

United Old Catholic Church International

# Canon Laws

and Bylaws





**Canon 1: INTRODUCTION**

- i. The corporate name of this Church will be The United Old Catholic Church International
- ii. Within these canons it will also be referred to as "this Church," "this faith community," "this denomination," or "the UOCCI"
- iii. The UOCCI is a validly consecrated and constituent member of Christ's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which unites all Christians throughout the world and throughout history.

**Canon 2: CANON LAW**

- i. UOCCI incorporates into and makes a part hereof the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church, and in the event there exists a conflict or conflicts between the two bodies of Canonical Law, the Canon Law provision which is more favourable in Spirit to UOCCI in the intention of the applicable Canon Law provision to the particular circumstances or issue in controversy, UOCCI Canon Law may supersede the provision of the Roman Catholic Canon Law which addresses the circumstances or issue in controversy.
- ii. In the event an impasse is reached concerning which body of Canon Law should apply, the matter will be referred to the Presiding Bishop who will then decide which body of Canon Law will apply to the particular circumstances or the Presiding Bishop may petition the Roman Catholic Curia or the Roman Catholic Holy See to seek Spiritual counsel, guidance and/or and a decision on which body of Canon Law or its provision, shall govern.

**Canon 3: DOCTRINE**

- i. This catholic faith community shall worship the One True Triune God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ii. This Church shall be part of God's Kingdom, unconditionally embracing all persons of faith and all persons seeking to discover or rediscover their faith.
- iii. This Church shall establish, parishes, religious communities and other necessary institutions to evangelize the world.
- iv. The UOCCI hierarchy, parishes, religious communities shall establish and follow the structure of the Roman Catholic Church until such time as The Holy Synod establishes a more defined, distinct management structure for UOCCI.
- v. This Church shall be subject to the credal statements established by the Ecumenical Councils of the Universal Church at Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon.
- vi. This Church shall accept as the definition of Christianity the creed associated with the Council of Constantinople of 381, CE. This creed is commonly referred to as the Nicene Creed.
- vii. This Church shall accept the Apostles' Creed as a valid statement of faith.
- viii. This Church shall accept the Athanasian Creed as a valid statement of Trinitarian theology and Christology. his Church cannot alter, change or revise any of the above-mentioned creeds.

**Canon 4: MEMBERSHIP**

- i. As an Ancient Catholic Church under true Apostolic Succession and Catholic Jurisdiction, and founded upon the beliefs and doctrine that existed prior to the great schism of 1054 A.D., any person baptised, confirmed or received into full membership into this UOCCI , according to the approved liturgical and Sacramental Rites of this Church by a Deacon, Priest or Bishop in good standing, is a full member of this Church, and any member in good standing of the following Catholic jurisdictions is an automatic member of this Church, and is considered to be a true full member in good standing since their Baptism as was the standard in the ancient Catholic Church: Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, Orthodox Catholic, Reformat Catholic, Brazilian Catholic, and of any other Catholic Jurisdiction.
- ii. Members of this Church are not authorized to hold membership in other Churches without forfeiting the membership in this Church . Members serve under one presiding Bishop.
- iii. A person may terminate their membership with this Church through the liturgical rite of reception within another faith community or by submitting a letter of intention to their local Pastor or local Ordinary.
- iv. A person who terminated their membership with this Church may petition for readmission by submitting a written request to the local Pastor or to the local Ordinary.

