



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF DENVER

July 24, 2008

Protocol 08-15

The Esteemed Parish Councils
of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Denver

Beloved in the Lord,

I am pleased to communicate with you and to forward to you the enclosed information regarding clergy remuneration.

There are three things that require the attention of the Council and of the Priest:

- a. The Council must ensure that the Priest's salary for 2009 is in accord with the Archdiocese Clergy Remuneration scale (enclosed).
- b. The Council Treasurer must submit the *Parish Benefits Authorization Form* (either for checking or for credit card) for 2009 (sample enclosed). The form submitted previously for 2008 will not be valid for 2009.
- c. Each Priest must personally submit his *Personal Pension Plan Contribution Authorization Form* (either for checking or for credit card) for 2009 (sample enclosed). The form submitted previously for 2008 will not be valid for 2009.

Parish Commitment to the Archdiocese.

Before discussing specific matters concerning clergy compensation, let me first address the parish obligation to support the National Ministries of the Archdiocese. This obligation is met through two allocations:

a. Total Commitment:

(1) According to the current paradigm applicable to all parishes throughout the Archdiocese, the parish Total Commitment is a proportion of the Archdiocese budget, determined on the basis of parish operating expenses. My Protocol 08-16 describes this process in detail.

b. Archdiocese Benefits Contribution:

(1) The parish Benefits Contribution in 2009 is \$475 per month (\$5,700 per annum) which is used to fund expenses of the Archdiocese Benefits Program which includes the pension, disability, life insurance, and confidential assistance programs of Archdiocese employees, lay and clergy.

(2) In the first week of September each parish will be receiving a package from GDC Financial, our third-party administrator for parish obligation contributions, containing the forms necessary for updating the parish direct withdrawal contribution to the \$475 per priest level required in 2009. A blank sample is attached for reference, and for those parishes not already participating in the direct withdrawal process.

(3) This contribution is required of all parishes, even those without a full-time Priest

(4) The Archdiocese Benefits Contribution is not part of the Priest's remuneration package nor is it specifically part of his individual retirement.

Individual Priest Pension Contribution.

Each priest — *without exception* — must participate in the Clergy pension plan. This is required by the Uniform Parish regulations, and was agreed to in writing before a clergyman was ordained or incardinated into the Archdiocese.

- a. Each Priest is personally responsible for contributing 3-1/2% or 5% of his monthly earnings to fund his Pension Benefit.
- b. In the first week of September each priest will be receiving a package from GDC Financial in which he will find the forms necessary for updating his direct withdrawal contribution to the personal pension plan. This must be updated to reflect his 2009 salary increase.

Clergy Compensation.

In regard to clergy compensation, Chapter One, Article 17, Section 8 of the Uniform Parish Regulations dated 2005 states that: *“The Archdiocesan Council-and the Archdiocesan Benefits Committee will establish remunerative standards for the Clergy. These standards, for the following year, shall be sent to each Parish annually, by September 30.”* The Regulations also establish in the same Section that: *“Each Parish shall be obliged ... to compensate the Priest appropriately according to the established remunerative standards for the Clergy as found in the Clergy Compensation Plan.”* As noted, a copy of the 2009 Plan is enclosed.

It is further my responsibility as the hierarch to determine and approve all matters affecting the compensation of each clergyman in this Metropolis. Accordingly, the following basic principles apply throughout the Metropolis to every parish and each clergyman:

- a. **A clergyman is assigned or reassigned to a parish by the Metropolitan alone.**
- b. **Clergy compensation is governed by the annual Clergy Compensation Plan.** This plan is promulgated by the Archdiocese through the Office of the Chancellor and the Archdiocese Benefits Committee.
- c. **The clergy of this Metropolis are forbidden by me to discuss the terms of their compensation with any member or body of the parish.** This includes the parish council and its officers; this standard practice helps to preserve the good relationship between the Priest and the parish on a spiritual level. All discussions and negotiations regarding the compensation of a clergyman are, without exception, conducted solely between the parish and the hierarch who acts on behalf of the Priest.
- d. **The compensation of the Priest is not subject to discussion when considering the parish budget.** This is so whether it is being considered informally, such as at a parish council meeting, or at a General Assembly; the compensation of a clergyman is to be regarded as a “fixed” expense just as a mortgage payment or other financial obligation of the parish.

