GUIDELINES FOR THE WEDDING CEREMONY

ACCORDING TO THE ARMENIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



1. MARRIAGE CAN BE SOLEMNIZED OUTSIDE OF THE HOLY SANCTUARY. THE SACRAMENT TAKES PLACE IN THE CHURCH SANCTUARY BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN, BY THE BLESSING OF THE PRIEST.

A. Both the prospective bridegroom and the bride must have received the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation). If there is a question in this regard, the Pastor must be consulted. If either party is not a member of the Armenian Orthodox Church, proper documentation of their Baptism (Baptism Certificate) must be presented to the Pastor by the first meeting.

B. If either party has been divorced, a dispensation to celebrate the Sacrament must be granted by the Diocesan Bishop of the Armenian Church by the Canon Law of the Armenian Church. Documentation of the divorce decree (a good photocopy) must be provided to the Pastor. The Roman Catholic party should also seek an annulment of their prior marriage if they are to be able to remain in communion with their Church. C. No ceremony can be celebrated if it is the intention that a second religious service in another church is to be held.

2. WEDDING DATE

A. Arrangements for a marriage to be blessed in the Church are to be made at least four months in advance.

B. A date shall be set for the solemnization of the Sacrament of Holy Crowning into Marriage.

C. Finalizing the date for the ceremony must be secured in joint consultation with the Pastor.

D. When all necessary papers are filed, then the chosen date will be confirmed.

E. Failure to submit the requested documents will forfeit the date chosen.

3. WHEN WEDDINGS CAN NOT TAKE PLACE

A. By canon law, no marriage may take place after 4:30 p.m. on Saturday afternoons and before 4:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoons.

B. No marriages may take place at any time during the period of Great Lent (including the first Sunday of Great Lent, Poon Paregentan) and Holy Week, nor on the Five Tabernacle Feast Days of Easter,

Theophany (Armenian Christmas), Transfiguration, Assumption, and Exaltation of the Holy Cross, nor on any Saturday preceding the Feast mentioned above Days and the eight days following Easter through New Sunday (the Sunday following Easter). Also, no weddings may be celebrated on January 13 (The Naming of our Lord Jesus Christ;), February 14 (The Presentation of the Lord to the Temple), April 7 (The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary), and Ascension.

C. No weddings may be celebrated on Wednesdays or Fridays, which are days of fasting or any fasting periods that precede the five Tabernacle Feast Days mentioned above in the section.

4. MARRIAGE PREPARATION

A. After securing the desired date and time of the wedding ceremony, the couple shall set up an initial meeting with the Pastor for premarital instruction and preparation.

B. The proper instruction regarding a Christian marriage is a necessary component of marriage preparations. It is, therefore, expected that the couple will meet with the Pastor as often as necessary. During these meetings, topics relative to their new life together as Christians and members of the Armenian Church family will be addressed.

5. LOCAL LAWS

All marriages are to follow the canon laws of the Armenian Church and the laws of the State of California. It is the responsibility of the parties to carry out the requirements of the legal authorities by applying for a proper marriage license and presenting these documents to the church office ten (10) days before the wedding ceremony.

6. THE BEST MAN

The major Sacramental witness of the wedding ceremony is the Brother in the Cross/Khach Yeghpayr, who is likewise the Best Man. He will hold a hand cross over the heads of the couple during a portion of the religious rite. This privilege of honor is allowed, provided he is a baptized member of the Armenian Orthodox Church, which is offering the blessing upon this couple or another Orthodox Church. Suppose there is a situation where a non-Armenian Church member is requested to assume the role of Best Man. In that case, this is allowed, provided that another male witness in the wedding party, who is himself a baptized member of the Armenian Orthodox Church or another Orthodox Church, can participate as the Khach Yeghpayr. The Pastor is to be informed if this situation applies. The Maid/Matron of Honor must also be a Christian. These two/three individuals will join the bride and groom at the holy Altar. All other attendants will take their places in the front pews.

7. THE REHEARSAL

A. The Pastor will determine the date and time for the wedding ceremony rehearsal in consultation with the bride and groom.

