

# GUIDELINES FOR CLERGY

Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America

Dear Reverend Fathers,

It will be manifest that a great and unspeakable reward will be reserved for him whose labors are concerned with these sheep, upon which Christ places such a high value... Consequently, much skill is required that our patients may be induced to submit willingly to the treatment prescribed by the physicians, and not only this, but that they may be grateful also for the cure.

—Saint John Chrysostom, *On The Priesthood*

**I**N HIS FAMOUS dialogues with his newly-ordained dear friend, our holy father John Chrysostom eloquently reflects on the care the pastor has for the flock entrusted to him. The Preacher explains that the whole source of the priestly ministry is the love for the flock, echoing the Lord's words to the Holy Apostle Peter: "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17).

We are laboring in the Savior's sheepfold during a time when the flock is in dire need of treatment, mercy, and love. Once generally accepted — if perhaps often flaunted — norms and expectations are not only called to question but not even known by the flock. Which of us, in our pastoral care, has not had a recent conversation with someone simply unaware of the expectations of the Holy Scriptures and Church regarding a crucial life choice? At the same time, the persons we pass by on the sidewalks and on our errands yearn deeply in their hearts for the Truth — often without knowing what treasure they seek.

Almost a quarter of a century ago, the Holy Synod promulgated Guidelines for Clergy in an effort to aid pastors in carrying out their

---

divine service as “builders of souls” (Archbishop John [Shahovskoy] of San Francisco). Now, the same Holy Synod is issuing this new edition of the Guidelines. In doing so, your archpastors seek to lead us as Church into deeper unity and communion. With the challenges in front of us, we seek to encourage all of the sacred clergy to deeper unity of purpose and common practice. The diversity of need and practice in our land can sometimes make unity — or dare I suggest conformity — seem like a distant or even undesirable goal. However, the bishops believe that more clear guidance and observation of the Holy Synod’s instructions will help the Church bear witness to Christ in our land and time with more clarity. In this fast-moving world, these Guidelines cannot envision every situation that will require the pastor’s discernment. The Holy Synod calls on each of the reverend pastors to be in close communication with his district deans and ultimately his ruling bishop in any unclear or new situation. Now, more than ever, we must work together.

The Holy Synod expresses its gratitude to the many persons involved for their work in preparing this document. Special appreciation is extended to His Grace, Bishop Alexei, who led this effort. As with the previous edition, it is my fervent prayer that pastors will apply these guidelines to build up the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

Dear Fathers, I echo the wonderment of Chrysostom when I think of the ministry which you have willingly taken up. “Oh, what a marvel! What love of God to man!” To you is given the great grace of serving at the Divine Liturgy and imparting grace on the faithful: “He who sitteth on high with the Father is at that hour held in the hands of all, and gives Himself to those who are willing to embrace and grasp Him.” May the same Lord protect and guide you in the exercise of your sacred office.

With love in Christ,  
+TIKHON  
Archbishop of Washington  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada  
*Feast of the Meeting of the Lord, 2023*

# CONTENTS

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Responsibility and Accountability in the Church   |
| 11 | The Divine Services                               |
| 12 | The Divine Liturgy                                |
| 14 | The Mystery of Baptism                            |
| 15 | The Mystery of Chrismation                        |
| 15 | The Reception of Converts                         |
| 17 | The Mystery of Penance                            |
| 18 | The Mystery of Monasticism                        |
| 19 | The Mystery of Marriage                           |
| 24 | The Mystery of Unction                            |
| 26 | Burial  |
| 30 | Ecumenical Witness                                |
| 33 | Matters of Appeal                                 |
| 33 | Attached Clergy                                   |
| 34 | Metrical Records and other Ecclesiastical Reports |
| 35 | Appendix A  |
| 37 | Appendix B  |

---

# RESPONSIBILITY and ACCOUNTABILITY in the CHURCH

## BISHOPS

By virtue of his canonical election by the Holy Synod and episcopal ordination, the Diocesan Bishop possesses full canonical authority within his Diocese, and shall exercise it with the assistance of Diocesan clergy and laity. He is the Chief Shepherd of his Diocese.

—*Statute*, Article 8.1

- 1 The bishop determines the assignment of the clergy in his diocese.
- 2 The bishop oversees the spiritual life of his clergy and monastics who respect him as such in a spirit of love and obedience. In all official duties, a bishop wears his cassock, riasa, klobuk, and panagia (*enkolpion*).
- 3 It is customary for the clergy and faithful to greet the bishop by asking his blessing and kissing his right hand. They address him as Master or *Vladyka*, or according to his elevation as Your Grace, Your Eminence, or Your Beatitude.
- 4 The bishop's official representative in a parish of his diocese is the assigned parish priest, also referred to as rector or priest-in-charge.
- 5 The bishop has direct supervision over all matters in his diocese involving the sacred canons and the canonical tradition of the Church and the pastoral service of his clergy.
- 6 The bishop alone may judge the merits of the transfer of clergy from one assignment in his diocese to another. A clergyman who would like to transfer from the parish to which he has been assigned must submit a written petition to his bishop.

- 
- 7 The bishop alone has the right to invite another bishop to serve within his diocese. Should a parish wish to have the presence of another bishop for a particular occasion, the parish priest must make this request in writing to his own bishop, prior to extending the invitation.
  - 8 The bishop pastorally resolves any disputes that may arise between a parish priest and his parish council.

## PRIESTS

- 1 The Parish Priest, also referred to as rector or priest-in-charge, shall sanctify his parishioners through the administration of the mysteries and the performing of a full cycle of services (see *Statute*, 12.3.a and following), with daily services being the ideal.
- 2 The priest is the spiritual father of his parish, and every parishioner ought to respect him as such. In interactions with parishioners, the priest is expected to wear his cassock and, as appropriate, pectoral cross. In the temple, in other formal settings, and in the presence of a bishop, the priest also wears a riasa over his cassock.
- 3 The faithful greet the priest by asking for his blessing and kissing his right hand, except in the presence of a bishop in which case a priest does not give a personal blessing. The faithful address the priest as Father.
- 4 The priest is responsible for scheduling the divine services.
- 5 The priest must see to it that the appropriate hymns and responses are sung during Divine Services in accordance with the typicon and by persons trained for the exercise of this ministry. The choir director or cantor and the parishioners that make up the choir are directly responsible to the priest, who is the presiding authority in all worship services.
- 6 The priest through his homilies shall proclaim the Gospel and impart knowledge of the doctrines, traditions, canons and disciplines of the Church. The homily at the Divine Liturgy takes place immediately after the reading of the Holy Gospel.
- 7 The priest is responsible for the ongoing education of the faithful. He should educate them on the spiritual life and faithfulness

---

to the commandments of Christ, matters of dogma, tradition, precepts, and sacred rites of the Church as they relate to the Orthodox Christian life. He shows special care for children and youth by supervising the Church School, giving direction to its instructors, and choosing appropriate resources and texts in conformity with diocesan directives.

