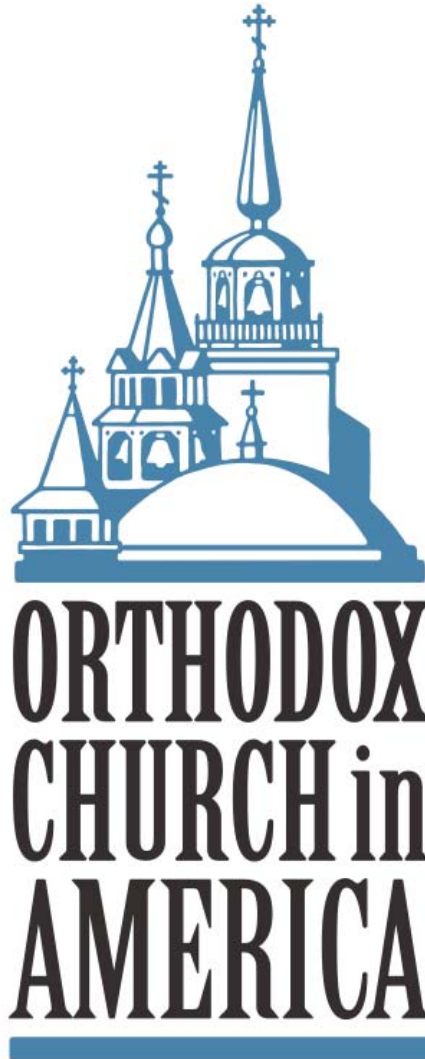


GUIDELINES FOR THE ORDINATION, APPOINTMENT AND TRANSFER OF CLERGY



**Approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops
at the Fall, 2013 Meeting**

GUIDELINES FOR THE ORDINATION, APPOINTMENT AND TRANSFER OF CLERGY

Approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops at the Fall, 2013 Meeting

I. Petitioning for Ordination

Enrollment in and/or graduation from an Orthodox theological seminary, or any other training program aimed at preparing candidates for ordination in the Orthodox Church, is not to be understood as a guarantee of future ordination. The discretion to ordain lies solely within the competence of the hierarchs of the Church.

A. Students at St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's

1. 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.
2. A student who is enrolled at Saint Tikhon's or Saint Vladimir's Seminary and who is a member of the Orthodox Church in America, is, for the duration of his period of study at seminary, under the omophor of the Metropolitan.
3. All petitions concerning ordination made by a seminarian, having first been approved by the appropriate authorities at his seminary, are to be addressed to the Metropolitan. If a seminarian has petitioned for ordination and the petition has been approved, the Metropolitan may request that another bishop perform the ordination on his behalf.
4. If a seminarian desires to be ordained by his diocesan bishop or another bishop, the petition for ordination must still be made to the Metropolitan. The Metropolitan will then request in writing the diocesan (or other bishop) to perform the ordination.
5. The following procedure will be used by a currently enrolled seminarian who is petitioning for ordination in the Orthodox Church in America upon completion of at least his third semester of academic studies:
 - Following an interview (his spouse, if applicable) with his confessor, receive his blessing to petition for ordination.
 - Following an interview (with spouse, if applicable) with his diocesan bishop, receive his blessing to petition for ordination.

- Present his petition to the appropriate authorities at his seminary for approval;
- Undergo a standard battery of psychological testing under the supervision of his seminary and paid for by the Orthodox Church in America if they are Seminary students and will serve in the Orthodox Church in America. (see Appendix A for prescribed tests);
- Undergo a standard criminal background check through the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America;
- If approved, the student must present his portfolio to the Metropolitan; to include:
 - A petition to the Metropolitan for ordination
 - A written recommendation from his diocesan bishop
 - A written recommendation from his confessor
 - A written recommendation from the seminary dean
 - A copy of all applicable forms and signed releases
- The candidate will ensure that confidential results of psychological testing and background checks have been submitted to the Metropolitan.
- After careful review of the candidate's portfolio and testing/background check results, the Metropolitan shall meet with the student (and wife if applicable). After the interview, the Metropolitan will respond, in writing, to the petition for ordination to the candidate in a timely manner and forward copies of his response to the candidate's diocesan bishop, confessor, and seminary dean. A copy shall also be placed in the candidate's file at the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America.
- In extraordinary circumstances, the Metropolitan may refer a case to the Board of Theological Education or Canonical Commission of the Holy Synod for counsel.

B. Orthodox Seminary Graduates

1. In accordance with the *Statute of the Orthodox Church in America*, (Article VI, section 4 (d)), those seminarians who have completed their studies and returned to their home dioceses are to address any petitions for ordination to the diocesan bishop. In the context of the Statute, the phrase “seminary graduates” is understood to mean graduates of programs of priestly formation rather than any other programs which a person may have completed at an Orthodox seminary.
2. In considering a candidate for ordination, the ordaining bishop should obtain and review all personal and academic reports from the seminary(s) the candidate attended, as well as documents regarding the candidate that are available at the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America. The ordaining bishop should bear in mind that by law

academic records from a student's file can only be released at the written request of the student.