- v. Members who fail to profess or follow the Creedal Doctrines or have violated the Canons of this Church and who fail to profess or follow the Creedal Doctrines and Canons of the Church Jurisdictions as listed in Canon 3.1 above while a member of this Church:
- (i) will be notified by their Bishop that, unless this failure is corrected, termination of membership may commence through formal procedures and the Member will be subject to have his or her membership stricken from the Church rolls.
  - (ii) in no event unless authorized by the Presiding Bishop and unless a member has willingly, knowing and intentionally turned their back on God and blasphemed God, excommunication procedures will commence against the offending member.
  - (iii) in such membership termination and excommunication matters, a member must be provided with formal documentation of any charges and be given due process to respond and be allowed to question any person making charges against them.
  - (iv) excommunication is an act of termination from the overall Catholic Faith and Catholic Church (Catholicism) in and of itself, thus, excommunication against a Member will never be undertaken or used as a threat unless it has been determined by the Presiding Bishop that such drastic and extraordinary action and measure must be undertaken.
  - (v) excommunication shall never be used as a tool of punishment or retaliation, nor shall it be used lightly, even for those members deemed to be irregular, unless sanctioned and authorized by the Presiding Bishop.
  - (vi) If a member who has been formally confronted and informed of their error and acknowledges such, but refuses to recant or correct their heresy after they have been given an opportunity under Church due process to be heard and review the allegations against them and confront witnesses and present witnesses, and the proper Church Canon Court has decided that the member has violated or offended the Church, they have a right to appeal to a higher authority the decision of the Canon Court, and in the event the higher authority affirms (upholds) the decision of the lower tribunal (Canon Court), the member is subject to either termination of Church membership and/or excommunication, whichever is the matter.
  - (vii) If a member who has been formally confronted and informed of their error recants and corrects their heresy, the membership termination and/or excommunication process is thereby terminated.
  - (viii) No member shall meet with a minor under the age of 18 without the parent/guardian/or two clergy present, failure to abide by this is subject to the consequences of the local authorities.

#### **Canon 5: Baptism**

- (i) Baptism is necessary for salvation in fact or at least in intention. It is the Sacrament by which all people are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God, are configured to Christ by an indelible character, and are incorporated in the Church. It is as validly conferred only by washing with true water together with the required form of words.
- (ii) Baptism should be administered in accord with the order prescribed within the approved liturgical rite books.
- (iii) One who is not of sound mind (non-sui composes) is equated with an infant; so far as Baptism is concerned.
- (iv) Baptism is to be conducted and conferred either by immersion in water, by the pouring of water, or by the sprinkling of water, with the prescriptions of the proper authority being observed, and the Baptism by immersion, pouring or sprinkling of water is at the discretion of the Pastor and in accordance with any urgencies or exigent circumstances which may be present at the time of Baptism.
- (v) In the event no urgencies or exigent circumstances are present, the Baptism shall be conducted and conferred either by immersion in water or by the pouring of water with the prescriptions of the proper authority being observed.
- (vi) At no time in urgent or exigent circumstances shall a Baptism be denied in the event no water is available, such as a death bed situation in a location where water is not available, and in this instance, the placing on the hands of the head of the person shall suffice as a Baptism.

- (vii) The traditional place for Baptism is in a Church or oratory but may be conducted and conferred outdoors or in another area that the Pastor deems appropriate and conducts and confers the Baptism to the Glorify of God.
- (viii) As a rule adults are to be baptized in their own local parish Church and infants are to be baptized in the parish Church proper to their parents unless the adult or the parents of the child requests and alternate location or based upon a just cause the Pastor suggests an alternate location.
- (ix) Outside of cases of necessity, Baptism is not to be conferred in private homes, unless with the permission of the local Ordinary.
- (x) The Ordinary Minister of Baptism is a Bishop, Presbyter or Deacon in good standing, with due regard that the prescriptions of the proper authority be observed.
- (xi) To be baptized, it is required that an adult have manifested the properly formed will to be baptized, be sufficiently instructed in the truths of faith and in Christian obligations and be tested in the Christian life by means of the catechumenate; the adult is also to be exhorted to have sorrow for personal sins.
- (xii) Unless a grave reason prevents it, an adult who is baptized is to be confirmed immediately after baptism and participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, also receiving Communion.
- (xiii) Parents and legal guardians are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized.
- (xiv) An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without any delay.
- (xv) For the licit Baptism of an infant, it is necessary that:
  - a. The parents and/or legal guardians or at least one of them gives consent.
  - b. There be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the faith of this Catholic Faith Community.
- (xvi) If there is a doubt whether one has been Baptized or whether Baptism was validly conferred and the doubt remains after serious investigation, Baptism is to be conferred conditionally.
- (xvii) A foundling or abandoned child is to be Baptized unless upon diligent investigation that there exists proof that prior Baptism is established.
- (xviii) If aborted fetuses are alive, they are to be Baptized, if possible.
- (xix) Insofar as possible, one to be Baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation.
- (xx) To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must:
  - (xxi) Be designated by the one to be Baptized, by the parents or legal guardians, or in their absence, by the Pastor and is to have their qualifications and intention of performing this role validated by the Pastor.
  - (xxii) Have completed their sixteenth year.
  - (xxiii) Not be the father or mother of the one to be Baptized.
  - (xxiv) A Baptized person who belongs to a non-catholic ecclesial community or another validly consecrated catholic community may act as a witness to the Baptism, together with a member in full standing within this Church.