- 8 The priest must strive in his ministry to maintain personal contact with all parishioners. This includes visiting the homes of parishioners who ask for their homes to be blessed after the Feast of the Theophany.
- 9 The priest must conscientiously visit each parishioner who has fallen gravely ill, especially when hospitalized.
- 10 When visiting in the privacy of a home, the priest may consider it necessary and advisable to have a deacon or another person accompany him.
- 11 The priest should make frequent and scheduled visitations to shut-ins, who for reasons of poor health are unable to attend Divine Services regularly.
- 12 The priest should conduct the Parish Assembly in accordance with 12.7.a of the *Statute*.
- 13 The priest shall oversee the care of all sacred vessels and appointments. He shall personally maintain the metrical book for all marriages, baptisms, chrismations, and funerals that take place at the Parish. He shall promptly submit all required documents, including civil marriage licenses, to the appropriate church and governmental authorities.
- 14 The parish priest maintains a list of all readers and subdeacons, serving and not serving, in his parish and forwards this list to the diocesan office when required.
- 15 The parish priest fulfills all diocesan mandated certifications and programs required with regard to background checks of youth workers, readers and subdeacons and other procedures required to safeguard the integrity of parish life.
- 16 The parish priest notifies the Diocesan Bishop and Dean in the event that a reader or subdeacon moves into or out of the parish, or does not fulfill his obligations in the parish.
- 17 The parish priest works with his Dean in the rare event a reader

- 
- or subdeacon may be required to lead services in another parish or mission within his deanery.
- 18 If a priest needs to absent himself from the diocese for any extended period of time, he must first receive the explicit permission of his diocesan bishop, ideally in a formal letter certifying his good standing.
  - 19 When a priest plans to make a visit or vacation outside his own diocese, the visiting priest must also contact the diocese and the local priest he is visiting and be prepared to show his letter of good standing obtained from his diocesan bishop.
  - 20 When visiting other parishes, even on vacation, a priest should always wear cassock, riasa, and, as appropriate, pectoral cross. He should enter into the sanctuary, venerate the Holy Table, greet the parish priest and other clergy present, and either remain in the altar, if invited to serve, or take a place assigned to the clergy.
  - 21 A priest may not accept an invitation from the laity of another parish to celebrate a liturgical service or offer a homily.
  - 22 The parish priest is responsible for invitations to priests and deacons to serve in his place or to concelebrate as blessed by his diocesan bishop.
  - 23 A priest should have personal liability insurance coverage and coverage for the personal contents of his rectory (i.e., clergy homeowner's or renter's insurance). The parish should assume the cost of insuring the rectory if it owns it. The contents of the rectory which are personal to the priest should be insured, with coverage cost assumed by the priest. Likewise, the parish must cover insurance costs for the contents belonging to the parish.
  - 24 A clergyman may not claim a personal right of ownership to any property of the parish he is serving unless it has been specified by mutual written agreement with the official parish representatives. To clarify this matter, it is appropriate for an inventory of parish items to be made each time there is a transfer of clergy.
  - 25 A clergyman may not enter into any contractual agreement or otherwise engage in a business enterprise which, by nature, may cause scandal or jeopardize the assets of the parish to which he has been assigned, or which might subject the parish to any

---

claim, lawsuit, or other liability arising from such activity.

- 26 An assigned clergyman may not seek secular employment in addition to his parochial responsibilities without the blessing of the diocesan bishop and the knowledge of the parish.
- 27 A clergyman may not begin a blog or podcast without the prior blessing of his diocesan bishop. A clergyman cannot separate his priestly ministry and his personal or online communications (See *Social Media Guidelines*).
- 28 Before a clergyman may begin to seek an assignment in a diocese other than his own, he must receive the blessing of his current bishop. (See *Guidelines for the Ordination, Appointment and Transfer of Clergy*, Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, Fall 2013)
- 29 The parish priest must submit all preliminary plans for the erection of a church structure, any major structural alteration, and iconography to the bishop for his prior approval.

## DEACONS

- 1 The deacon serves at the Divine Liturgy and other services and rites according to the established order, as an assistant to the priest and in obedience to him.
- 2 The faithful address the deacon as Father Deacon.
- 3 When not vested in sacred vestments, but in the temple, and in other formal settings, and in the presence of a bishop, the deacon wears a riasa over his cassock.
- 4 If a deacon needs to absent himself from the diocese for any extended period of time, he must first receive the explicit permission of his parish priest and then his diocesan bishop, ideally in a formal letter certifying his good standing.

## CHURCH SERVERS (Readers and Subdeacons)

- 1 Church servers are the lowest degree of clergy, who, while not having the grace of the priesthood, are devoted to one or another service in the Church. In our present time, these orders are subdeacon and reader.
- 2 Tonsured readers and ordained subdeacons, when serving or



---

reading (especially in the middle of the church) should wear the vestments appropriate to their function. The garment of a Reader is the stikharion; that of the Subdeacon is the stikharion and the orarion worn crossed about the torso. The custom of blessing readers to wear the orarion is no longer encouraged.

- 3 The black cassock is not the garment or sign of a reader or subdeacon, but is a garment which is appropriately worn under the stikharion.
- 4 If it is the established custom in the diocese and parish, a reader or subdeacon may be blessed to wear a black cassock in the temple and perhaps the church grounds within his home parish, as well as at other parishes within the diocese of his own bishop.
- 5 With the exception of monastics, a subdeacon or reader may not wear a riasa, skufia, vest, or belt over the cassock.
- 6 A subdeacon or reader may not wear a cassock in the parish of another jurisdiction or diocese without the specific blessing of his own parish priest and that of the parish priest of the parish he wishes to visit.
- 7 The church server will be careful to avoid confusing the faithful or those outside the church about the scope of his noble and churchly — but not priestly or clerical — service.
- 8 Subdeacons, at the present time, participate in ways unique to their ministry only in service of the bishop: they prepare his vestments and trikerion/dikerion. They vest him, support him, and bear the trikerion and dikerion. They have the blessing to wear the stikharion and the orarion, which is worn crosswise.
  - a Outside of episcopal services, a subdeacon's role is no different from that of a reader (as discussed below) with the honor of wearing the orarion crosswise as proper to the office.
  - b An ancient rule allows ordained subdeacons to retrieve the trikerion and dikerion from the holy table if a stand proper to those items is not available. By analogy, in extreme need, at the express direction of the bishop or priest, the subdeacon may be blessed to retrieve an ecclesiastical item from the holy table or table of oblation. It is understood that as a rule touching the holy table is to be avoided.

- 
- 9 Readers have the duty of reading the holy scriptures, with the exception of the Gospel, during the divine services.
  - 10 Church servers, both subdeacons and readers, generally assist the celebrating clergy at the divine services. These duties include:
    - a Reading and singing during the divine services
    - b Bringing the prosphora, wine, water, incense to the clergy as needed
    - c Cutting of the antidoron and preparing the wine sometimes available after communion (*zapifka*)
    - d Preparing and giving the censer and hot water to the priest and deacon
    - e Cleaning the church, icons, etc.
    - f Calling the believers to the divine services by ringing the bells
  - 11 All assignments are made by the Parish Priest or his designate. Some church servers will be assigned responsibilities primarily for reading and singing; others in the altar. Notwithstanding, all church servers must be trained and prepared to both serve or sing at any time as required by the parish priest.
  - 12 The church server does not shirk from any kind of duty necessary to maintain good order in the church and the divine services.
  - 13 Readers and subdeacons are blessed by the bishop to minister within a particular parish. Both readers and subdeacons are responsible to the parish priest, who, as the representative of the bishop, is the head of the parish.
  - 14 In extraordinary circumstances, with the blessing of his parish priest and dean, readers and subdeacons may provide reader's services for parishes and missions that are in need of such a service.
  - 15 At the request of local parish priests, and with the blessing of his own parish priest, the subdeacon may render assistance with special feast day services, episcopal services, and other celebrations taking place in his deanery or local area.
  - 16 Readers and subdeacons may not leave their parish to join another without his bishop's written blessing, including any situation that may require him to relocate to another city or state.

