

Orthodox Wedding Information

Stewardship Commitments for those Who Wish to Schedule Weddings

Congratulations on your engagement! We are delighted that you are planning your wedding at the Gracanica Serbian Orthodox Church in Windsor.

The sacrament of marriage is one of the most important steps in the lives of most Christians. It signifies your intention as a member of the Body of Christ to form a new Christian household and to grow in the Orthodox faith. It is also a reaffirmation of your commitment to Christ's Holy Church. We are eager for you to become active participants in our liturgical and communal life. Nothing is more fulfilling, both spiritually and personally! Nothing will provide a better foundation for your lives together!

Who May Marry?

For a Serbian Orthodox priest to be allowed to celebrate a marriage, at least one of the two spouses must be of the Eastern Orthodox faith. The non-Orthodox spouse must have been baptized in a Christian Church that baptizes in the Name of the Holy trinity. A marriage between an Orthodox Christian and a non-Christian or an individual not baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity can not be celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Marriage Paperwork

For the meeting with Fr. Vladimir you will need:

1. Baptism Certificate of Bride
2. Baptism Certificate of Groom
3. The Wedding ceremony requires two Witnesses (Kumovi)
4. Verification of church affiliation for Kumovi (witnesses) – 1st Kum/a must be baptized orthodox, and if married - must have been married in an Orthodox church) - if married in the Orthodox Church and divorced, must have Ecclesiastical Divorce from the Orthodox Church. A proper paperwork should be provided to the priest in a timely manner.
5. Copy of the marriage certificate which you procure from Office Ontario.
6. Church opening fee.
7. Call church/priest to schedule rehearsal time and date.
8. Call directly the choir president (Denise Chuk – 519-735-6330) if you wish services of the choir.

If Divorced:

- Copy of legal divorce
- (if married in the Orthodox Church - Ecclesiastical divorce paperwork)

IMPORTANT: Please call the church office to make an appointment with Fr. Vladimir 226 -340-5115 - at least 2 months prior to your wedding to go over any details you wish to discuss with him.

Weddings cannot be performed during the following days without a special blessing from the Bishop: Wednesdays and Fridays; from the beginning of the Nativity lent until January 7/20; from the Meatfare Sunday until the beginning of the Thomas' Sunday; during the Apostles' fast and the fast in preparation for the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos; on the Day of the beheading of St. John the Baptist and on the feast of the elevation of the Holy Cross.

The Ceremony

The Sacrament of Marriage

The wedding ceremony of the Serbian Orthodox Church is an ancient and meaningful service that has been celebrated in its present form for centuries. The service is abundant with symbols that reflect marriage: love, mutual respect, unity and sacrifice.

The ceremony consists of two parts which are distinct and separate from each other: The service of the Betrothal and the Ceremony of the Sacrament of Marriage. Everything in the ceremony has a special meaning and significance, especially the repetition of each act three times to symbolize and to invoke the mystical presence of the Holy Trinity. The Wedding begins as the candles are handed to The Bride and The Groom. These candles symbolize their spiritual willingness to receive Christ.

The Service of Betrothal

Petitions are chanted for the spiritual welfare of the couple. The highlight during this service is the exchanging of the rings. The priest then blesses the rings. He holds them in his right hand, and making the sign of the cross over their heads, he betroths the servants of God, The Bride to The Groom. The rings are then placed on their right hands, for it is the right hand of God that blesses, it was the right hand of God to which Christ ascended, and it is also to the right that those who will inherit the eternal life will ascend.

The 1st Kum/a (religious witness/sponsor) then exchanges the rings three times. The exchange signifies that in married life, the weakness of one partner will be compensated by the strength of the other, the imperfections of one, by the perfection of the other. By themselves, the newly betrothed are incomplete, but together they are made perfect. The rite of the betrothal ends with the priest praying for betrothal of mutual promise, officially given before the church, may prove in true faith, concord and love.

The Ceremony of the Sacrament of Marriage

The ceremony consists of petitions, prayers, the crowning, readings from the New Testament, the offering of the common cup, the circling of the ceremonial table and the benediction. At the

conclusion of the prayers, the priest joins the hands of The Bride and The Groom. The hands are kept joined until the end of the service to symbolize the union and the oneness of the couple.

The Crowning

This is the focal point of the marriage ceremony. The crowns are signs of the glory and honor with which God crowns them during the sacrament. The wedding crowns are placed on the heads of the Groom and the Bride representing the presence of Christ who blesses and joins the couple and establishes them as the King and Queen of their home, which they will rule with wisdom, justice and integrity. The priest takes the two crowns and blesses The Bride and The Groom, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and then places the crowns on them.

The Common Cup

The rite of crowning is followed by the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel. The Gospel reading describes the marriage at Cana of Galilee which was attended and blessed by Christ and for which He reserved His first miracle. There He transformed the water into wine and gave it to the newlyweds. In remembrance of this blessing, wine is given the couple. This is the "common cup" of life denoting the mutual sharing of joy and sorrow, the token of a life of harmony. The drinking of wine from the common cup serves to impress upon the couple that from that moment on they will share everything in life, joys, as well as sorrows, and that they are to "bear one another's burdens." Their joys will be doubled and their sorrows halved because they will be shared.

The Ceremonial Walk

The priest then leads The Bride and The Groom in a circle around the table on which are placed the Gospel and the Cross, the one containing the word of God, the other being the symbol of our redemption by Jesus. The Bride and The Groom are taking their first steps as a married couple, and the Church, in the person of the priest, leads them in the way they must walk. The way is symbolized by the circle at the center of which are the Gospel and the cross of our Lord. This expresses the fact that the way of Christian living is a perfect orbit around the center of life, who is Jesus Christ our Lord.

During this ceremonial walk around the table a hymn is sung to the Holy Martyrs reminding the newly married couple of the sacrificial love they are to have for each other in marriage - a love that seeks not its own but is willing to sacrifice its all for the one loved.

The Removal of the Crowns

At the conclusion of the Ceremonial Walk, the priest removes the crowns from The Bride and The Groom and beseeches God to grant to the newlyweds a long, happy and fruitful life together. He then lifts up the Gospel and reads a special prayer, and at the conclusion separates their joined hands reminding them that only God can separate the couple from one another.

Kum or Kuma

Being asked to be the Kum or Kuma is a great honor in the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is not necessary for the Kum/a to be Serbian; however, 1st Kum/a must belong to the Christian Orthodox faith. The Kum/a is the person who, among other responsibilities, exchanges the rings three times of the wedding couple during the ceremony. He/She is required to be a member in good standing with the canonical Orthodox Church. **The two kumovi (witnesses) do not have to be related to each other. Typically, The Groom chooses his Kum and The Bride chooses her Kuma.**

The following items are to be provided by either the couple or Kum/a for the special day:

- Rings
- Two specially decorated candles (may be obtained in our church)
- A white cloth (ribbon) long enough to tie the right hands of the couple during the ceremony
- Gratuities to the Church etc.

A Note to Non-Orthodox

Conversion to the Orthodox faith is not a requirement. If you desire to become an Eastern Orthodox Christian, this matter needs to be addressed with the parish priest separately and apart from the wedding. It should not be a conversion for the sake of convenience, nor should it be made to make someone happy. The decision should be made following thought and prayer and out of a true desire to become an Eastern Orthodox Christian.