



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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September 2014

The Esteemed Clergy of the  
Direct Archdiocesan District

My dear Fathers,

During the past 3 months alone, on at least four occasions, my office has been made aware of issues related to “fees” charged by our clergy for funerals, weddings, baptisms, etc. Out of curiosity I canvassed the Metropolises of our Archdiocese to see what the prevailing policy is in the rest of the country. Those chancellors who responded so far informed me that, as in the District, the “honoraria” is only expected when there is a fill-in clergyman (some Metropolises specify that the parish and not the faithful offer it) but that otherwise, under no circumstances should the parish priest expect/demand an honorarium. The consensus is that officiating at funerals, weddings and other services is “part and parcel” of the responsibilities of the parish priest of a community and therefore, no additional compensation should be expected.

It is my understanding that some funeral homes, because of the policy of other Faiths, “automatically” add a fee for the priest on their invoice to the family. You are to immediately inform the funeral homes in your area, especially those who handle most of the funerals brought to your parish, that under no circumstance are they to include such a fee on their invoices for funerals in your church. This directive supersedes any policy or inclination of a funeral director and needless to say, also applies to the church office. For any service, if the faithful so choose to offer something of their OWN accord, that is their prerogative but the dignity of our priesthood should preclude any of the brothers (or someone on their behalf) demanding, coercing, expecting or even subtly hinting at a “gift”.

No doubt, possible justification for this practice started years ago when our parishes did not appropriately compensate our clergy but with the exception of a few brothers, that is no longer the case. I hope that this communiqué will suffice in addressing the matter and trust that it will be immediately implemented by all. Please...I ask you in all sincerity...do not place me (or yourself) in the distasteful position of forcing me to address infractions to this policy. As you can well imagine, things inevitably get back to my office. Since this is now an “official policy” of the District, it is being distributed to all the brotherhood. My apologies to those who may be offended by this communiqué but unfortunately there are enough brothers whose conduct warranted it being addressed.

Needless to say, I am available if anyone wishes to discuss this further. As we embark upon a new ecclesiastical year, I convey to you the paternal best wishes and blessings of His Eminence. May you and your respective parishes enjoy the bountiful blessings of the Almighty.