---

## UNTONSURED READERS AND ALTAR SERVERS

- 1 Untonsured altar servers are a regular part of Church life. Where there are many servers, they should serve according to a schedule prepared by the Parish Priest.
- 2 Without exception, adult altar servers and church servers are subject to background checks and other measures in effect to promote safety especially around children serving in the altar.
- 3 Untonsured altar servers may be blessed to wear the stikharion during the divine services when they are serving. A cassock is not worn, but dark dress slacks, black dress shoes, and a button-down shirt are to be worn under the stikharion.

## SEMINARIANS

- 1 Orthodox men who have the recommendation from their diocesan bishop and the parish priest where they have attended for at least three years may apply to any stavropegial seminary of the Orthodox Church in America.
- 2 Seminarians as students of Orthodox theology are under a special discipline, which is not only academic, but also spiritual. They are expected to live according to the values and teachings of the Orthodox Church, fostering the qualities of mature obedience and sacrificial love. This obedience includes following all pre-admissions application procedures including appropriate background and psychological testing.
- 3 Saint Tikhon's and Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminaries are both stavropegial institutions. As such, students at these seminaries, while remaining accountable to their diocesan bishops, are supervised by the seminary authorities, under the archpastoral supervision of the Metropolitan.
  - a While enrolled, seminarians are to ask for blessings from His Beatitude the Metropolitan for major life changes, e.g., becoming engaged to marry.
- 4 Seminarians are expected to develop lasting attitudes and habits of personal and community prayer by active participation in the liturgical life of the Seminary and by being under the direction of a spiritual father at the Seminary.

- 
- 5 Unordained male seminarians are given a temporary blessing to wear a cassock for the duration of their studies in Seminary. Jackets, coats, and sweaters are not to be worn on top of the cassock in church, class, and meals. The temporary blessing to wear the cassock does not signify tonsure to the minor orders of reader or subdeacon, nor does it confer ordination status. This temporary blessing to wear the cassock is automatically rescinded upon the student's graduation, withdrawal, or dismissal from the Seminary if the student has not subsequently been tonsured to minor orders or ordained to Holy Orders.
  - 6 Although seminarians are presumed to enter the seminary for the purpose of active service in the Orthodox Church, graduation does not guarantee ordination. The decision of whether a candidate is eligible for ordination ultimately belongs to the ordaining bishop. See *Guidelines for the Ordination, Appointment, and Transfer of Clergy* (Approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops at their Fall, 2013 meeting).

## MONASTICS

- 1 Monastic habitations (e.g., monasteries and sketes) may be established only with the blessing of the local bishop.
- 2 Every monastic habitation must present to the ruling bishop an annual statement about its civil status including: a. the legal name in English, b. the non-profit organization number from state and IRS, c. a financial report, d. a list of individuals in the community with civil and religious names, e. a list of property holdings with written evidence and mortgage information, f. a list of any non-monastics living in the community with purpose, g. if applicable a list of board members, h. all documents related to "Policies, Standards, and Procedures of the Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct" and other procedures and other requirements of the Orthodox Church in America
- 3 In keeping with monastic tradition, a riasophore monk or nun will wear the cassock and head covering outside of the temple and wear the riasa, headcovering, and veil (*klobuk*) within the temple.

- 
- 4 Every monastic is canonically attached to the monastic community in which he or she was tonsured.
  - 5 Every monastic is under the immediate canonical supervision and pastoral care of the diocesan bishop or in the case of stavropegial institutions of the primate. In daily monastic life, he or she is directly subject to the superior in the monastery.
  - 6 A monastic who travels from his or her monastery to visit family or to make a pilgrimage must receive the written blessing of the superior and the bishop prior to making plans or arrangements for travel.
  - 7 The monastic norm is for all monastics to reside within the monastery. In those instances in which this is not the case, the monastic blessed to live outside the monastery is under the direct supervision of the local diocesan bishop and obedient to him.
  - 8 In cases in which a monastic transfers to another community, that transfer shall be executed in keeping with the accepted protocols: an official written letter from the accepting monastic superior indicating willingness to receive the monastic and an official written letter from the releasing monastic superior granting the release, as well as official written letters from accepting and releasing bishops.

---

# THE DIVINE SERVICES

- 1 Only a canonically ordained and appointed clergyman can serve divine services. He must not be under suspension or excommunication by his bishop or by his own sins. He must be properly prepared, spiritually and physically, for divine worship. He must partake of the sacrament of holy confession regularly.
- 2 If a clergyman develops any health challenges that may be an impediment to the celebration of the holy services or to his daily ministry, he must seek direction from his bishop.
- 3 No one may schedule any liturgical service without the approval of the parish priest.
- 4 The priest is expected to serve Vigil, or Vespers and Matins, and the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, the Great Feasts, Great Lent and Holy Week, and the Feast Days of major Saints that may vary with local veneration. The priest also strives to grow the daily liturgical life in his parish with the office and other devotional services as appropriate in his context.
- 5 In all holy services, the clergy are to follow the order and rubrics prescribed by the service books approved for use in the Church, giving priority in the territorial dioceses to those of the Orthodox Church in America as received from the Russian Orthodox Church. The ethnic dioceses are to use the texts and rubrics approved by their bishops. Any departure from the usual order or rubrics must meet with the specific approval of the diocesan bishop. The clergy serve using printed, authorized liturgical books. Digital devices are not blessed for use.
- 6 Only the tabernacle and the minimum articles necessary for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy should be on the Holy Table. These include the Book of Gospels, the antimension, and hand cross(es). There is a general practice to decorate the sanctuary with flowers, both cut flowers and potted plants. Neither should be placed on the Holy Table itself, but may be placed on a stand behind the Altar Table.
- 7 No one is permitted to enter the altar unnecessarily. A person having a specific purpose in the sanctuary may reverently enter

---

only with the blessing of the priest and after making the three customary bows.

- 8 No layman — including altar servers, and all the laity, including elected parish officials — is permitted to touch anything on the Holy Table or on the Table of Oblation. Money should not be brought into the altar.

## THE DIVINE LITURGY

- 1 At Divine Liturgy the clergyman must be at peace with all people, harboring no anger, resentment, or ill will against anyone.
- 2 As part of the clergyman's necessary preparation in order to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, he must fast from the previous evening, celebrate (or read) Vigil, the canons and prayers before Holy Communion, and be clean in body and conscience.
- 3 Before beginning the Preparation (*Proskomedie*), the serving clergy must pray in full the Entrance Prayers, Vesting, and Washing of Hands.
- 4 The Divine Liturgy is normally celebrated in a consecrated temple and on a consecrated and vested holy table (the holy throne) with a consecrated and assigned antimimension. The priest is responsible for the cleanliness of the holy table, table of oblation, and the entire altar area, along with the good maintenance of liturgical vestments and sacred vessels. He may assign to the deacon duties appropriate to his rank. Subdeacons may be assigned duties in this regard only at the table of oblation and the altar generally and not the holy table proper or the sacred vessels.
- 5 In the case of a specific necessity, the Divine Liturgy may be celebrated outdoors or in a suitable place other than a consecrated temple. This may occur only with the blessing of the diocesan bishop. Before the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, the site must be blessed with holy water. In such an instance, the priest celebrates on the antimimension that is placed on an appropriate table, such as a table of oblation, that should be set aside exclusively for this purpose.

