



## **Maronite Wedding Guidelines**

**Congratulations** on your upcoming wedding! We are happy that you are considering St. Rafka Church for this memorable celebration.

The celebration of a Christian/Maronite wedding in the presence of the priest and community and the love a man and woman have for one another are a manifestation of God's own love for us. For this reason, the priest and community come together to witness the promises of unity, fidelity, and unqualified love made by those who marry. Modeled after the love of Christ for his Bride, the Church, Christian marriage is nourished by Christ's grace and presence and founded on the solid rock of His Word.

To help you in your preparation, and to help you decide if St. Rafka Church is the right church for your wedding, we kindly ask you to read through the following guidelines. If you have any questions, please feel free to call our pastor, Abouna Rodrigue, or to ask your questions at your next meeting with him.

### **Planning**

1. **The wedding date:** Arrangements for your wedding are to be made **No less than 6 months in advance** of the suggested wedding date.
2. **Weddings are celebrated:**
  - **Fridays - 5:00pm to 8:00pm**
  - **Saturdays - 10:00am – 12:00pm or after 4:00pm**
  - **Sundays - 5:00pm to 8:00pm**
  - Exceptionally, weddings may be celebrated also on **weeknights** as well.
3. In the Maronite tradition, the Crowning ceremony (which is what the Maronites call the wedding ceremony) does not include a Divine Liturgy (i.e., the Eucharist). The Sacrament of Marriage is in and of itself a full source of grace.
4. The couple or the celebrant has the **right to cancel** or postpone the wedding for a **just reason**.

### **Pre-marriage Preparation**

1. **License:** The marriage license should be secured a minimum of 3 days before the wedding date and should be brought to the wedding rehearsal. After the wedding ceremony, the best man and maid of honor will sign the certificate as witnesses.
2. **Marriage Paperwork:** The basic **requirements** for marriage in our Eparchy include:
  - Pre-marital investigation forms (emailed to you by our parish office)
  - Freedom to marry form (Issued within 6 months of the wedding date), if the bride or groom are not known members of the parish (emailed to you by our parish office)



- Other forms, in case the bride or groom were previously married to third parties
- FOCCUS Pre-Marital Inventory (register & complete online - cost is \$40)
- Marriage Preparation given by the pastor
- Copies of Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates for both bride and groom, if both are Christians.
- The couple is encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) prior to the wedding.

### **Special Considerations**

1. Other priests, relatives or friends of the couple, may join our pastor in celebrating your Crowning, with the pastor's approval.
2. St. Rafka Church is smoke-free. Smoking and/or the consumption of any alcoholic beverages are absolutely prohibited. No beverages, except water, are to be brought into the church.
3. **Suggested offering** - St Rafka sets no fees for religious ceremonies. However, it is customary to make an offering to the parish on the occasion of a wedding as a token of gratitude for God's blessings and favors upon you. Another offering may be given to the priest(s) performing the ceremony. There is no set amount for these at-will gifts. Fees for musicians, soloists or choir, on the other hand, must be set with them.

### **Ceremony**

**The wedding ceremony** is a religious service and everything should be done to make this a truly spiritual experience. There are many options available for your selection. The priest will discuss these with you beforehand.

- The Crowning may be celebrated **in English or in Arabic** or a mix of both languages.
- The selection of two (exceptionally, three) readings from Sacred Scripture. Secular readings are not allowed.
- The option to have a friend or relative act as a lector, reading one of the Scripture readings.
- The wedding is to **begin on time**
- The **attire** of the bride, groom and their wedding party **must be modest**. Remember that this is God's Temple. If shoulders or chests are uncovered, please consider wearing a light shawl during the ceremony.
- **Music** is considered an aid to worship and should not be chosen with a view of entertaining the guests. The hymns *must be religious* in content. We strongly prefer the use of Maronite hymns (English or Arabic), but some classical Western pieces (such as the Ave Maria, for example) may be allowed. Please approve your music with the pastor beforehand.



- You may ask our own **church pianist or guitarist** to play at your Crowning and to sing, or you may bring your own musicians and soloists.
- **Photography** in church must not distract from the prayerful ceremony. Flash pictures may be taken only during the processional and recessional. More pictures may be taken before or after the wedding.
- The use of video equipment is restricted to some designated area in the church. **No video or pictures are to be taken from the Altar area.**
- Please **reduce unnecessary talk** and commotion in the church before and after the ceremony.
- **No rice, confetti, birdseed** may be thrown on church property.
- **No alcohol** is permitted around the church, including the parking lot.
- **Your ushers** are responsible for cleaning up the church, removing trash, collecting books, vacuuming the carpet in the social hall, and sweeping the church floor if needed. Alternatively, you may pay a \$200 cleaning fee and our parish janitor will take care of the cleanup.
- **Floral arrangements** should be discussed with the priest. Ordinarily, flower arrangements brought into the church remain for the weekend Liturgies.
- If you choose to print a ceremony program, please have the priest review it for accuracy.
- **Some “popular” wedding practices, such as the lighting of a unity candle, are not religious in origin** and are foreign to the Maronite tradition. No such practices are allowed in the Crowning ceremony.

### **Parish Registration**

Please be sure to register in the parish as husband and wife soon after your wedding. Above all, we pray that your sacramental union may be a real occasion of grace for you. ***May God bless your new life together!***

**I have read through, and agree to the above guidelines, and would like to have my wedding celebrated at St. Rafka Church.**

**Name of Bride:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Bride:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Groom:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Groom:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Suggested Wedding Date & Time:** \_\_\_\_\_