



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΣΙΑΚΗ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ
ΙΕΡΑ ΕΠΑΡΧΙΑΚΗ ΣΥΝΟΔΟΣ Γ.Ο.Χ. ΕΝ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗ
HELLENIC ORTHODOX TRADITIONALIST CHURCH OF AMERICA
**HOLY EPARCHIAL SYNOD OF THE G.O.C. IN
AMERICA**

The Eparchial Synod of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece in America in its meeting of September 25/October 8, 2024, approved the following updated Internet Code of Ethics for Clergy:

In today's age, when information and communication technologies dominate our daily lives, the use of the Internet may prove to be a useful pastoral tool for the clergy. This presupposes, however, that the use of the electronic pulpit will be sensible and careful, as is true of the real pulpit. Moreover, the nature of these novel technologies allows for instantaneous publication of and access to information on a global scale, crossing traditional Diocesan boundaries and violating the geographical principle of Church governance by effectively allowing for public preaching and publication without the blessing of the local Hierarchy. In preaching and publishing online without the knowledge or blessing of the Hierarchy, some clergymen have misunderstood their canonical relation to their Hierarchs, which is expressed by Saints such as the Hieromartyr Ignatius of Antioch, who proclaims, "It is fitting that ye also should run together in accordance with the will of the bishop who by God's appointment rules over you.... For your justly renowned presbytery, being worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp" (*Ephesians* 4). He emphasizes, "It is becoming, therefore, that ye also should be obedient to your bishop and contradict him in nothing; for it is a fearful thing to contradict any such person" (*Magnesians* 3), concluding decisively, "Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop" (*Smyrnæans* 8), since "The one who does anything without the bishop's knowledge serves the devil" (*Smyrnæans* 9).

In order to uphold this Patristic order, the Eparchial Synod of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece in America has decided to establish an updated code of ethics for the public use of the Internet by the clergy.

We define the public use of the Internet as the use of any information or communication media whose content is accessible to more than ten people. This category includes websites or blogs kept by clergymen, profiles on social networking sites, and mass emails with more than ten recipients. We define clergy as referring to all major and minor orders, including monastics.

In their electronic communications, clergymen:

1. Must receive a written blessing from the Eparchial Synod to establish any Church-related public Internet activity, be it a website, blog, podcast, chat group, or any type of social media.
2. Shall not use abusive, improper, or profane expressions in any way, or forward, retweet, or repost such material.

3. Shall not use improper allusions or comment favorably on provocative material presented in videos, pictures, documents, or any other Internet media.
4. Are not permitted to take a position for or against specific political parties or political figures. It is permitted to comment on politicians' specific acts or words from an ecclesiastical perspective. This, however, must be done by means of competent and theologically-documented essays and not by the republication of the political opinions or comments of others or through commentaries of such articles found on other websites. Commentary on political, historical, or social matters or current events that extends beyond the explicit consensus of the Fathers and the universal Tradition of the Church must be presented as merely the personal opinion of the author, in no way intended as a binding statement of dogma nor as the official teaching of our Church.
5. Shall not denigrate or impugn the honor of any Hierarch of our Church, nor of any of our Sister Churches, nor of those who have died within the peace of the Church.
6. Shall not endorse, promote, defend, or lend credence to any schismatic or heretical group, defined as any ecclesial body that has been subject to the canonical judgment of our Holy Synod, the Holy Synods of the Local Churches with which we hold communion, or the historical consensus of the Orthodox Church.
7. Shall present a written transcription of any video or audio publication they have made, upon request by the Eparchial Synod or any member thereof.
8. Are obliged to bear in mind at all times that they are called to give a good witness to and to be an example for the laity. For this reason, they must act in accordance with their vocation, using the Internet principally as a ministry of good witness and confession.

Clergymen who violate these rules shall be punished, firstly with the suspension of their privilege to use such media. Clergymen that persist in disobedience to the Church's Hierarchy shall be judged in accordance with the Canons of the Church. It is the responsibility of each Ruling Hierarchy to provide further clarification of the aforementioned rules.

A group of clergymen may be appointed by the Eparchial Synod to assist the Hierarchs in examining the veracity of accusations of violation of the Internet Code of Ethics. These clergymen shall be at the disposition of both the Eparchial Synod and the individual members thereof in order to investigate the facts of each case, to provide them with a brief, and to reduce the workload for the Hierarchs, but they shall have no judicial authority in the matter.

If the Eparchial Synod finds a clergyman to be in violation of the Internet Code of Ethics, the latter shall obligatorily remove the offending post, statement, text, video, or audio file, irrespective of any disciplinary act imposed by his local Hierarchy.