- 
- 6 Only an antimimension authorized and signed by the then-current ruling diocesan bishop can be used on the holy table. The antimimension is not to be washed or burned. If the antimimension needs replacing, the diocesan bishop must be contacted.
  - 7 Prosphora for the Divine Liturgy is prepared from the best unbleached wheat flour, pure water, salt, and yeast or starter, using no other ingredients. It is carefully and prayerfully prepared by a person designated for this holy task. The bread must be thoroughly baked and the imprint from the seal must be clearly discernible.
  - 8 The wine should be sweet, made from red grapes, without additives or fortifications.
  - 9 A priest is not permitted to celebrate the Divine Liturgy twice in the same liturgical day, nor may he permit the celebration of two Divine Liturgies on the same holy table or antimimension in the course of one day.
  - 10 If during the course of the Divine Liturgy, particles placed on the disks have fallen onto the antimimension or its iliton (cloth cover), the serving clergy are responsible to gather them and place them into the chalice. The communion cloths must be kept clean with the water disposed of appropriately. If the cloths are no longer serviceable, they should be burned in an appropriate place and the ashes disposed of in a fitting manner.
  - 11 The Holy Gifts are to be consumed as indicated in the service book immediately after the same divine liturgy, by the deacon (or priest).
  - 12 Liturgical commemoration of bishops:
    - a It is the prescribed practice of the Orthodox Church in America that the name of the metropolitan (primate) is elevated before the name of the diocesan bishop.
    - b Only if another bishop is present at the service is his name elevated. The name of the local bishop is mentioned first. At the Great Entrance when a bishop is celebrating, the name of the presiding bishop is commemorated by the deacon (or priest) and the presiding bishop commemorates the metropolitan, the diocesan bishop, and any other concelebrating or present bishops.



---

# THE MYSTERY OF BAPTISM

- 1 Baptism is normally performed in the temple or appointed baptistry. In the case of an adult baptism, the rite may take place outdoors at a suitable aquatic site. Preferably, each parish should have a large baptismal font for the immersion of adults.
- 2 The candidate for baptism should be given the name of a recognized Orthodox saint. This matter should be discussed with the prospective parents long before the birth of the child. An adult convert to the Church should be given the name of an Orthodox saint.
- 3 The Mystery of Holy Baptism is administered in full accordance with the Office of the Service. No exorcism or prayer may be shortened or omitted. Baptism is properly performed by triple immersion. It is necessary to have a font large enough for full immersion.
- 4 The final step in Christian initiation is the partaking of the Holy Eucharistic Mysteries. In the instance of Baptism or Chrismation, it is desirable that the newly illumined receive Communion as soon as possible from the chalice, during the Divine Liturgy, and not from the reserved sacrament.
- 5 The sponsor (godparent) of a candidate for Holy Baptism is a guarantor to the Church that the person will be reared and/or educated in the Orthodox faith; he/she must be a committed Orthodox Christian. The first sponsor should be of the same sex as the candidate. In the case of infants, a second sponsor may be selected of the opposite sex.
- 6 A worthy sponsor is already leading a full sacramental life, confessing sins through the Mystery of Penance and receiving Holy Communion. The priest is to instruct the parents and the sponsors of their respective obligations to the catechumen, and to exhort them to live a full sacramental life. The sponsor, as well as the parents, should be prepared to receive the Eucharist at the same time together with the newly baptized Christian.
- 7 The child's parents or an adult catechumen may request that a

---

non-Orthodox person witness the mystery. That person may be present and considered an honorary witness if there is no negative or scandalous deterrent. This person, however, is not the sponsor of the candidate or the godparent.

- 8 The priest must enter the required data in the parish metrical book after carefully ascertaining all necessary information, including facts and spellings. A certificate witnessing the data in the metrical book can be prepared with certificates available from [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).

## The MYSTERY of CHRISMATION

- 1 Chrismation is to take place immediately after the Mystery of Baptism according to the prescribed order.
- 2 The priest must ensure that the vessel containing the Holy Chrism is properly identified and stored in an appropriate place.

## The RECEPTION of CONVERTS

- 1 An established course of catechetical instruction is administered to all seeking entrance into the Holy Orthodox Church.
- 2 Holy Baptism, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, followed by Holy Chrismation and ultimately Holy Eucharist, is the normative means by which one is initiated into the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.
- 3 When receiving those coming into Holy Orthodoxy from religious confessions who profess a belief in the Holy Trinity and baptize with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the Church has, depending on the circumstances, received some candidates through means of Penance, a Profession of Faith, and sometimes Holy Chrismation, and ultimately Holy Eucharist.

- 
- 4 Catechumens from all non-Trinitarian groups and cults, including Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Quakers, Unitarians, and adherents of Bah'ai, Unification, and Unity, must be baptized.
  - 5 Catechumens who previously have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity in a manner recognized as authentic by the Church, after having completed the established catechetical instruction and making a personal affirmation of the Orthodox faith, are received through the Mysteries of Penance, Chrismation, and Holy Eucharist according to the prescribed order. This group includes Roman Catholics and some Protestants (Holy Synod, *Service for the Reception of Converts*, 1989).
  - 6 Non-Chalcedonians are to be received through Holy Confession, Confession of the Orthodox faith, and the reception of the Holy Eucharist. These include Monophysites (Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians, Malankara, and Syro-Jacobites), and Nestorians (*Sixth Ecumenical Council*, Canon 95).
  - 7 In any case of doubt as to the rite of the reception to follow, or doubt about a prior baptism, the bishop must be consulted. In instances of reasonable doubt about a prior baptism, after approval is given by the bishop, the Office of Holy Baptism is performed conditionally with addendum: "if not already baptized, the servant of God, (Name), is baptized..." (*Holy Apostles*, Canon 49).
  - 8 After having performed the prescribed rites of reception, the priest must enter the required information in the parish metrical book and issue the appropriate certificate available from [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).

---

# THE MYSTERY OF PENANCE

- 1 The priest, as the confessor for the flock entrusted to his care, determines the frequency with which his spiritual children confess their sins, with monthly confession as the norm.
- 2 The counsel the priest gives in confession must have the teachings of the Gospel as the foundation.
- 3 The mystery of penance is not to devolve into a psychotherapeutic counseling session.
- 4 For those who seldom receive Holy Communion, the priest must keep in all its strictness the obligation for confession before communion. However, if someone wants to confess more often than he/she communes, the Spiritual Father should be prepared to hear that person's confession.
- 5 If the order of General Confession is utilized with the blessing of the diocesan bishop, then the Order of Prayers before Confession must be read. The General Service of Prayers Before Confession is not meant to replace or be a substitute for personal confession.
- 6 The clergy are reminded that they must also avail themselves of the Mystery of Penance regularly and faithfully. The priest who does not have a Spiritual Father upon beginning his priestly ministry must seek one. If he cannot find one, then he must turn to his bishop to appoint one for him. In some instances, there is a senior priest who has been appointed by the bishop as diocesan confessor to whom the priest can turn.
- 7 The secrecy of the Mystery of Penance, even under strong constraining influence, is considered an unquestionable rule in the entire Orthodox Church. Betrayal of the secrecy of confession will lead to canonical punishment of the priest.
- 8 The testimonial given by the Spiritual Father before an ordination does not constitute an exception. If the confessor discovers an impediment to ordination, he is not obligated to deliver the testimonial, and does not need to provide any reason for justifying his refusal. See *Confidentiality of Confession*, Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, 1988. See also: *Confession*

---

*and Communion, Report to the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann, 1972.*

- 9 The order of the mystery of repentance is normally concluded with the absolution of the penitent and the restoration to Holy Communion. In rare circumstances, for the sake of the salvation of the one coming to the mystery, the priest may withhold absolution for a short time and ask the penitent to take concrete steps to make amends as an expression of repentance. If a penance is to extend beyond six months, the bishop should be consulted. Indefinite excommunication from the Church is reserved to the episcopate.

