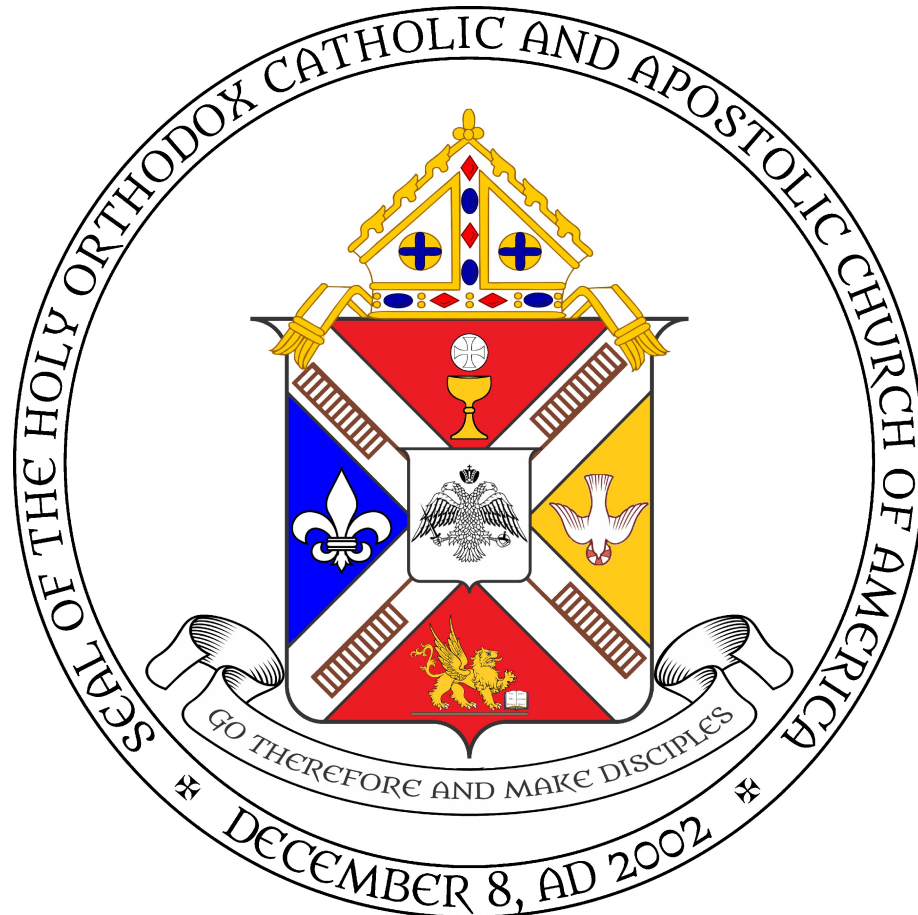
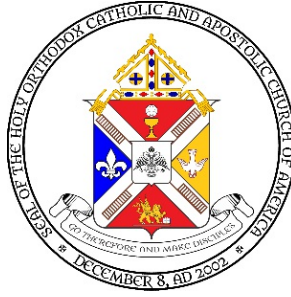


# THE CODE OF CANONS



OF  
THE HOLY ORTHODOX CATHOLIC  
AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH  
OF AMERICA  
2021





THE HOLY ORTHODOX CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH  
OF AMERICA

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THE MOST REVEREND ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY  
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK  
METROPOLITAN

THE VERY REVEREND ARCHIMANDRITE ANDREW  
CHANCELLOR

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**THE CODE OF CANONS  
OF THE  
HOLY ORTHODOX CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH  
OF AMERICA**

**PREAMBLE**



**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.**

Humbly invoking the Protection of Almighty God and affirming the Canons of the Holy Ecumenical and Provincial Councils, We, the Clergy and People of The Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of America in convention assembled, do Ordain and Establish this Code of Canons for the governing of Our Church.

**ARTICLE I  
THE HOLY ORTHODOX CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH  
OF AMERICA**

The Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of America is an autocephalous Church, in the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and set forth in the Nicene Creed, which faith the Church is called to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth as taught by Holy Traditions, the Holy Ecumenical and Provincial Councils, and the Holy Fathers. It administers in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Seven Sacraments of the Church: Anointing of the Sick, Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Eucharist, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Penance.

