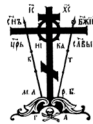


Российская Православная Автономная Церковь
Епархиальное Управление Американской Епархии



Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church
Diocesan Administration of the American Diocese

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May 1/14, 2007

PROTOCOL

To: To the Rectors of our ROAC parishes in the US

Re: Standards

In order for there to be no misunderstanding about what is considered to be the proper way for our clergy and laity to prepare for the Divine Services and the reception of the Holy Sacraments, and indeed to live a life of piety pleasing to our Lord, I have decided to write the following memorandum.

In the list of things that a candidate for ordination to the priesthood in the Russian Orthodox Church agrees to, there are the following:

1. Besides the normal daily rule of morning and evening prayers, one preparing for the Divine Liturgy must read three canons (one to the Savior, one to the Mother of God, and one to one's Guardian Angel), and one Akathist (to the Savior or to the Mother of God). At one time, this was the normal daily rule of prayer for everyone. Illiterate persons were permitted to replace these prayers with so many Jesus Prayers and prostrations. As the level of piety in society fell, however, it was decided that this rule should be kept at least by those of the clergy and faithful who were preparing to receive Holy Communion. In addition, the Canon of Preparation for Holy Communion and the Prayers Before Holy Communion that accompany it must also be read. This rule is kept so strictly that if one fails to prepare properly, it is expected that he will not dare to serve the Divine Liturgy at all, which is, of course, a great sin as well. In monasteries, and in some parishes, the Rule of Preparation is often read in church during the afternoon, before the All-night Vigil, so that those who lack the discipline to read it

- on their own can hear it together. A complete Sunday or feast day celebration includes the All-night Vigil, or Vespers, Matins and First Hour, served on the preceding evening, and the Third and Sixth Hours before the Divine Liturgy. At one time, these services were actually begun from sunset and continued literally all night, culminating with the Divine Liturgy in the morning. It is still done this way in some places, but is becoming more and more rare.
2. All fast days of the Church must be observed. This includes most Wednesdays and Fridays, the Nativity, Apostles', and Dormition Fasts, and Great Lent. This means that no meat, dairy, or eggs, and sometimes fish, may be eaten on these days.
 3. Clergy are expected to confess their sins to their bishop, dean, or spiritual father, no less than once a year, or as the need arises. The bishop should be aware of who your spiritual Father is. Lay people are expected to confess their sins each time that they wish to receive the Holy Mysteries. For those who confess regularly (once a week), I think that it is acceptable to permit them to receive Holy Communion without repeating their confessions during weeks when we have more than one Liturgy (for example during Holy Week). St. John Chrysostom wrote, "If a man is living a pious Christian life, then let him commune freely; if not, then even once a year is too often."
 4. Clergy must serve every Sunday and on the twelve great feasts. Vacations are not congruent with the life of a clergyman. If some special need arises (like a family crisis, for example), he must get permission from his bishop before being absent from his parish and canceling services.
 5. Candidates to ordination forswear smoking and drinking to excess. They also vow to wear their cassocks at all times when they might be seen by the faithful. If they go out on the street, they should also wear a ryasa (exorason) and appropriate head cover (according to rank). Priests are to wear the cross that is appropriate for their ranks. Belts should be worn over the cassock. The belt, contrary to popular belief, is not only for monastics, but should be worn by all Christians. Belt buckles with the schema on them should be worn by monastics only, however. The belt is symbolic of "girding the loins" in preparation for warfare against the carnal passions, and as a reminder that we have sworn in Holy Baptism to be chaste in body and in soul. The belt is usually made of leather, i.e. the skin of a dead animal, as a reminder that we are also to be dead to the flesh. When God instituted the Mosaic priesthood, those dedicated to His service were commanded to abstain from cutting the hair of their heads, as an outward symbol to

men of their consecration. This custom is one of the ones that the holy Apostles continued from Old Testament times. Having a little beard is not “enough” to satisfy this requirement. If, because of secular employment, an adaptation to these rules has to be made, clergymen are expected to petition in writing for permission. Written permission is usually granted. However, it should not just be assumed that it is OK and that the formality can be dispensed with.

My dear Fathers, we are exhorted to walk in “holiness of life.” These are the precepts that we have received from our holy Fathers. These are the things from their lives that we know are pleasing to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Those who strive to keep them do well. May God help us all to do so! God bless you!

With much love and affection
in our risen Savior,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Andrew". The signature is written in dark ink and has a long, sweeping horizontal line at the end.

+Bishop Andrew,
Administrator