### **Canon 6: Eucharist**

- (i) The celebration of the Eucharist is the action of Christ Himself and the Church; in it Christ the Lord, by the ministry of a Priest, offers Himself, substantially present under the forms of bread and wine, to God the Father and gives Himself as spiritual food to the faithful who are associated with His offering.
- (ii) Those who can validly serve as Christ to confect the Sacrament of the Eucharist are validly ordained Priests or Bishops, however, shall not preclude a duly ordained Deacon in urgent or exigent circumstances or as a conferred right to do so by a valid Bishop.
- (iii) A Priest or Bishop who is not canonically impeded celebrates the Eucharist illicitly, observing the prescriptions of the following canons.
- (iv) A Priest or Bishop may apply the intentions of the Mass for anyone, living or dead.
- (v) Priests or Bishops may concelebrate the Eucharist, unless the welfare of the faithful requires or urges otherwise.

- (vi) A Priest is to be permitted to celebrate the Eucharist even if said Priest is unknown to the rector of the Church. Such Priests must present a current letter of faculties or recommendation issued by their local Ordinary or Religious Superior.
- (vii) Remembering that the work of redemption is continually accomplished in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, Priests and Bishops are to celebrate frequently; indeed daily celebration is strongly recommended, since even if the faithful cannot be present, it is the act of Christ and the Church in which Priests and Bishops fulfil their principle function.
- (viii) The Ordinary Minister of the Eucharist is a Bishop or Presbyter.
- (ix) The Pastor and Parochial Vicars, Chaplains and the Superior of a community in Apostolic life have the right and the duty to bring the Most Holy Eucharist to the sick in the form of Viaticum.
- (x) Any baptized person, not prohibited by canon law, must be admitted to Holy Communion, however, no Deacon, Priest or Bishop can prohibit a person from partaking of the Holy Communion for it is not authorized by God for a Deacon, Priest or Bishop to interfere or negatively intervene in a relationship between any person and God.
- (xi) The Most Holy Eucharist may be given to children who are in danger of death or children who are mature enough and schooled in Catechism and understand the true meaning of the Holy Sacraments and Holy Eucharist.
- (xii) It is the responsibility of the parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as the Pastor to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the Divine Food as early as possible.
- (xiii) All the faithful, after they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, are bound by the obligation of receiving Communion at least once a month, and on Christmas Day and Easter Day.
- (xiv) The Christian faithful, who are in danger of death, arising from any cause, are to be nourished by Holy Communion in the form of Viaticum.
- (xv) The Most Sacred Eucharistic Sacrifice must be celebrated with bread and wine, which a small quantity of Holy Water is to be mixed.
- (xvi) Holy Communion is to be given under the form of bread alone or under both kinds in accord with the norm of the liturgical custom or even under the form of wine alone in case of necessity.
- (xvii) It is forbidden for a celebrant to consecrate one matter of the Eucharist without the other.
- (xviii) In celebrating and administering the Eucharist, Bishops, Priests and Deacons are to wear the liturgical vestments prescribed by the rubrics.
- (xix) The celebration and distribution of the Eucharist may take place on any day and at any hour, except for those times excluded by liturgical norms.
- (xx) The celebration of the Eucharist is to be celebrated in a sacred place, unless in a particular case necessity demands otherwise; in such a case of urgency or exigency the celebration should be done in a respectable place, if at all possible, in the even no respectable place is available and it is a situation of urgency or exigency, then it is at the discretion of the Deacon, Priest or Bishop to choose the place in order to celebrate the Eucharist.
- (xxi) In sacred places where the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved, there must be someone who has the care of it.
- (xxii) The Most Holy Eucharist is to be reserved regularly in only one tabernacle of a Church or oratory.
- (xxiii) Consecrated hosts are to be reserved in a ciborium or vessel in sufficient quantity for the needs of the faithful; they are to be frequently renewed and the old ones properly consumed.
- (xxiv) In Churches or oratories where it can be permitted to reserve the Most Holy Eucharist, there can be exposition either with the ciborium or with a monstrance or other appropriate vessel, observing the norms prescribed in the liturgical books.
- (xxv) Exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament is not to be held in the same part of the Church or oratory during the celebration of the Mass.
- (xxvi) The Minister of exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament and the Eucharistic Benediction is either a Bishop, Priest or Deacon.

