Day / Year*

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### Groom's Information

#### 1a. Full Legal Name

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*First, middle, and last name. (Please list any prior names in parentheses.)*

#### 1b. Phone Number

#### 2. Place of Residence

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*Street address, city, state/province, country*

#### 3a. Age

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*Current age*

#### 3b. Date of Birth

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*Month / Day / Year*

#### 4. Place of Birth

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*City, state/province, country*

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## Groom's Information (continued)

### 5a. Date of Baptism

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*Month / Day / Year*

### 5b. Religion Baptized Into

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*(e.g., Orthodoxy, Catholicism, etc.)*

### 5c. Date Joined Orthodoxy by Chrismation

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*Month / Day / Year (Write "N/A" if not applicable.)*

### 6. Usual Occupation

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### 7a. Father's Full Legal Name

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*First, middle, and last name. (Please list any prior names in parentheses.)*

### 7b. Father's Country of Birth

### 7c. Father's Religion

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### 8a. Mother's Full Legal Name

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*First, middle, and last name. (Please list any maiden or prior names in parentheses.)*

### 8b. Mother's Country of Birth

### 8c. Mother's Religion

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### 9a. Have you ever been married before?

- Yes  
 No

*Please note, prior marriages require additional discussion and paperwork. Please speak to the priest for additional information.*

### 10a. Were you born in the USA or Canada?

- Yes  
 No

### 10b. If no, age at arrival and date of arrival

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*Age | Month / Day / Year (Write "N/A" if not applicable.)*

### 11a. Are you related by blood to your intended spouse? *(Cousins, etc. If yes, please note details below.)*

- Yes  
 No

### 11b. Are you related by marriage to your intended spouse? *(If yes, please note details below.)*

- Yes  
 No

### Notes:

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## Bride's Information

**1a. Full Legal Name**

**1b. Phone Number**

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*First, middle, and last name. (Please list any prior names in parentheses.)*

**2. Place of Residence**

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*Street address, city, state/province, country*

**3a. Age**

**3b. Date of Birth**

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*Current age*

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*Month / Day / Year*

**4. Place of Birth**

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*City, state/province, country*

**5a. Date of Baptism**

**5b. Religion Baptized Into**

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*Month / Day / Year*

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*(e.g., Orthodoxy, Catholicism, etc.)*

**5c. Date Joined Orthodoxy by Chrismation**

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*Month / Day / Year (Write "N/A" if not applicable.)*

**6. Usual Occupation**

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**7a. Father's Full Legal Name**

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*First, middle, and last name. (Please list any prior names in parentheses.)*

**7b. Father's Country of Birth**

**7c. Father's Religion**

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**8a. Mother's Full Legal Name**

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*First, middle, and last name. (Please list any maiden or prior names in parentheses.)*

**8b. Mother's Country of Birth**

**8c. Mother's Religion**

**9a. Have you ever been married before?**

Yes

No

*Please note, prior marriages require additional discussion and paperwork. Please speak to the priest for additional information.*

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## Bride's Information (continued)

**10a. Were you born in the USA or Canada?**

- Yes  
 No

**10b. If no, age at arrival and date of arrival**

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*Age | Month / Day / Year (Write "N/A" if not applicable.)*

**11a. Are you related by blood to your intended spouse?** *(Cousins, etc. If yes, please note details below.)*

- Yes  
 No

**11b. Are you related by marriage to your intended spouse?** *(If yes, please note details below.)*

- Yes  
 No

**Notes:**

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## For Church Use Only

This section is for the use of the Holy Apostles' Office. Please leave blank.

**Date of Wedding**

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*Month / Day / Year*

**Officiating Priest**

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*Title and name*

**Location of Wedding**

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*Parish name, city, state, country*

**Record Number**

**Date Recorded**

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*Month / Day / Year*