## **ARTICLE II**

### **THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

*Section 1.* The Synod of Bishops is the highest canonical authority in this Church.

*Section 2.* The Synod of Bishops shall consist of all the Diocesan Bishops and Retired Bishops of this Church. The Metropolitan is ex-officio Chairman of the Synod. In his absence, the Diocesan Bishops present shall elect a Chairman pro-tempore.

*Section 3.* The Synod of Bishops shall meet at least twice annually, in April and in October of each year.

*Section 4.* Special sessions may be called by the Metropolitan on his own initiative, or at the request of at least three other Diocesan Bishops.

*Section 5.* The quorum required for a regular or special session of the Synod of Bishops shall be two-thirds of the membership.

*Section 6.* The following matters are within the jurisdiction of the Synod of Bishops:

- a. All matters involving doctrine, canonical order, morals, and liturgical practice;
- b. All canonical matters pertaining to the election and consecration of Bishops as provided in Article V; Section 10.
- c. The establishment of new dioceses, the definition of diocesan boundaries, and the acceptance of dioceses into the jurisdiction of The Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of America;

- d. Transfer of bishops and their retirement in accordance with Article V, Section 7;
- e. The acceptance of bishops from other autocephalous churches;
- f. Bishops' leaves of absence;
- g. Bestowing honors on Bishops;
- h. Examination of the annual report of the Metropolitan and the Bishops on the fulfillment of their pastoral duties;
- i. Solution of problems arising in the administration of individual dioceses and requiring the judgment of the entire episcopate;
- j. Determination in all complaints involving Bishops;
- k. Acting as Supreme Church Court of Appeals for all matters involving Bishops, clergy, and laity in accordance with Article IX, Section 6;
- l. Establishment of general policies in relation to other religious bodies;
- m. Appointment of the Chancellor, Secretary, Treasurer, and other officials, upon recommendation of the Metropolitan, whose competence or service extend beyond the boundaries of a single diocese;
- n. Pastoral supervision over all Church organizations whose activity extends beyond the boundaries of a single diocese;
- o. Appointment of committees on matters belonging to the competence of the Synod of Bishops;
- p. General supervision over Armed Forces chaplaincies, with the Metropolitan being particularly and immediately responsible in this field;
- q. Decisions in cases involving clergy applying for admission into The Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of America;

- r. Supervision over seminaries;
- s. Establishment of standards required for ordination;
- t. Overseeing the missionary, educational, and social programs of the Church;
- u. Supervision of all ecclesiastical arts.

### **ARTICLE III THE GENERAL SYNOD**

*Section 1.* The highest legislative and administrative authority within the Church is the General Synod.

*Section 2.* The General Synod shall be composed of the following:

- a. The Metropolitan and all Bishops of the Church;
- b. The Priests of each parish and an equal number of lay delegates;
- c. Priests not having parishes if accredited by the General Synod;
- d. One delegate from each seminary.

*Section 3.* The General Synod shall be convened annually at the time and place set by the Synod of Bishops.

*Section 4.* At least four months prior to the next General Synod, the Synod of Bishops shall appoint a pre-conciliar commission which shall be entrusted with the following responsibilities:

- a. To publish and distribute the agenda, notices, and arrangements for the General Synod at least 30 days prior to the established date;



- b. To publish and distribute the proper credentials and certification forms at least 15 days prior to the meeting;
- c. To collect and certify the credentials of all delegates;
- d. To prepare the agenda and submit it to the Synod of Bishops for approval.

*Section 5.* The presiding officer of the General Synod shall be the Metropolitan or, in the case of his absence or vacancy in office, a Bishop appointed by the Synod of Bishops. Two vice chairman, one from the clergy and one from the laity shall be elected by the Synod.

*Section 6.* The General Synod shall elect a secretariat sufficient for its needs and which will perform its task under a chairman elected by the Synod.

*Section 7.* The minutes of the General Synod shall be prepared by the secretariat, signed by the chairman, and submitted to the presiding officer for approval. Within 30 days after the adjournment of the General Synod, the official text of the minutes shall be sent to each delegate.

*Section 8.* The General Synod shall be opened with the celebration of The Holy Eucharist and closed with a Prayer Service.

