

Welcome to Kyriakos & Athanasia's wedding

21th June 2015



Greek Orthodox Wedding ~ a guide

A blend of Greek Orthodox religious traditions and a Mediterranean touch make the marriage service a very "different" affair.

Everyone in Greece knows what to expect at a wedding, but for the unseasoned guest, it is a situation where you need to show initiative. With the characteristically relaxed Greek attitude to events, there have been no rehearsals, there is no printed order of service and you are free to choose where you sit or stand.

If at any time you have a question you are welcome to approach any family member or indeed any guest.

Arriving at the Church

When you arrive, please stay outside the church. You can either stand up or sit in one of the chairs placed outside the church. You will notice that everyone, as they arrive, stands casually outside the church chatting, or simply looking lost, until they find someone they know. The tradition serves a couple of purposes. People are able to greet each other and catch up. More importantly, the father of the bride gives her away *before* the couple walks together to the church.

The groom waits at the church door holding his bride's bouquet together with the lovely page boy, Yannis. The father places the bride's hand into that of the groom's and the groom in turn, hands his bride the bouquet he has for her. The two beautiful flower girls, Anna and Katerina will arrive together with the bride. Please feel free to take pictures. Everyone will then follow the couple into the church and the wedding ceremony begins. It is expected that it will take approximately one hour.

The Service

The majority of the guests will be standing throughout the service. We appreciate that it will be... "all Greek to you", but even if you can't understand the language, we hope that you will be able to follow the symbolism described here. The priest normally conducts the service himself. Neither the couple nor the guests are expected to say anything. The service is split into two ceremonies.

The Betrothal

The first part of the wedding service is the engagement known as the Betrothal. The focal point of this ceremony is the placement and exchange of the rings. The rings are blessed by the priest and then exchanged by one of the "Koumbarus" - Theodoros & Panagiotis. The rings are considered a sign of Kyriakos and Athanasia's pledge to give themselves equally to each other.

The Crowning

The second ceremony is the Crowning. The priest, through a gospel reading, prayers and advice given to the couple in view of their life together, binds them together. He then joins the couple's right hands and they hold hands throughout the service.

The focal point of the sacrament is the placement of the crowns on the heads of the bride and groom which are crossed over three times by the second one of the "Koumbarus". They are known as "Stefana", and are connected with a ribbon.

The "Stefana" are considered the symbol of marriage in the Orthodox Church. They signify the authority and dignity of married life, the honour of marital love and the glory of parenthood and family life.

The Common Cup

As a sign that the couple will be sharing everything in life, the priest offers them wine from a common cup three times. At this stage the

flower girls will be walking among the guests with baskets full of rice and rose petals and will be handing these out.

The wedding dance

Finally, the highlight of the ceremony, the wedding "dance", takes place. The priest leads the couple in a short procession around the lectern three times. This marks the beginning of their marital journey through life. Now is the time to shower them with rice and rose petals. Here the priest gives his final blessing and maybe a personal message to the newlyweds and he removes their crowns. Then he wishes peace to everyone and closes the wedding ceremony.

After the Wedding Service

The traditional thing to do would be to congratulate the couple and their closest family members, but since everybody will be at the reception we will omit this step and we will give you the chance to do so there. Please feel free to take pictures at this stage, both inside and outside the church.

Wedding Favours

Outside of the church there will be a table with jars filled with sugar coated almonds (koufeta). Please help yourselves. At the reception, guests will find their wedding favours on the table.