

The Diocese of the West, Orthodox Church in America Guidelines for Readers and Subdeacons

All ministries exercised within the Diocese, whether that of a Priest, Deacon, Subdeacon or Reader, are done so with the blessing and under the authority of the Diocesan Hierarchy, and are accountable to him.

A Reader is tonsured to minister within a particular parish, as indicated in the Office of the Tonsuring of a Reader:

Blessed is the Lord. Lo, the servant of God, N. is become a Reader of the most holy Church of N.: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (*The Service Book*, Isabelle Hapgood, 1906).

According to the canons of the Orthodox Church, there is no procedure for removing a Subdeacon or Reader from office apart from the determination of his own hierarchy.

Until now, very few dioceses have kept track of the movement of Subdeacons and Readers leading in some instances to confusion and disorder as they move in and out of various parishes and even jurisdictions without reference to the hierarchy under whose authority they were ordained or tonsured. These guidelines are established to take better account of those exercising the roles of minor clergy within the life of a given parish. Their purpose is to help those who minister in both major and minor orders better recognize and understand the responsibilities that Subdeacons and Readers hold, and their relationship both to their Diocesan Hierarchy, his Priests, and the local parish.

The Responsibilities of Rectors

- a. To establish and maintain a list of all Readers and Subdeacons, serving and not serving, in his parish and to forward this list to the diocesan office when required.
- b. To supervise the ministries of the Readers and Subdeacons in his parish.
- c. To fulfill all diocesan mandated certifications and programs required with regard to background checks and all other means required to safeguard the integrity of parish life..
- d. To notify the Diocesan Hierarchy and Dean in the event a Reader or Subdeacon moves into or out of the parish, or fails to fulfill his obligations within the parish.
- e. To work with his Dean in the event a Reader may be required to lead services in another parish or mission within the deanery.

The Responsibilities of Readers and Subdeacons

- a. To acknowledge that they are appointed by the Diocesan Hierarchy to fulfill a particular ministry within a particular parish, and may not leave it to join another without his Hierarchy's written blessing, including those situations that may require him to relocate to another city or state.
- b. To assist the Rector, under his supervision, in ministering within the parish.
- c. With the blessing of his Rector and Dean, to provide Reader's services for parishes and missions that are in need of such a service.
- d. At the request of local Rectors, and with the blessing of his own Rector, to render assistance with special feast day services, hierarchical services and other celebrations taking place in the deanery.

Concerning Dress

Subdeacons and Readers are blessed to wear a black cassock on the church grounds within their home parish, as well as other parishes within the diocese of their own hierarchy. With the exception of those who have taken monastic orders, Subdeacons and Readers may not wear a riassa, skoufia, vest or belt over their cassock. While serving they are to wear a sticharion and, in the case of Subdeacons, an orarion as befits their rank. A Subdeacon or Reader may not wear a cassock in the parish of another jurisdiction without the specific blessing of his own rector and that of the rector of the parish he wishes to visit.