*Section 9.* All resolutions adopted by the General Synod shall be examined by the Bishops at the end of the session. No resolution shall be valid unless approved by a majority of Bishops attending the Synod.

*Section 10.* At least a majority of the Synod members which have been certified and are present at a given session shall constitute a quorum.

*Section 11.* A majority vote shall determine the decisions of the General Synod and the Synod may determine the voting in certain matters shall be by secret ballot.

## **ARTICLE IV THE METROPOLITAN**

*Section 1.* Among the bishops of the Church, the Metropolitan enjoys primacy, being the first among equals. He shall bear the title of “Metropolitan of The Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of America”. He supervises the internal and external welfare of the Church and represents it in its relations with other Churches, religious organizations, and secular authorities.

*Section 2.* The Metropolitan:

- a. Consecrates and distributes the Holy Chrism;
- b. Convenes the General Synod, presides over it, and promulgates its decisions;
- c. Convenes and presides over meetings of the Synod of Bishops;
- d. Issues pastoral letters addressed to the Bishops, clergy, and laity of the Church;
- e. Reports to the General Synod concerning the life of the Church;
- f. Initiates action to fill vacancies in the office of Diocesan Bishop;
- g. Gives brotherly advice to bishops, and in cases of necessity, submits their cases to the Synod of Bishops;
- h. Receives petitions for admission of clergy from other Churches.

*Section 3.* The office of Metropolitan shall be declared vacant by a vote of the Synod of Bishops in the event of death, voluntary retirement, medically certified incapacity, or deposition by due canonical process.

*Section 4.* When a vacancy has occurred in the office of Metropolitan, the Bishop senior by rank and date of consecration shall convene the General Synod within ten days. After the formal vote declaring the vacancy, the General Synod shall proceed with the election of a Metropolitan.

*Section 5.* If not already a Bishop, the candidate for the office of Metropolitan must fulfill the canonical, moral, and educational requirements established by the Synod of Bishops.

*Section 6.* The election shall take place according to the following order:

a. The General Synod nominates candidates by secret ballot without previous discussion of names. A blank paper ballot shall be distributed to each member of the Synod before the vote.

b. On the first vote, one single name may be written on each ballot. If the name of a candidate is written on a number of ballots equal to at least two-thirds of the total number of members in attendance at the Synod, that candidate shall be declared elected to the office.

c. If no candidate receives a number of ballots equal to at least two-thirds of the total membership in attendance, a second vote shall be taken.

d. In the second vote, two names shall be written on each ballot; the tellers shall not count any ballot on which fewer or more than two names are written. The names of the two candidates who receive the highest number of ballots on the second vote shall be submitted to the Synod of Bishops for their choice by majority vote.

e. Upon his election, and before the dismissal of the General Synod, the new Metropolitan shall be enthroned according to the established ritual.

## **ARTICLE V THE DIOCESE**

*Section 1.* The Diocese is the basic church body which comprises all the parishes of a determined geographical area. It is governed by the Diocesan Bishop with the assistance of a Diocesan Council.

*Section 2.* The geographical boundaries of the diocese shall be determined by the Synod of Bishops.

*Section 3.* Dioceses shall be established by the Synod of Bishops whenever the growth of the Church demands it or whenever the boundaries of existing Dioceses need to be modified.

*Section 4.* By virtue of his episcopal consecration and canonical appointment to his Diocese, the Diocesan Bishop possesses full hierarchical authority within his Diocese. The Diocesan Bishop:

a. Shall expound the faith and morals guide his flock in accordance with the teachings of the Church, and will issue pastoral letters to the clergy and laity;

b. Has the right of initiative and authoritative guidance in all matters concerning the life of his Diocese;

c. Shall distribute the Holy Chrism consecrated by the Metropolitan to all Churches in his Diocese;

d. Shall ordain candidates for the Diaconate and Priesthood in his Diocese. Candidates must receive the approval of the Synod of Bishops;