e. **The parish will pay, in a timely and regular manner the salary designated by me to their assigned clergy.** Normally the Priests are paid on time (i.e., not later than) the 15th day and the last day of each month.

f. **The parish also pays the Priest's Social Security/Medicare taxes (FICA/SECA).** These are 15.3% of the salary amount.

g. **The parish pays the Orthodox Health Plan premiums.** Without exception, all clergy of the Archdiocese must be on the Orthodox Health Plan; participation is not optional, notwithstanding the fact that certain small, struggling parishes may have previously been allowed to procure a local health benefits policy in lieu of the Archdiocese Plan. Failure heretofore to include all clergy in the Plan, and in particular the young and more healthy clergy, has dramatically and unnecessarily increased Orthodox Health Plan premiums.

h. **Each clergyman is to receive an annual increase in salary.** This is to be effective January 1, commensurate with their years of ordained service.

i. **No Priest is an employee of the parish.** The Priest is ordained by the Holy Spirit to the Priesthood, and is assigned by the Metropolis Hierarch to the parish.

j. **For IRS purposes the Priest is considered an employee of the Archdiocese.** The parish is only the payor of the compensation package assigned by the Metropolis hierarch.

k. **The Priest is neither an “hourly” nor a “salaried” worker.** The Priest is the “father” of the parish family. He is compensated for his love, service, and dedication to the parish, which obviously involves being available to the parishioners around the clock as necessary. Accordingly, he is not paid “after the fact” as though he had “earned” his wages, but *the parish pays the Priest in advance on a monthly basis.*

l. **The parish must provide the Priest with an IRS Form W2 no later than January 31 each year.** The W2 will indicate the total salary amount minus the designated housing allowance; an accompanying letter will indicate that portion of the salary designated for “housing.”

m. **Each Priest is entitled to take vacation time away from the parish.** This is always done with the written permission of his Metropolis Hierarch upon informing the parish council.

(1) A Priest does not receive “paid vacation days” above his normal remuneration; vacation days do not accrue from year to year, nor are they “carried over” to following years, nor is he paid for “vacation days” not taken.

(2) In regard to vacation, a Priest merely absents himself from his parish, always with the blessing of the Metropolis Hierarch, for the number of days indicated in the UPR.

n. **The parish is responsible for purchasing or leasing an automobile for use by the Priest.** The parish also covers all associated maintenance and routine expenses. On a case by case basis I have permitted, the parish to provide the Priest with an annual transportation allowance.

o. The parish pays the full expenses (travel, lodging, and fees) for the Priest to attend the following (*it is vitally necessary that every Priest and deacon attend these periodic events*):

- (1) Biennial Archdiocese Clergy-Laity Congresses.
- (2) Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assemblies.
- (3) National Presbyters Council Clergy Retreats.
- (4) Metropolis Clergy Retreats and continuing education programs.

p. All clergy, whether pastors or assistants, receive the full compensation amount. Assistant Priests no longer receive only 80% of the amount indicated on the compensation Plan.

q. In the case of a newly-assigned Priest, the parish covers the cost associated with his move to the parish, including travel and moving expenses.

r. Whenever a supply Priest serves a parish, either as a substitute for the Proistamenos or in the absence of an assigned Priest, the parish provides him with a minimum stipend of \$350 and also covers any necessary travel and lodging expenses.

I fully realize that all of our parishes struggle to meet their financial obligations; I also realize that all the faithful struggle to be good stewards of the many blessings each of us receives from God. We have been richly blessed in many ways: we live in the most affluent country in history, and many of us are among the most affluent in America. We must learn to be generous on an individual as well as parish basis, for indeed, *“he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”* (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6)

If we are to maintain a very dedicated clergy, we must accord them the same financial benefits as are given to professionals in our communities, especially to those who are willing to work unstintingly and sacrificially, to be available at all hours of the day and night to build up the Church of God which is our only Ark of Salvation and to spiritually sustain the faithful in all their joys and tragedies. When a parish has a full-time, dedicated Priest, nothing will stop it from developing and growing beyond its current expectations.

With Paternal Blessings,



✠ Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver

Enclosures:

- a. The Clergy Compensation Plan for 2009
- b. Sample Parish Benefits Authorization Form for 2009
- c. Clergyman's Personal Pension Plan Contribution Authorization Form for 2009