## The MYSTERY of MONASTICISM

- 1 Parish priests should always encourage those discerning a call to the monastic life. They should provide spiritual guidance to those interested in monasticism and urge them to discern this calling through prayer, reading of scripture, study of ascetic literature, and visits to monasteries where additional guidance can be provided to ensure a comprehensive discernment process.
- 2 Parish priests should encourage the faithful to make pilgrimages to monasteries and to support their work.
- 3 Clergy are encouraged to participate in and to promote attendance at monastery pilgrimages (e.g., the annual patronal feast) and such events as retreats and conferences that have been scheduled at monasteries with the blessing of the diocesan bishop.
- 4 Entry into monasticism, including the sacred order of tonsure, is normally performed by the diocesan bishop. The bishop may bless an enthroned abbot to perform the tonsure.
- 5 Except in the case of life-threatening illness or approaching death, the novitiate should last at least three years.

---

# The MYSTERY of MARRIAGE

- 1 The priest must make sincere and determined efforts through preaching and teaching to make his parishioners aware that the Mystery of Marriage always takes place within the context of the life of the Church community. If, despite the teachings of the Church, an Orthodox Christian marries someone who is not a Christian or chooses to marry outside of the Church (whether in a civil act or in a non-Orthodox Christian service), the following provisions apply:
  - a A baptized Orthodox Christian whose wedding has not been blessed by the Orthodox Church is no longer in good standing with the Church, and may not receive the Sacraments of the Church, including Holy Communion, or become a Sponsor of an Orthodox Marriage, Baptism or Chrismation.
  - b After a period of time, with sincere understanding of the Church's teachings regarding the Mystery of Marriage and repentance for entering into an unblessed marriage, the baptized Orthodox Christian may be readmitted to holy communion. The priest must consult with the bishop in such circumstances.
  - c When possible, such an act of restoration includes the confirmation of the marriage through a rite approved by the bishop.
  - d *Note:* In the practice of the Orthodox Church in America, the act of baptism and chrismation is complete; the marriages of newly-baptized are not solemnized upon being received into the Church.
- 2 The parish priest must seek to know who among his parishioners intend to marry and must make himself available for guidance and advice. His responsibilities include instructing the couple on the Orthodox Christian teaching about marriage. This should take place at least three months before wedding plans are made so that the couple may understand and follow the Church's teaching and discipline on the Mystery of Marriage.
- 3 Both bride and groom should be Orthodox Christians in good standing, meaning that each participates in the Sacraments and

---

is an active member of a canonical Orthodox parish. If one of the partners is not Orthodox, but is baptized, in water, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, they may still be blessed to marry (see “Inter-Christian Marriage’ below). The Church cannot bless the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian.

- 4 Both bride and groom must have valid birth and baptismal certificates.
- 5 Neither the bride nor the groom can be currently married.
- 6 If either has received a civil divorce, they must first receive a blessing from their bishop for remarriage.
- 7 If either is widowed, they must produce a legal death certificate for the deceased spouse.
- 8 No person may marry more than three times in the Church, with permission for a third marriage granted only with extreme *economia*.
- 9 The sponsors (e.g., best man and maid of honor) must be Orthodox Christians in good standing. The other members of the bridal party need not be Orthodox.
- 10 Counseling and teaching should begin at least six months before the proposed wedding date, be comprehensive, and regular (held no less frequently than once per month). Excellent programs to help the priest in his preparation for counseling include *The Journey of Marriage in the Orthodox Church* (Greek Archdiocese) and FOCCUS: Orthodox Edition.
- 11 The priest should make it clear that before setting a date, renting a hall, or considering any activity related to the social aspect of the marriage day, a couple planning marriage must first seek the blessing, guidance, and advice of their parish priest.
- 12 The couple must respect the seasons, times, and days during which marriage may be blessed. The priest must also uphold the teaching of the Church in regard to these things. The most appropriate time for a wedding is Sunday, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

- 
- 13 Marriages may not be celebrated on:
- a* evenings before Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year,
  - b* on the eves of Sundays throughout the year,
  - c* eves of the twelve Great Feasts or patronal feast of the parish,
  - d* the Great Forty Day Fast, Apostles' Fast, Dormition Fast, and Nativity Fast,
  - e* from Sunday of Meatfare to the Sunday of Cheesefare,
  - f* during the course of Pascha and Bright Week,
  - g* from the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord (Dec. 25) through the Feast of the Synaxis of St. John the Baptist (Jan. 7),
  - h* on the eve and day of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (Aug. 29), and
  - i* on the eve and day of the Elevation of the Cross (Sept. 14).
- 14 Prior to the new beginning in life of marriage, the couple should participate in the mysteries of Penance and Communion.
- 15 As stated above, weddings are not to be performed on the eve of the Lord's Day. In extraordinary circumstances, a written petition by the parish priest and couple detailing why it is not possible for the wedding to take place on Sunday may be presented to the diocesan bishop. If the bishop makes this extraordinary concession, the couple must be exhorted to attend the Divine Liturgy on the following Sunday so that the marriage can be sealed by the reception of the Holy Eucharist. In the rare event that permission is given for a Saturday wedding, it shall be celebrated no later than a time of day established by the bishop so that the priest may serve the Vigil or Vesper service.
- 16 The ritual of the marriage ceremony is to be celebrated in an Orthodox church building. Halls, gardens, and other places are not permitted.
- 17 The priest should schedule, in advance, a counseling session 3 months after the wedding.
- 18 The priest, as a pastor of souls, must also be available to counsel those already married, who are experiencing difficulties in their marriage.
- 19 The priest is responsible for entering into the metrical book the required information.



---

## INTER-CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES

- 1 Orthodox canon law strictly forbids marriages of Orthodox Christians with non-Orthodox Christians (see Sixth Ecumenical Council, canon LXXII). “Mixed” marriages are being permitted today only according to the principle of “economy,” which permits the Church to abstain from applying canon law strictly, hoping that such a condescension would bring forth better practical results than strictness. Thus, the Church always hopes that the Orthodox party will ultimately bring the whole family into the Orthodox Church.
- 2 The more a couple has in common, the more likely they are to live together in peace and concord. Shared faith and traditions strengthen the bonds between couples and their children, as well as their extended families. Even so, the Orthodox Church will bless marriages between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christian partners, provided that:
  - a The diocesan bishop is consulted
  - b The non-Orthodox partner is a Christian who has been baptized, in water, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit;
  - c The couple should agree to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith;
  - d The pre-marital counseling will need to be more extensive, intentionally including an introduction to Orthodox Christianity as a way of life and a frank discussion of the challenges around a “mixed marriage.”
- 3 Toleration of a mixed marriage does not extend to marriage between an Orthodox Christian and a non-Christian person, such as a Christian Scientist, Jehovah’s Witness, Jew, Mormon, Muslim, Unitarian, etc. (See “Inter-Religious Marriage” below)
- 4 Active participation of non-Orthodox clergy in this service, as in all the mysteries of the Orthodox Church, is not allowed. Conversely, Orthodox clergy may not participate in non-Orthodox services and rites. A non-Orthodox clergy member could be invited to say a word at the wedding feast.