- e. Shall appoint and transfer parish priests and other parish clergy within the limits of his diocese;
- f. Shall exercise the right of pastoral action and discipline in reference to Diocesan clergy and laity in all cases not requiring the action of a Church Court;
- g. Shall make canonical visits to the parishes of his Diocese;
- h. Shall organize parishes, missions, and chapels in his Diocese and determine their boundaries;
- i. Shall consecrate the Holy Antimensia and churches and erect permanent Altars;
- j. Shall be a member of the Synod of Bishops in accordance with the provisions of Article II, Section 2;
- k. Shall convene and preside over the Diocesan Council;
- l. May appoint a Diocesan Chancellor and other Diocesan officers from among the members of the Diocesan Council;
- m. Shall exercise the right of supervision over the monastic communities in his diocese;
- n. Shall approve the decisions of the Diocesan Council, deanery, and parish meetings;
- o. Shall have custody, in the name of the Diocese, of the consecrated items which are the property of the Church;
- p. Shall reside within the limits of his Diocese.

*Section 5.* If the good of the Church so requires, Auxiliary Bishops may be appointed in order to assist Diocesan Bishops in the fulfillment of their functions. Candidates for the dignity of Auxiliary Bishop are nominated by the Bishop of the Diocese in which they are to serve, with the agreement of the Diocesan Council, and are canonically elected by the Synod of Bishops.

*Section 6.* The Diocesan Bishop shall be entitled to adequate financial support from the Diocese with an official residence and household.

*Section 7.* The office of Diocesan Bishop shall be declared vacant by the Synod of Bishops in the event of death, voluntary retirement, medically certified incapacity, transfer, or deposition by canonical process.

*Section 8.* In the event of the vacancy in the office of Diocesan Bishop, a locum tenens, appointed by the Metropolitan shall convene and preside over the Diocesan Council whose sole purpose at this time shall be the election of a new Diocesan Bishop.

*Section 9.* The candidate for the office of Diocesan Bishop must satisfy all the requirements of the Holy Canons pertaining to this highest of all ecclesiastical offices.

*Section 10.* The election of the Diocesan Bishop shall proceed as follows:

- a. The Diocesan Council shall nominate a candidate and submit his name to the Synod of Bishops;
- b. If the Council fails to nominate a candidate acceptable to the Synod of Bishops, the Synod shall elect the Bishop of the Diocese;
- c. Upon the approval of the candidate by the Synod of Bishops, he shall be summoned to a session of the Synod for the canonical election.

*Section 11.* The Consecration and Installation of the Diocesan Bishop shall be as follows:

a. If the Bishop-Elect is not yet in the episcopal rank, the date of his consecration shall be set with the period of 30 days following the date of his acceptance by the Synod of Bishops;

b. After the consecration, or if the Bishop-elect is already in the episcopal rank, the date of installation shall be set within two weeks following the consecration or, in the latter case, the election to the Diocese;

c. The installation of the newly-consecrated Bishop shall take place in the Diocese and shall be officiated by the Metropolitan or by a senior Hierarch of the Synod of Bishops.

*Section 12.* The Diocesan Bishop, by virtue of his episcopal office, is bound to propagate and expound the Christian Faith and morals among all people within the Diocesan boundaries. In order to accomplish this, he shall:

a. Take measures to assure that his clergy make a Christian witness in their communities;

b. Direct parish clergy to extend the limits of their pastoral activity in an approach to the unchurched;

c. Establish missions for the purpose of propagating the Christian faith;

d. Takes measures to provide the necessary funds for missionary activity within his Diocese.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL**

*Section 1.* The Diocesan Council is the permanent body of Diocesan administration. It shall be composed of

a. The Diocesan Bishop;

b. Any auxiliary Bishops;

c. The Deans of the Deaneries of the Diocese;

- d. The Priests of each parish and an equal number of lay delegates;
- e. Priests not having parishes if accredited by the Diocesan Council;
- f. One delegate from each seminary.

*Section 2.* The Diocesan Council shall meet annually unless otherwise decided by the Council.

*Section 3.* One-half of the members of the Diocesan Council together with the Diocesan Bishop or other presiding officer shall constitute a quorum.

*Section 4.* A majority vote shall determine the decisions of the Diocesan Council. In the event of a tie, the Diocesan Bishop or other presiding officer shall cast the deciding vote.

*Section 5.* All decisions of the Diocesan Council shall become effective upon approval of the Diocesan Bishop.