B. The Pastor, or his designated representative, shall have complete charge of the rehearsal.

C. Only members of the wedding party and immediate family need to attend the rehearsal.

D. It is the responsibility of the couple to determine the order of the procession.

E. It is strongly recommended that a facilitator/prompter who is not a member of the wedding party be assigned to coordinate the procession on the day of the wedding so that everything will flow smoothly. They should attend the wedding rehearsal and will be given a script of the procedures for the ceremony by the Pastor. F. It is essential that all participants in the wedding rehearsal arrive at the Church at least 15 minutes before the time set for the rehearsal so that it will begin on time. Edited 09/21

F. If you are later than 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time of the wedding rehearsal, we cannot be assured that the rehearsal will take place. You will then be responsible for your arrangements.

8. DECORATION OF THE SANCTUARY

A. Requests for adorning the Church with flowers, lighting, and other appointments must be approved by the Pastor.

B. No furniture or furnishings of the Church may be removed from their respective places.

C. Flowers may be placed on the altar table, the floor of the bema (upper sanctuary), and in the chancel, except for the steps leading up to the Altar.

D. Fixtures such as podiums and stands are allowed but should be placed so as not to obscure the view of the Altar from the congregation. The Pastor must be informed of such props.

E. If flowers are to be taken, the floral arrangements are not to be removed from the Altar by any persons other than those designated by the Pastor.

F. No decorations shall be nailed or screwed to the furnishings nor attached in any way that would damage the church furniture.

G. The wedding runner/white carpet can be acquired from the florist. H. Decorations which do not comply with the above will be removed before the service.

9. PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOUND RECORDING

Photography and sound recording are allowed within limitations. Still, photographers and videographers should exercise caution and maintain decorum during the actual celebration of the sacramental rite. Most importantly, caution should be used by the photographer not to blind the eyes of the Priest, Deacon, or any other participant. At no time and nor for any reason can the photographer stand on the steps of the Altar or be at the Altar itself.

10. ADDITIONAL MUSIC

The Pastor must approve all requests for additional music before the ceremony in advance. If there is a desire to enhance the pre-wedding preludes with individual performers or instrumental groups, the Pastor must be appraised, after which he will determine the approval.

11. USHERING

The bride and groom shall arrange ushering and any necessary control of traffic.

12. CLERGY/GUEST CLERGY

A. The Pastor will officially invite guest clergy participants by letter.

B. If the guest priest is a member of the Armenian Church, he may be invited to perform the service.

C. If a priest of a different religious tradition is invited, the Pastor will assign to him those portions he sees fit according to the Canons and traditions of the Armenian Church, and it should be clear that any priest of a different denomination is a guest and not a concelebrant.

D. If the clergy are to be invited to the reception, an invitation should be sent to them.

E. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to provide an invitation to the wedding reception and directions as well as any necessary travel and lodging expenses for the guest clergy assisting the celebrant.

13. FEES AND DONATIONS

All donations are the responsibility of the family/person involved. It is a tradition in the Armenian Church that the Godparents incur the costs of the Church portion of the expenses.

There is a suggested donation of $1500, which includes:

a. A donation to the Church, maintenance of the Church facility (heating, AC, electricity, etc.), and other related expenses directly connected with the administering of the Sacrament.

b. To donate to the priest and deacon (which is not included in the sacrament fee), please make a check out to the priest and deacon.

c. A customary donation for an organist (or soloist) is $200, which is not included in the sacrament fee. A donation to the Church made out to St. Garabed Armenian Church of the Desert should be given before the Sacrament.

14. Before any guest priest is invited, the Parish Pastor must be consulted. According to the etiquette of the Armenian Church, the Pastor must be the one to invite any guest clergy. If the guest priest is a member of the Armenian Church, he may be invited to perform all or part of the service. In addition to an Armenian Priest, should a priest of a different Christian denomination be invited, the Pastor shall decide the appropriateness of his participation. The Pastor will assign to him those portions he sees fit according to the Canons and traditions of the Armenian Church and it should be clear that any priest of a different denomination is a guest and not a co-celebrant.

15. A wedding is a public service of the Church, and no one may be excluded from the Church by any means.

All donations were made to St. Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church of the Desert. Please contact Dn. Gevork Gevorkian via phone or email, informing him of the donation being made. His contact information is:

Email: deacon.gevork@stgarabed.org

Cell: (401) 714-9842

Church: (760) 773-2155