- 
- 5 A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian does not thereby become a member of the Orthodox Church. The non-Orthodox spouse should be warmly welcomed into parish life as fully as possible, and should be cared for and encouraged by the pastor, but may not receive the Sacraments, including Holy Communion, or be buried by the Church, serve on the Parish Council, or vote in parish assemblies or elections. To participate in the Church's life, one must be received as described elsewhere in these Guidelines.

## MARRIAGE OUTSIDE the ORTHODOX CHURCH and INTER-RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES

- 1 Canonical and theological reasons preclude the Orthodox Church from performing the Sacrament of Marriage for couples where one partner is Orthodox and the other partner is a non-Christian. As such, Orthodox Christians choosing to enter such marriages fall out of good standing with their Church and are unable to actively participate in the life of the Church. While this stance may seem confusing and rigid, it is guided by the Orthodox Church's love and concern for its member's spiritual well-being and salvation. See point 1, above, under "The Mystery of Marriage."
- 2 Converts to Holy Orthodoxy are not to be remarried when they embrace the Orthodox faith. See: On Marriage, *Encyclical*.

## PROHIBITIONS ON MARRIAGES

- 1 The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:
  - a Parents with their own children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren;
  - b Brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law;
  - c Uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews;
  - d First cousins with each other;
  - e Adoptive parents with adopted children or adopted children with the children of adoptive parents;
  - f Godparents with godchildren or godparents with the parents of their godchildren;

- 
- g* Same-gender relations;
  - h* Persons who have undergone a “gender reassignment” are prohibited from marriage in the Church.

## SECOND MARRIAGE and MARRIAGE between DIVORCED PERSONS

- 1* The Orthodox norm for those who marry is one marriage. A second marriage is tolerated under certain conditions. A third marriage is extended under certain precise circumstances.
- 2* The Church does not grant divorces. However, it recognizes that because of human weaknesses and sin marriages sometimes disintegrate and are ended by civil decree (divorce).
- 3* By economy, the diocesan bishop may permit remarriage after receiving a petition through the parish priest. This petition includes a clear statement of repentance from the divorced party as well as an understanding that a second marriage is necessary for his or her salvation.
- 4* Under no circumstances can there be a fourth marriage.
- 5* The Order of Service:
  - a* If one party of the marriage is being married for the first time (even if that person is not Orthodox), the order of the first marriage is used;
  - b* If both the partners are divorced and/or widowed, the order for the second marriage is used.

## THE MYSTERY OF UNCTION

- 1* The Mystery of Holy Unction is administered to Orthodox Christians for the healing of soul and body. It may be for a particular person or for a number of persons gathered together.
- 2* The Mystery is not served for the same person, for the same sickness, more than once.
- 3* The Mystery of Holy Unction is intended for the living, whether

---

they are sick or dying. Those who are already dead must not be anointed with the Holy Unction.

- 4 It should be understood that the service is primarily for those who are ill in body and in soul and are able to be present if the service is performed in public. Otherwise, the priests ought to go to the bedside of the person for whom the healing is sought.
- 5 This mystery is bestowed on those who have confessed and are at peace with God in their souls. One cannot expect to receive healing without repentance.
- 6 If circumstances prevent the use of the full order of service to anoint a person who has fallen ill, an abridged form is printed in the Book of Needs that may be approved by the Diocesan Bishop in extreme need.
- 7 In some places, it has become a custom to celebrate the Unction for a larger gathering. Although not prescribed in the Triodion, one such example is the serving of the mystery on the eve of Great and Holy Thursday after the prescribed Matins. A better practice is the serving of this Mystery during the Great Fast itself so as not to interrupt the Passion.
- 8 Normally, oil that has been sanctified at a previous celebration of the Mystery of Holy Unction is not reserved for the subsequent anointing of the sick, but should be burned in an oil lamp or poured over the body of the person for whom it had been offered if that person dies.
- 9 The custom of allowing the faithful to take oil home with them to anoint others should not be encouraged since the usual minister of the Mystery of Holy Unction is of the priestly rank. If garments and the like are brought forward at the service, they may be sprinkled with holy water, but should not be anointed with the sanctified oil.

---

# BURIAL

- 1 While the traditional ideal is for burial to occur on the third day, the Church has no specific insistence on the length of time between death and burial. Interment varies according to the climate, civil ordinances, customs, and circumstances, and may be held immediately following death, or after a number of days.
- 2 The hour of interment is also not fixed; it may be at any time during the day to accord with cemetery regulations and parish needs.
- 3 It is assumed that, unless the death was an accidental or untimely one, the priest has been ministering to an aging person, or one suffering from some ailment or sickness, and has prepared the person for death through participation in the Mysteries of Penance, Unction, and Holy Eucharist.
- 4 The priest should read the Prayers at the Departing of a Soul and passages from Holy Scripture. Merely to be present at the bedside of one's spiritual child and not minister with audible prayer is unworthy of the priesthood.
- 5 The priest must make contact with the family of the deceased, offering to assist them through the time of grieving and mourning, especially if the priest was not able to be at the bedside of the dying parishioner at the time of death.
- 6 The Service for the Departed (*panikhida*) is sung on the eve of the burial whether the body is in the temple, funeral home, or elsewhere.
- 7 The body of the departed may be brought into the temple at any time prior to the time of the Funeral Service, whether days before or on the day thereof.
- 8 The body of the departed may not be in the temple on the Lord's Day during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.
- 9 Under normal conditions, the casket is open from the first Service for the Departed (*panikhida*) until the conclusion of the Funeral Service.
- 10 The casket is positioned so that the feet of the departed are toward the iconostasis (from our liturgical perspective, the person

---

is thus “facing” the Holy Altar).

- 11 The Funeral Service is usually served in the temple on the day of the burial.
- 12 It is proper and befitting God to place the burial of the departed in the context of a cycle of services. Local customs and directives may shape the possibilities but two possibilities of a fuller order are common:
  - a Panikhida on the eve; Liturgy the next morning; Burial Service (vigil); burial
  - b Burial service (vigil) on the eve; Liturgy the next morning; burial
- 13 The Funeral Service and burial is generally not officiated on Sunday or Pascha. If the burial is scheduled for Monday, the body may be brought into the temple only after Vespers on Sunday evening. There may be circumstances for which immediate burial may be necessary, and in this case pastoral discretion is to be used.
- 14 Between the day of Pascha and the Sunday of St. Thomas, the Funeral Service follows the prescribed order for funerals during Bright Week.
- 15 An Orthodox clergyman may not take part in a service for a non-Orthodox deceased person even if that person is related to a parishioner. If invited, however, he may offer some words of consolation at the graveside or funeral meal.
- 16 Only the celebrating Orthodox clergy speak in the Funeral Service or offer any form of homily or public statement in the temple, or participate in the graveside service. The parish priest may invite family members or other appropriately vetted dignitaries to speak at the memorial meal.
- 17 Prayers for the dead are usually offered at the memorial meal, on the third, ninth and fortieth day after death, and every year thereafter.
- 18 Saturday is the usual day for a memorial service (e.g., after the Divine Liturgy or prior to the Vigil or Vesper service). In rare circumstances, the Service for the Departed (*panikhida*) may be served with the bishop’s blessing after the conclusion of the

---

Sunday Divine Liturgy in the afternoon.