*Section 6.* The Diocesan Council shall:

- a. Consider and act on matters affecting parishes and all Diocesan institutions in accordance with the directives of the Diocesan Bishop;
- b. Consider and act on other matters submitted by the Diocesan Bishop;
- c. Attend to legal matters affecting only the interest of the Diocese;
- d. Examine the financial reports of the diocese;
- e. Determine the allocations, when necessary, of general Diocesan funds to parishes, monasteries, convents, missions, or other Diocesan institutions;



- f. Delineate the boundaries of parishes and deaneries;
- g. Take the initiative in Diocesan fund-raising projects;
- h. Provide for the establishment and maintenance of institutions of charity and education within the Diocese;
- i. Provide for the maintenance of Diocesan administrative bodies and the allocation of general Diocesan funds.

*Section 7.* The Diocesan Chancery shall function in order to implement the decisions of the Diocesan Council under the management of the Diocesan Bishop. The Bishop may, if he desires, appoint a Diocesan Chancellor to assist him.

## **ARTICLE VII THE DEANERIES**

*Section 1.* Deaneries are specified districts within the boundaries of a Diocese which are established by the Diocesan Council.

*Section 2.* The District Dean is the priest who is the head of a deanery. While subordinate to the Diocesan Bishop, he has the responsibility of leading the life of the deanery and is the first instance of appeal when disputes arise.

*Section 3.* Subject to the instructions of the Diocesan Bishop, the District Dean shall:

- a. Direct the affairs of the deanery;
- b. Supervise the activities of the clergy in the deanery;
- c. Give directives and explanations in matters of pastoral service, with the right to direct, counsel, and admonish, in a

strictly private and circumspect manner, rectors and clergymen within his deanery whenever their personal conduct or manner of discharging duties indicates the need of such action;

d. Receive and investigate complaints against rectors and other clergymen, as well as protests against the decisions of the parish bodies, which complaints or protests he submits with his report to the Diocesan Bishop;

e. Convenes deanery meetings;

f. Fills temporary vacancies in parish clergy with the consent of the Diocesan Bishop;

g. Receives the minutes of parish meetings held within his deanery, with the right to make recommendations to the Diocesan Bishop;

h. Takes part in parish meetings upon request of the Diocesan Bishop or the rector or parish council;

i. Aids and plans the organization of new parishes within his deanery;

j. Ascertains that new church buildings under construction are built according to the approved plans of the Diocesan Bishop;

k. Acts on all other matters submitted to him by the Diocesan Bishop;

l. Submits minutes of every meeting of the clergy of the deanery to the Diocesan Bishop;

m. Submits an annual report on the status of the deanery to the Diocesan Bishop and Diocesan Council, stating not only the achievements, but also instances of serious negligence;

n. Negotiates with the parish and the assigned priest the salary and fringe benefits needed by the priest in agreement with the ability of the parish to meet these requests.

*Section 4.* The District Dean is elected from among the rectors of the Deanery and confirmed by the Diocesan Bishop for a term of three years.

## **ARTICLE VIII THE PARISH**

*Section 1.* The parish is the local community of the Church having at its head a duly appointed priest and consisting of Christians who live in accordance with the teachings of The Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of America, comply with the discipline and rules of the Church, and regularly support their parish. Being subordinate to the Diocesan Council, it is a component part of the Diocese.

*Section 2.* The organization and administration of a parish are subject to these canons.

*Section 3.* The parish is established by decision of the Diocesan Bishop within whose Diocese it is constituted and after the local group petitioning him has satisfied the Bishop that its charter and by-laws are consistent with the canonical requirements of the Church. Every parish charter or set of by-laws must provide the mechanics for implementing all decisions of the General Synod. No charter or by-laws of a parish shall be effective unless approved by the Diocesan Bishop. According to the teachings of the Church, the Bishop is the head of all parishes which constitute his Diocese. He appoints parish clergy, has the obligation and right of regular and special visitations to the parish, approves received reports on parish life, and, in case of conflict and disorders within the parish, takes all necessary measures consistent with Holy Canons.

