

CONCERNING RETIRED CLERGY



Archpastoral Guidelines

Approved with the blessing of
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Archbishop of New York
in consultation with
the Council of Presbyters of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

Issued May 16, 2019

CONCERNING RETIRED CLERGY:
ARCHPASTORAL GUIDELINES FOR RETIRED CLERGY
IN THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

Introduction

All priests and deacons who have served the Holy Orthodox Church and have retired from active ministry are to be thanked with all due honor and gratitude, while being mindful of their role within the Church.

Whether leaving parochial ministry, chaplaincy, or some other form of clerical ministry, the years of retirement ought to be spent in living out one's ordination, though in new ways apart from parish administration and leadership.

In several respects, retired clergy are to be treated, in terms of parish governance, as attached clergy. The Statute of the Orthodox Church in America states that "[a]ttached clergy are priests or deacons who are canonically attached to a parish by the Bishop without necessary compensation from the parish and without involvement in parish governance." (XII.4.c)

Deposed Clergy

No former clergyman who has been deposed from the ranks of the clergy through the proper canonical process shall be considered as a retired clergyman. In the Clergy Guidelines of the Orthodox Church in America, in the section entitled "Attached Clergy," point 2 says that "[a]ttached clergy do not include those who have been permanently released from all sacred functions (deposed) or those under canonical suspension."

Attached to a Suitable Altar

It is within the competency of the Diocesan Bishop to "Appoint, transfer, remove, and grant retirement to parish clergy of his Diocese." (Statute, VIII.8.2.n) Upon retirement, a retired clergyman will be attached by the Diocesan Bishop to a suitable altar. Normally this will not be the altar to which he has most recently been assigned, in order to ensure that good order is maintained and in order to allow the subsequent Parish Priest to fulfill his responsibilities, as outlined in the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America and the By-Laws of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. Every effort will be made to ensure that the placement of the retired clergyman is beneficial for the Diocese, for him, and for his family.

Upon the attachment of a retired priest to a new altar, the parish priest may decide, in consultation with the Diocesan Bishop, what ministry, if any, a retired cleric should have in the parish. The retired cleric must respect this determination.

Pastor Emeritus

The title and dignity of Pastor Emeritus is conferred solely at the Diocesan Bishop's discretion. The provisions of the award are the Diocesan Bishop's prerogative to determine. The title of Pastor Emeritus is an award for distinguished service to a parish for a substantial amount of time in service and provides no subsequent pastoral rights or authority upon the clergyman's retirement.

Non-Interference

Retired priests shall not interfere with the competencies of the Parish Priest. The competencies of the Parish Priest are outlined in Statute XII.3.

Without reservation, the Diocesan By-Laws stipulate that "The Parish Priest is the spiritual father and teacher of his flock and the celebrant of the liturgical worship as established by the Church." (VI.4) These rights, authorities and competencies shall not be infringed upon by a retired clergyman.

In instances where the parishioners from his former assignment contact him with complaints, concerns, or issues affecting the parish, the retired clergyman will direct them back to the current Parish Priest, taking every precaution and care not to be involved in matters of the parish. A retired clergyman may not discuss matters pertaining to the life of the parish with fellow parishioners. A retired clergyman may not engage in any pastoral activity (including in matters of governance, mediation, visitations, confessions, liturgical serving, catechizing, etc.) without the prior blessing of the Parish Priest.

Attendance at any administrative meetings of the parish may be allowed only with the prior permission of the Parish Priest and the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop. A retired clergyman may be appointed by the Parish Priest to committees or ministries within the parish.

Participation in the Life of the Church

Retired priests and deacons maintain some privileges within the life of the Church, though different from their active ministry. While they are no longer pastoring on a daily basis, their accumulated experience is welcomed by the Church.

- **All-American Council**

Retired clergymen have a place of honor in the Church. As a result of their years of experience, their wisdom is valued by those who remain in active pastoral roles; therefore, retired clergymen have the privilege of voice, but not the privilege to vote, at the All-American Council. The OCA Statute states that "An attached or retired priest or deacon, if accredited by his bishop, may be seated with delegates to the All-American Council, with voice but without the right to vote." (III.2)

- **Diocesan Assembly**

Diocesan Assemblies and Special Diocesan Assemblies are deliberative and legislative bodies within the life of the Orthodox Church. As with the other principles in this document, the retired clergyman has the right to voice, as a welcome addition of experience, but does not have the right to vote at these assemblies.