3. All candidates for ordination shall undergo a standard battery of psychological testing at the expense of the diocese (see Appendix A for prescribed tests).
4. All candidates for ordination shall undergo a standard criminal background check through the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America.

C. Candidates Otherwise Qualified

1. In general, persons petitioning for ordination are either to be Orthodox seminary graduates or, if otherwise qualified, receive the approval of the Holy Synod before being ordained (*The Statute, Article VI, section 4 (d)*).
2. This procedure applies to all candidates who are not regular graduates of an Orthodox seminary (see section II.B. above). This category includes graduates of the Diaconal Vocations Program.
3. The potential candidate petitions his diocesan hierarch.
4. All candidates for ordination shall undergo a standard battery of psychological testing at the expense of the diocese (see Appendix A for prescribed tests).
5. All candidates for ordination shall undergo a standard criminal background check through the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America.
6. If the diocesan bishop wishes to ordain the candidate, the bishop refers the candidate's file to the Board of Theological Education. Typically, the Director of Diaconal Vocations Program collates such requests for the Board's consideration.
7. The Board reviews cases prior to the regular meetings of the Holy Synod of Bishops.
8. Cases are reported to the Holy Synod by the Board of Theological Education for consideration.
9. Upon receiving the blessing of the Holy Synod of Bishops, the diocesan bishop may schedule the ordination at his discretion.
10. In extraordinary cases, the Board of Theological Education may consider a case between sessions of the Holy Synod and submit its recommendation to the Lesser Synod for decision.

D. Canada and Mexico

1. Whenever possible, the regular provisions described above shall be followed in the Archdiocese of Canada and the Diocese of Mexico.
2. Local legislation may require limited adjustment to the stated procedures.

3. Notwithstanding, the role of the Holy Synod (*The Statute, Article VI, section 4 (d)*) and its Board of Theological Education apply to all dioceses.

II. Previously Ordained Clergyman Now Studying at a Seminary

1. A priest or deacon of the Orthodox Church in America who seeks to enter either Saint Tikhon's or Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary on a full-time basis normally requests from his diocesan bishop permission to do so. If, upon being granted permission to do so, that priest or deacon enrolls in seminary, he is still accountable to his diocesan bishop and is supervised by the seminary authorities under the archpastoral supervision of the Metropolitan for the duration of his seminary program. Upon completion of his program, he returns to his diocese and to the jurisdiction of its bishop.
2. In a few exceptional cases (e.g., when a diocesan priest or deacon seeks to enter Saint Tikhon's or Saint Vladimir's Seminary on a full-time basis not just for a brief period of remedial training or for advanced theological studies, but rather for the full basic program of priestly formation) the well-being of the Church may be better served if the priest or deacon receives a formal canonical release from his diocesan bishop and transfers to the omophorion of the Metropolitan. The theological schools shall bring such exceptional cases to the attention of the Metropolitan for his judgment before the cleric is accepted.

III. Intra-diocesan Transfers

All transfers of clergy within the diocese are made by the diocesan bishop. The transfer is reported to the Metropolitan by filing a copy of the decree of appointment and transfer with the Chancery of the Church.

IV. Inter-diocesan Transfers

Transfer from diocese to diocese within the Orthodox Church in America requires:

- a. Request of the clergyman;
- b. Canonical release by the diocesan bishop from whose diocese the priest is being transferred;
- c. Acceptance and appointment by the bishop to whose diocese the priest is being transferred.
- d. All files and documentation will be forwarded to the receiving bishop prior to acceptance. If there was any investigation of misconduct, the receiving bishop will be informed of the investigation and the results. The bishops shall contact the Metropolitan's office, inform the office of the transfer and receive any information on the priest.

The transfer is reported to the Metropolitan by filing a copy of the decree of appointment and transfer with the Chancery of the Church.

V. Reception of Clergy from Other Orthodox Churches

1. The Metropolitan receives all petitions for admission of clergy from other Orthodox Churches (*The Statute, Article IV, section 2(i)*).
2. As a canonical principle, no clergyman from any Orthodox Church or jurisdiction may initiate a transfer to another Church or jurisdiction without the knowledge and blessing of his bishop and/or the appropriate diocesan authorities. Whatever the clergyman's reasons for seeking a transfer, he should communicate with his own bishop and receive from him a blessing to seek an assignment elsewhere. The normal practice within the OCA is for such a blessing to be issued in writing by the bishop.
3. The Metropolitan inquires of the diocesan bishops whether they have need of such clerics.
4. A candidate petitioning to be received into the Orthodox Church in America must present a portfolio that includes:
 - a. Letter from the bishop releasing the clergyman;
 - b. Letter from bishop willing to receive the clergyman stating he has need of such cleric;
 - c. All available background material on the clergyman including seminary records, clergy file from the Orthodox Church releasing him, baptism/chrisamation and ordination certificates (marriage certificate if appropriate), especially any information concerning misconduct in the previous jurisdiction;
5. The clergyman will have a psychological test and criminal background check similar to the one required for ordination into the Orthodox Church in America that will be paid for by himself and/or the diocese that will receive him;
6. The Metropolitan will review the portfolio and interview the clergyman (and wife if applicable) and issue a letter of acceptance. If the clergyman is not accepted, a letter will be composed as well.
7. Having been duly received, clergy from other Orthodox Churches are then referred by the Metropolitan to diocesan bishops for assignment.

