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Conflict of Interest Guidelines

In accordance with the provisions of Article 11.05 and Article 26.09 of the Metropolis Statutes, each member of the Archdiocesan Council and the various Parish Councils shall be required to review, sign, and pledge to abide by the following Archdiocese Conflict of Interest Policy, upon or following appointment, election or installation.

Those serving in the administration of the Archdiocese, the Deaneries, the Parishes, the Monasteries, and other institutions of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of the Americas have a fiduciary responsibility to act in good faith and in the best interests of the Church generally, and specifically in regards to the office for which they have been entrusted. A conflict of interest exists whenever a person has a “duality of interest” and they or their immediate family could benefit privately (financial or otherwise), or appear to benefit, from their position or by decisions of the governing body on which they serve. In fulfilling one’s fiduciary responsibility, it is necessary that any conflict of interest, or even the appearance of a conflict of interest, be avoided.

If such conflicts arise, the appropriate body should:

- 1) *Disclose* the conflict. In the case of Members of Archdiocesan bodies, the Archbishop and the Archdiocesan Council should be informed and disclosure made to the Congress. In the case of Parish Council Members, the Parish Priest and Parish Council should be informed and disclosure made to the Parish General Assembly and the Archdiocesan Council.
- 2) *Disassociate* the member from discussion and voting on the issues related to the conflict. The member should recuse him or herself from any formal or informal role in determining the outcome of the matter which has resulted in the conflict between his or her own personal or financial interest and that of the institution.
- 3) *Document* what has been done. A written record of the matter should be included in the official records of the institution. The record should be specific and include sufficient detail to allow an independent examiner to understand fully the issue involved and the nature of the conflict.

Individual members serving on various offices, boards, councils and other bodies within the Archdiocese and the respective governing bodies should be sensitive to two types of conflict: personal and financial.

Personal: Members of the same family should not serve on the same governing body. This includes blood relations and marital relations to the second degree, e.g. parents and children; spouses; siblings; father/mother-in-law with children-in-law; brothers/sisters-in-law. In smaller parishes exceptions made be allowed through *disclosure*, but in no case shall persons with these sorts of personal conflicts serve together as officers or have signature power together on financial accounts.

Financial: While more challenging to identify, financial conflicts may range from having a direct financial interest in a transaction involving an Archdiocesan institution, to business partners serving together on an Archdiocesan board, or even to employer/employee relationships. In these cases the three principles of: Disclosure, Disassociation, and Documentation need to be followed strictly.

Three simply ways to assess conflicts of interest are:

- **Does it meet the “smell test?”** Would it raise suspicions by outsiders, despite the high regard you may hold for the individual?
- **Does it meet the “comfort test?”** How comfortable would you be with these facts being reviewed by the local newspaper, state attorney general or a government investigator?
- **Does it send the right signals to the general parish membership and the Church at large?** A parish must always be concerned about building trust and credibility and be especially careful to avoid the image of insider dealings.

If a person is unsure as to whether a certain set of circumstances constitutes a conflict of interest they should consult the chief clergy or lay officer of the particular body on which they serve, e.g. in a parish this would be the parish priest or the parish council president. Final determination of a conflict of interest is the responsibility of the Archbishop or his designee.

I have read the above Archdiocesan Conflict of Interest Guidelines and pledge to abide by them.

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