*Section 4.* At the head of the parish is its priest. According to the teachings of the Church, he is the spiritual father and teacher of his flock

and the celebrant of the liturgical worship established by the Church. He teaches and edifies the People of God entrusted to his spiritual care “with no partiality” and sees to it that all activities within the parish serve the religious goals of the Church. He is appointed by the Diocesan Bishop and cannot leave his parish without the permission of the Bishop. No activities in the parish can be initiated without his knowledge, approval, and blessing, neither should he do anything pertaining to the parish without the knowledge of his parishioners and parish council elected by them, so that always and everywhere there may be unity, mutual trust, cooperation, and love. In conformity with his teaching office, the priest shall have final authority over the church school.

*Section 5.* By virtue of their Baptism and Chrismation, the parishioners are members of the Body of Christ and must strive to live in accordance with their high calling.

*Section 6.* The by-laws of each parish shall provide for regular and special meetings of parishioners in good standing. At these meetings all matters pertaining to the life of the parish may be discussed. Officers and members of the Parish Council and other parish bodies provided for in the parish by-laws shall be elected at these meetings. All regular and special meetings must be announced by the Parish Priest on three consecutive Sundays and published in the church bulletin. The Parish Priest presides at the parish meeting.

*Section 7.* The parish meeting shall elect a Parish Council to assist the priest in the administration of the Parish and to execute the decisions of the parish meeting.

## ARTICLE IX CHURCH COURTS AND CANONICAL PROCEDURE

*Section 1.* Every member of the Church is entitled to due canonical procedure in the courts of the Church.

*Section 2.* The Diocesan Court is composed of four voting members: two members of the clergy and two members of the laity, appointed by the Bishop from among the members of the Diocesan Council. The Diocesan Bishop himself, or a member of the clergy appointed by him, shall preside over the court as a non-voting member. In cases involving accusations against members of the clergy, the court shall be restricted in its membership to members of the clergy.

*Section 3.* The Diocesan Court shall act as a court of the first instance in cases where the accused is a priest, a deacon, or a member of the laity. It shall judge cases involving accusations of unorthodox belief, breaches of canonical or moral discipline, marital problems, disputes involving clergy and parish officers, disputes over parish institutions, and any other matter involving the good order of the Church.

*Section 4.* The following procedure shall be used:

- a. Accusers shall present their accusations in writing to the Bishop of the diocese of the accused.
- b. Before examining the case, the court shall establish the accuser's good and irreproachable character. The accuser shall agree in advance in writing that the decision of these courts is final and non-appealable to the civil courts. If the court is not satisfied in these matters, or considers that the accuser, by lodging his accusation, pursues personal advantage or acts out of personal animosity, the case shall be dismissed.

c. If the court determines that there is probable cause to come to trial, the accused shall be summoned in writing by the court. The summons shall specify the nature of the accusation and the name(s) of the accuser(s). The accused shall be given appropriate time to prepare his/her defense. If he/she does not answer two successive summonses, the court shall try the case in absentia.

d. The accused is entitled to request that a third party act as his defense. Both the accuser and the accused may request the testimony of experts and witnesses acceptable to the court.

e. The Diocesan Bishop, by his own judgment, is empowered to impose temporary suspension upon clerics, and temporary excommunication upon members of the laity. The accused has the right to trial in court within 30 days of the day when the penalty is imposed by the Bishop.

f. The decision of the court shall be made by unanimous vote, approved by the Diocesan Bishop, and communicated to the accused in writing within 30 days. If the decision is not unanimous, upon the request of either party the Diocesan Bishop shall appoint a court of four new members, according to the procedure outlined in Section 2. The new court shall make a decision by a majority vote, approved by the Bishop. If the Bishop rejects the decision of the court, upon the request of either party the case shall be referred to the Synod of Bishops, in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 c.

g. Penalties imposed by the court (against persons judged guilty after trial as well as against false accusers) are prescribed by the canons of the ecumenical and local councils and the holy fathers. Their application is subject to the approval by the Diocesan Bishop who must use the pastoral discretion which belongs to his office in applying penalties.

h. If one of the parties is not satisfied with the judgment of the Diocesan Court, he may appeal to the Synod of Bishops,

as the Supreme Court of Appeals of the Church, within 30 days of receipt of said judgment.

i. Judgments requiring the final deposition of clerics (defrocking) are effective only upon their confirmation by the Synod of Bishops.

j. Those protesting canonical penalties imposed by presbyters in the normal course of their pastoral responsibilities may appeal to the Diocesan Bishop within 30 days of the day when the penalty was pronounced. Those protesting canonical penalties imposed or confirmed by Bishops in the normal course of their pastoral responsibilities may appeal to the Synod of Bishops, as the Supreme Court of the Church, within 30 days of the day when penalty was pronounced.

k. Trials are held subject to any other procedural rules as established by the Synod of Bishops.

l. No one shall be brought to trial more than once for the same alleged offense.