A retired clergyman may not represent a parish as a delegate to the Diocesan Assembly. According to the Diocesan By-Laws, III.5.h, attendees at the Diocesan Assembly may include “[r]etired bishops and priests residing in the Diocese with the right to attend and the right of consultative voice, but without the right to vote.”

- **Diocesan Council**

Retired clergymen are excluded from membership or holding elected office on the Diocesan Council. Statute X.2.e, the section entitled “Representation on the Diocesan Council”, states that “[a]dditional members as determined by the Diocesan By-Laws” may be assigned to the Diocesan Council. Retired clergymen are not listed as a group from which additional members may be chosen.

- **Parish Council**

Retired clergymen are excluded from membership or holding elected office on any Parish Council, as they do not satisfy the requirements laid out in the Statute of the OCA. They are not parishioners, as determined by the definitions of the Statute, but attached clergy. To be elected to the Parish Council, a layman or active clergyman must have “been a parishioner for a period of time as fixed by the Diocesan Authority.” (Statute, XII.5.d.iv) It follows, then, that “Voting Membership shall be denied if these criteria are not met.” (XII.5.d)

Additionally, section XII.5.e states that “[a] Voting Member may be considered for election to office in appropriate parish bodies. A Voting Member is eligible for election as a delegate to the Diocesan Assembly and the All-American Council.” Retired clergymen do not fit the requirements to be counted as Voting Members. Therefore, they are not eligible for these prerogatives. As has been outlined above in relation to the All-American Council and Diocesan Assembly, retired clergymen are likewise precluded from these rights as voting members of any parish.

Further, an attached retired clergyman cannot act as the chair of a meeting of the Parish Council. “No regular or special meeting of the Parish Council shall be held without the knowledge and blessing of the Parish Priest.

If the Parish Priest is unable to preside over a meeting of the Parish Council, the senior elected officer of the Parish Council shall preside with the blessing of the Parish Priest or the Bishop.” (XII.8.e)

Role of the Parish Priest to be Honored

The duly assigned priest is the father of a parish, at the pleasure of the Diocesan Bishop. “The Parish Priest, also referred to as rector or priest-in-charge, by virtue of his ordination and canonical appointment, serves as the spiritual father and teacher of that portion of the flock of Christ entrusted to him, the first among the parish clergy, and presides over liturgical worship in accordance with the tradition and the norms of the Church.” (Statute, XII.3.a) Therefore, retired clergymen have the right to receive the Sacraments and, with the invitation of the Parish Priest, to serve at the Divine Services; however, no retired clergyman may interfere with the office and responsibilities of the Parish Priest.

Relationship to Former Parishes

The retired clergyman may visit his former parish(es) only with the prior blessing and permission of the Diocesan Bishop and Parish Priest. Under no circumstances should this be construed as a pastoral visit, nor should he represent himself as the pastor, spiritual father or rector of the parish. It is appropriate for the good order of the Church that, once a priest or deacon has retired from active pastoral service, he remain at a distance from his former parish, so that the subsequent Parish Priest can discharge his duties to the best of his abilities, and without hindrance.

Resolution of Discrepancies

If a retired cleric finds himself at odds with the vision of his Parish Priest, the Diocesan Bishop (with the assistance of the area Dean) should try to find a nearby parish where the retired cleric can minister harmoniously with another Parish Priest. If no such parish can be found, then the retired cleric may be told that his ministry can only be on an occasional basis. If the retired cleric continues to hamper the work of the local parish, the Diocesan Bishop may consider more severe canonical action.

Use as Supply Clergy

From time to time, retired clergy are used as supply priests or deacons. A retired priest may be utilized for longer or shorter periods as an interim pastor, as circumstances arise. Upon completion of such duties, no lingering authority remains with the retired clergyman.

GLORY TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!