VI. Release of Clergy to Other Orthodox Churches

1. The release of clergy to other Orthodox Churches is the prerogative of the Metropolitan.
2. Clergy petitioning to be released to other Orthodox Churches shall be referred to the Metropolitan by their diocesan bishop. Any such reference shall be accompanied by a letter from the diocesan bishop with his recommendation for appropriate action on the petition.
3. The exact mechanism of release may vary from case to case due to the vagaries of the administration of Orthodoxy on the North American continent and elsewhere. In some cases, it may be deemed appropriate to release the clergy file from the Chancery to the other Orthodox Church receiving the clergyman.
4. Nevertheless, the Metropolitan must receive a letter informing him of the willingness of the receiving bishop to accept the cleric in question upon canonical release.
5. The Metropolitan's office will release to the appropriate authorities information on any misconduct allegations.

VII. General Guidelines Concerning Appointments and Transfers

- A. In all transfers and appointments the following factors must be taken into consideration:
 1. the needs of the parish (size, language, average age, etc.);
 2. the qualifications and needs of the priest or deacon (family, education, financial requirements, seniority, etc.).
- B. All newly-ordained priests are appointed "acting rectors" for six months; thereupon the diocesan authority may confirm the priest as rector of the parish.
- C. All material problems involving the parish's responsibility (remuneration, housing, benefits, moving expenses, etc.) are to be resolved with the Parish Council by the bishop directly or through the dean prior to the assignment or transfer of the priest or deacon. Minutes of the meeting at which this problem was resolved shall be submitted to the Diocesan Bishop.
- D. All rectors are to be officially installed by either the bishop or the dean.

- E. Barring exceptional circumstances, no priest or deacon may apply for a transfer until he has spent three years in his assignment.

VIII. Procedures Concerning Transfers

- A. A priest or deacon seeking transfer to another parish must first consult with his diocesan bishop and then may possibly file a petition with his diocesan bishop asking to be transferred to another assignment;
- B. If the diocesan bishop can satisfy the needs of the priest or deacon within the diocese, the procedure described in Paragraph III applies. A copy of the approved petition is to be filed with the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America by the diocesan bishop.
- C. If a priest or deacon cannot be transferred within his present diocese his petition is referred to the members of the Holy Synod through the Metropolitan.

IX. Leaves of Absence

- 1. Leaves of Absence may be granted by the diocesan bishop.
- 2. Leaves of Absence are granted for a specific purpose and for a specific period of time. Indefinite Leaves of Absence are generally not permitted. In situations where the reason for the leave does not involve a specific period of time the norm is to grant leaves with durations of six months and to renew those leaves as proves necessary, and, unless conditions particularly warrant otherwise, not more than once.

X. Unassigned Clergy

- 1. Clergy who are not on Leave of Absence yet have no pastoral assignment are listed as Unassigned Clergy.
- 2. The rights, privileges and obligations of "Unassigned Clergy" will defined in each case by the given priest's diocesan bishop.

Appendix A: Recommended Psychological Tests. These tests are subject to change upon the recommendation of the Holy Synod of Bishops, the Board of Theological Education and other qualified consultants.

- I. The psychological testing of candidates petitioning for ordination or reception into the Orthodox Church in America is now standard practice.
- II. The testing must be of equal or greater nature for all and at equivalent and qualified institutions. The tests cannot be done by someone not licensed and qualified to administer the tests.
- III. The Orthodox Church in America will pay for all standard testing for Seminary candidates who will be entering into service in the Orthodox Church in America. Those clergymen petitioning to enter into the Orthodox Church in America will either pay for the testing themselves or with some agreement with the Diocesan authorities with whom they will be serving.
- IV. All candidates for ordination or reception will have a standardized criminal background check which is paid for by the Orthodox Church in America.
- V. The information contained in both the psychological test and the criminal background tests are strictly confidential and can only be reviewed by competent and assigned authorities. The contents may not be shared with anyone outside of these authorities.
- VI. The tests and checks will not be conducted without the written permission of the applicant.
- VII. Currently, these tests are the standardized norms to be used:
 - A. Psychological Testing:
 1. Personality Inventory which can include 16 Personality Factor (PF), 16 Personality Test, Personal Data Inventory, MMPI-2 and MCMI-III
 2. Leadership Style which can include FIRO-B and MBT1
 3. Vocational Interest Scale which can include R-COPE (Religious Coping Index)
 4. Personal Interview with will include an in-depth clinical interview combined with other tests.
 5. The tests results will include a comprehensive written report which will include raw data and interpretive comments.
 - B. Background Check
 1. Criminal History
 2. Employment Verification
 3. Driver's License and SSN Verification
 4. I-9 Verification
 5. Sexual Offender Registry Search
 6. Consumer Credit History