- 19 The Church has set aside definite days on which remembrance of the dead should especially take place. Among these are Meatfare Saturday, the second, third and fourth Saturdays of the Great Fast, the Saturday preceding Pentecost, and St. Demetrius Saturday.
- 20 In addition to these specific times, the faithful may have the names of the deceased remembered at the Proskomedie and during the Divine Liturgy.
- 21 Memorial services are not permitted on feast days or from the Nativity of our Lord to Theophany, and from Palm Sunday to the Sunday of St. Thomas.
- 22 The parish priest is responsible for entering into the metrical book the required information about burials.

## NON-COMMUNICANTS

- 1 Membership in the Body of Christ, His Holy Church, is defined by participation in the Holy Mysteries. The burial service for a person who has kept himself away from actual parish participation should take place in the funeral home or a place other than the church building. This presupposes that the person was baptized as an Orthodox Christian, has not joined another religious group, but has not fulfilled his or her membership in the life of the Orthodox Church.

## NON-ORTHODOX PERSONS

- 1 If a priest is asked to bury a non-Orthodox person, he must consult with his diocesan bishop, and with the bishop's blessing bury the person according to the order prescribed in the Book of Needs.

## SUICIDE

- 1 The act of suicide is a profound tragedy affecting a parish. It necessitates prayers for forgiveness for the sake of the departed and calls the parish community to repentance and mourning.
- 2 A person who has committed suicide is, strictly speaking,

---

precluded from a Church burial. Given the pastoral delicacy involved in a suicide, the priest must share factors bearing on the particular case with the diocesan bishop, e.g., any history of mental illness; it is the prerogative of the bishop to consider the factors and make a decision concerning the order of burial.

## MEMBERS of MASONIC and Other SECRET FRATERNAL SOCIETIES

- 1 If a parish priest is aware that a member of his flock is a Freemason, he should make it a pastoral concern to speak privately with the person, showing the incompatibility of Orthodoxy with Freemasonry.
- 2 When a communing member of a parish falls asleep in the Lord and that person is also a member of one of these societies, the priest will show love and concern for the deceased. In his counseling of the bereaved family, he must not be hostile but must inform the family that only the Funeral Service for an Orthodox Christian will be served.
- 3 Patiently, tactfully, and discretely, he will inform the family that no words or symbols other than those of the Orthodox faith can be introduced into the church or the funeral home.

## CREMATION

- 1 The practice of cremation is not a Christian one and is to be discouraged. Cremated remains are not to be brought into the temple for a burial service or for any other reason.
- 2 Although cremation is not encouraged, and the Funeral Service over cremated remains is denied, the remains may be buried only with the hymn Holy God....
- 3 A memorial service may be celebrated (without any cremated remains present) on the 40th day or some other appropriate date.

## AUTOPSY AND ORGAN DONATION

- 1 Unless there is a specific legal reason, such as determining the cause of death, an autopsy ought to be avoided. The desire for



---

scientific information through experimentation is not an appropriate reason to merit an autopsy. The family is not obliged to give approval for this procedure. The Church is concerned that respect for the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit be maintained.

- 2 Donation of body organ(s) after death may be allowed as long as respectful care is exercised toward the body before, during, and after the extraction operation. Care must be taken that the organ(s) are given as a gesture of altruism, free of any commercial overtones.
- 3 The Church does not consider the sharing of organs as a lessening of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the deceased, or as a transmigration of part of the donor to the recipient. A healthy person not in expectation of imminent death may donate non-vital organs as long as his/her quality and integrity of life is not diminished or endangered.

## ECUMENICAL WITNESS

### ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS ON VARIOUS LEVELS

- 1 Orthodox participation in gatherings of churches or faith leaders is acceptable with the blessing of the diocesan bishop.
- 2 Participation and cooperation in work for the good of society in such areas as educational opportunities, morality, responsible citizenship, Christian charity, social services, and other areas of concern to the community are acceptable.
- 3 Orthodox services may be celebrated at which non-Orthodox are present—that is, Vespers, Service of Intercession (*moleben*), etc., but the readings, hymns, and responses must be led by Orthodox Christians. Non-Orthodox choral groups may not be invited to give the responses or sing the hymns of the services.
- 4 In such a service, a place of honor near the front of the nave may be given to attending dignitaries from established churches with apostolic foundation (e.g., Roman Catholic, Armenian, etc.) apart from any Orthodox bishops presiding at the Orthodox service.

- 
- 5 A prayer from the *Great Book of Needs* may be appropriately tailored for civic occasions at which an Orthodox priest is invited to pray from his own tradition.

## LAY PARTICIPATION IN ECUMENICAL WITNESSING

- 1 A layperson with the blessing of his or her parish priest may be involved in interfaith and charitable efforts. He or she must be well-grounded in the Orthodox faith and ecclesiology in order to witness to the Orthodox faith in this context. The parish priest must inform the faithful in these matters. Ongoing diocesan and parochial educational programs should be tailored to these needs.
- 2 Any clergyman or layperson representing the Church in an official capacity must have the blessing of his/her diocesan bishop.
- 3 Although non-Orthodox clergy may not deliver a sermon in an Orthodox church, they may be invited to give lectures or presentations in the educational facilities of the church if the diocesan bishop has already given the blessing for such an invitation to be made.
- 4 With the advance knowledge and specific blessing of his diocesan bishop, an Orthodox clergyman may deliver a sermon in a non-Orthodox church which will in no way compromise the tenets of the faith and Orthodox Tradition.
- 5 Non-Orthodox clergy present for a liturgical service in an Orthodox church may be afforded a place of honor in the body of the temple, but not in the altar.
- 6 If a parish sponsors an open house for the local non-Orthodox community, a non-Eucharistic service, such as Vespers, Matins, or a Service of Intercession (*molieben*) may be served. Appropriate explanations prior to the service for the benefit of the non-Orthodox guests should be part of the preparations.
- 7 If non-Orthodox groups have been invited or make themselves present for a scheduled service, sufficient time should be devoted to explanation and orientation prior to the worship service. The distinction between communing members of the Church and those who are present as guests should be made, along with

---

an invitation to those present to enter into the spirit of the service.

- 8 If non-Orthodox are present for the Divine Liturgy, it is prudent to announce that only Orthodox Christians, members of a parish, who by confession and fasting are prepared for receiving the sacrament are permitted to partake of the Eucharist.
  - a Even after offering this specific information, it should not be presumed that the guests will necessarily understand it. Therefore, it is prudent for the priest to ask one or more questions of a person he does not know to ascertain his/her standing.
  - b The priest is reminded that he is the guardian of the Eucharist and under no conditions may give the Eucharist to a non-Orthodox Christian. Deacons who have been given the blessing to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful must defer to the priest in uncertain situations.
- 9 Non-Orthodox clergy present in the church on the occasion of a wedding, funeral, baptism, or another similar event may not participate in any part of the service.
  - a However, in the case of a wedding, non-Orthodox clergy may offer a prayer or blessing at the reception or at another appropriate time outside the church.