*Section 5.* The procedure for marital problems shall be as follows:

a. Whenever the parish priest is unable, through pastoral counseling, to prevent the dissolution of a marriage and the conflict results in a civil divorce and if the interested persons themselves seek from the Church a definition of their status as divorcees, a petition is filed with the Diocesan Court, which examines the documents and makes a new attempt at reconciling the parties.

b. If the reconciliation fails, the court shall come to a final decision. In issuing its opinion, the court may recommend that penance be imposed by the Bishop upon the guilty party/parties. On the basis of this court decision, the Bishop issues the following statement:

Having heard the conclusion of the Diocesan Court of the \_\_\_\_\_ Diocese concerning the judgment of divorce rendered by the \_\_\_\_\_ Court of \_\_\_\_\_, dissolving

the marriage between (Name) and (Name), celebrated at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_, I, (Name), Bishop of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby acknowledge the conclusion of the civil court as final. (Invoking God's mercy and compassion, I allow (Name) to enter into a new marital union with (Name) and to receive the Sacraments of the Church starting on \_\_\_\_\_.

*Section 6.* The Synod of Bishops shall act as the Church's Supreme Court of Appeals according to the following procedure:

a. If a person, clerical or lay, is dissatisfied with the judgment rendered in his/her case by a Diocesan Court, he/she may file an appeal addressed either to the Metropolitan or to the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops through the Chancery of the Church.

b. The Synod of Bishops shall take up the case at its regular session, provided the appeal has been filed at least a month before the session.

c. The accused shall be entitled to the rights specified in Section 4d.

d. The Synod of Bishops shall never act as a court of first instance in cases which are within the jurisdiction of Diocesan Courts.

e. The rulings of the Synod of Bishops are final, except for those instances which the canons reserve to the judgment of the Universal Church.

*Section 7.* The procedure for hearing charges against a Bishop shall be as follows:

a. Accusations against Bishops are referred directly to the Synod of Bishops, which is the court of first instance empowered to pass judgment in such cases.

b. If the accusations are considered to have substance either by the Metropolitan or by at least three members of the



Synod, and after the accuser's good character, irreproachable standing in the Church, and motivation have been established, the accused shall be summoned and judged by the Synod of Bishops in closed session. In cases of grave accusations involving the possibility of canonical deposition, the accused shall be called through a formal summons presented to him by registered mail with return receipt requested.

c. If the accused refuses to appear after receiving three summonses, the Synod of Bishops shall suspend him from his duties and judge him in absentia.

d. Penalties against Bishops judged guilty after trial, as well as false accusers, are prescribed by the canons of the ecumenical and local councils and the holy fathers.

e. A judgment of deposition or defrocking of a bishop has final validity only when signed by at least three bishops. (If such need arises, bishops may be invited from neighboring ecclesiastical provinces to complete the quorum.)

f. The judgments of the Synod of Bishops are final except for those instances which the canons reserve to the judgment of the Universal Church.

## **ARTICLE X AMENDMENTS**

*Section 1.* These canons may be amended by a General Synod. Proposed amendments must be submitted to the Chancellor at least 30 days prior to a General Synod. The parishes must have proposed amendments to be acted upon by the Synod in their possession 15 days prior to the Synod.

*Section 2.* A final draft of all proposed amendments from the parishes shall be mailed, together with the recommendations of the

parishes and the Canonical Commission 15 days prior to the General Synod.

**ARTICLE XI**  
**EFFECTIVE DATE**

These canons shall be in effect immediately upon their adoption by the General Synod and shall abrogate, nullify, and repeal any and all actions and/or documents which are inconsistent with this Code of Canons.