## ECUMENICAL RELIGIOUS SERVICES

- 10 Ecumenical services are frequently very different from Orthodox services. Before asking the diocesan bishop to give his blessing, the Orthodox participants should review the text of the service so they can determine whether or not an Orthodox presence might be misconstrued. Mere presence, without active participation in such a service, may be viewed as an affirmation of all that is stated, implied, and proclaimed.
- 11 If the content of the service compromises or offends the Orthodox faith or ecclesiology, then there can be no Orthodox participation. For the purpose of witness, it is necessary to convey precisely and succinctly why Orthodox participation is not possible.
- 12 In the Orthodox tradition, liturgical vestments are worn only

---

when a liturgical function is being performed. Therefore, liturgical vestments are never to be worn even when some participation in an ecumenical service is permissible.

- 13 An Orthodox clergyman attending an ecumenical service should wear his cassock, riasa, and cross (as awarded).
- 14 Orthodox clergy, in the context of ecumenical services, may preach, offer a prayer in the Orthodox Tradition, and read from Holy Scripture.
- 15 An ecumenical (interfaith) service may not be conducted in an Orthodox temple.
- 16 The diocesan bishop may give the blessing for an Orthodox divine service to be held for the benefit of true ecumenical witness and at which there is to be a major attendance by non-Orthodox clergy and laity.

## MATTERS OF APPEAL

- 1 Appeals by priest and parish are regulated by Diocesan Bylaws and *The Statute of the Orthodox Church in America* (e.g., Section 15).

## ATTACHED CLERGY

- 1 These guidelines apply to attached as well as to assigned clergy. The attached priest or deacon is one who generally does not have specific responsibilities in a parish apart from the celebration of Divine Services, and who usually does not receive remuneration from the parish.
- 2 Attached clergy include supply clergy to the deanery or diocese, retired clergy and those on leaves of absence. Attached clergy do not include those who have been permanently released from

---

all sacred functions (deposed) or those under canonical suspension.

- 3 A clergyman who has been given a leave of absence may only serve at the altar to which he has been attached, unless the bishop blesses him also to serve elsewhere.
- 4 An attached clergyman serves and concelebrates as directed by the priest-in-charge (see *Statute*).

## METRICAL RECORDS

### and other ECCLESIASTICAL REPORTS

- 1 It is the parish priest's responsibility to complete in a timely fashion the parish metrical records and all other ecclesiastical forms or reports that are required by the Central Church Administration and the diocesan chancery.
- 2 All metrical records are the property of the parish and are not to be taken by the priest in the event he leaves the parish. When a priest transfers from the parish, he turns the church seal and records over to the district dean who entrusts them to the newly assigned parish priest.



---

# APPENDIX A

## ENCYCLICALS OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF BISHOPS AND OTHER POLICY DOCUMENTS

In addition to these Guidelines, the following documents are considered binding guidance on the life of the Orthodox Church in America. In addition, [www.oca.org/about/documents](http://www.oca.org/about/documents) should be consulted regularly for working policies and additional statements that may be promulgated.

### THE STATUTE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

The Orthodox Church in America is governed by Holy Tradition, that is, the whole body of teaching and practice of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. That Tradition is expressed first of all in Holy Scripture; in the dogmatic decisions and canons of the seven Ecumenical Councils, the canons of the local councils, the canons and writings of the Holy Fathers; in the liturgical life of the Church; and in this *Statute of The Orthodox Church in America*. The purpose of the *Statute* is to apply Holy Tradition to the organization and daily life of The Orthodox Church in America.

### ON MARRIAGE

An increasingly secularized world tends more and more to neglect the traditional biblical understanding of marriage and family. Misunderstanding freedom and proclaiming the progress of a humanity supposedly too mature, sophisticated and scientific to follow Christ's Gospel, many have abandoned its moral demands.

### ON SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH

We members of the Orthodox Church in America are called to reflect upon our place in American society and our mission as Orthodox Christians. We are called at the same time to rededicate ourselves to the service of God and our fellow men in this place where God has put us, striving to be faithful to our divine calling.

---

### ON AUTOCEPHALY

Forty years ago, the Orthodox Church in America received its autocephaly from the Russian Orthodox Church and soon after glorified the first North American saint, our Venerable Father Herman of Alaska... By the grace of God, this great gift was the result of a long process of reconciliation between the Metropolia and the Moscow Patriarchate, whose relations had tragically gone astray, a gift which still stands at the heart of our ecclesial life and serves as the basis for understanding ourselves.

### ON PREACHING

There are those who have the gift to preach spontaneously. Others find it necessary to prepare their homily even to the point of writing it out. When such is the need, the preacher must set aside a scheduled and sufficient amount of time in which to prepare his sermon. Carefully chosen words are an offering to God and food for the faithful.

### ON CHRISTIAN UNITY AND ECUMENISM

Today we perceive a grave crisis in the ecumenical movement. In the first place, there have appeared in the movement theories and understandings of its nature, which are radically different from those upon which it was founded. In the second place, there have arisen among the Orthodox positions and even practices, which are clearly contradictory to the consensus that formerly guided us in ecumenical activity.

### ON CONFESSION AND COMMUNION

The questions and the controversies about more frequent communion, about the link between the Sacrament of Communion and that of Penance, about the essence and form of confession, are, in our Church today, a sign not of weakness or decay, but of life and awakening. That there is among the Orthodox people, among the members of our Church, a growing interest in that which is essential, that there appears a thirst for that which is spiritually genuine, can no longer be denied and for this alone we ought to render thanks to God. It would be extremely wrong therefore to try to solve these questions and controversies by merely “administrative” measures, with decrees and interdicts. For what we face is, indeed, a crucial spiritual question which is related literally to all aspects of our Church life.

---

# APPENDIX B

## A SELECTION OF CLERGY DISCIPLINES ACCORDING TO THE CANONS OF THE CHURCH

- 1 The clergy are strictly to observe the teachings of The Church, regarding Christ, the Sacred Scriptures and Holy Traditions (*Ephesus*, c. 6, 7; *Trullo*, c. 1; *Carthage*, c. 2).
- 2 The clergy are under the complete authority of the diocesan bishop, without whose blessing they cannot function and to whom they must show proper respect (*Laodicea*, c. 57; *Holy Apostles*, c.31, 39, 55; *Carthage*, c. 10).
- 3 The clergy are to show respect and concern for other members of the clergy (*Holy Apostles*, c. 56, 59).
- 4 The duty of the priest is to instruct the faithful in the way of godliness (*Holy Apostles*, c. 58).
- 5 Clergy are to be examples to the flock through prayer and fasting as prescribed by the Church (*Carthage*, c. 41; *Holy Apostles*, c. 69).
- 6 Clergy should not abstain from the Eucharist (*Trullo*, c. 80; *Holy Apostles*, c. 8).
- 7 Clergy should always be diligent and sensitive in encouraging pious repentance and receptive to a sincere confession (*Holy Apostles*, c. 52; *Trullo*, c. 102).
- 8 Clergy must not run for political office (*Carthage*, c. 16; *Holy Apostles*, c. 81, 83; *Chalcedon*, c. 7).
- 9 Clergy may not accept secular appointments or engage in business without the permission of the diocesan bishop (*Holy Apostles*, c. 39; *Chalcedon*, c. 3).
- 10 Clergy have the right to a hearing before a Church Court (*Chalcedon*, c. 9; *The Statute of the Orthodox Church in America*, Article 15).





# *Guidlines for Clergy*

has been typeset in Arno Pro and Cronos Pro

by SAINT TIKHON'S MONASTERY PRESS

**Glory to God for  
All Things!**



**ORTHODOX  
CHURCH in  
AMERICA**