### **Canon 7: Confession and Reconciliation.**

- (i) Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the ordinary way by which the faithful person who is aware of serious sin is reconciled with God and with the Church.

- (ii) A person who has had serious sins remitted by a general absolution is to approach individual confession as soon as there is an opportunity to do so before receiving another general absolution unless a just cause intervenes.
- (iii) Priests and Bishops, who are in good standing, are the Ministers of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- (iv) For the valid absolution of sins it is required that, besides the power received through sacred ordination, the Minister possesses the faculty to exercise that power over the faithful to whom the Minister imparts absolution.
- (v) The local Ordinary, as well as the competent Religious Superior, may revoke the faculties to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation from a Presbyter for just cause.
- (vi) Even though a Priest may lack the faculty to hear confessions, any Priest or Bishop validly and illicitly absolves from any kind of censures and sins any penitent who is in danger of death, even if an approved Priest or Bishop is present.
- (vii) In hearing confessions, the confessor is to remember that they act as a judge as well as a healer and is placed by God as the Minister of divine justice and mercy, concerned with the divine honour and the salvation of souls.
- (viii) The confessor, in posing questions, is to proceed with prudence and discretion, with attention to the condition and age of the penitent, and that the confessor is to refrain from asking the name of an accomplice.
- (ix) If the confessor has no doubt about the disposition of a penitent who asks for absolution, absolution is not to be refused or delayed.
- (x) The confessor is to enjoin salutary and suitable penances in keeping with the severity and number of the sins, but with attention to the condition of the penitent; the penitent is obliged to perform the penances personally.
- (xi) The Sacramental seal of the confessional is inviolable. Therefore, it is a sin for a confessor, in any way or form, to betray a penitent by word or in any other manner for any reason.
- (xii) An interpreter, if needed, is also obliged to preserve the secret, and also all others to whom knowledge of sins from confession shall come in any way.
- (xiii) Even if every danger of revelation is excluded, a confessor is absolutely forbidden to use any knowledge acquired from a confession when it might harm the penitent.
- (xiv) One who is placed in authority can in no way use for external governance knowledge about sins which the confessor, or others cited, has received in confession at any time.
- (xv) A member of the Christian faithful is obliged to confess, in kind and in number, all serious sins committed after baptism and not yet directly acknowledged in individual confession, of which one is conscious after diligent examination of conscience.

#### **Canon 8: Sacrament of the Sick.**

- (i) The anointing of the sick is conferred by anointing them with oil and using the words prescribed in the liturgical books.
- (ii) The anointing is to be carefully performed while observing the words, the order and the manner prescribed in the liturgical books; but in cases of necessity it is sufficient that one anointing be made on the forehead or even on another appropriate part of the body, while saying the entire formula.
- (iii) The communal celebration of the anointing of the sick can be performed according to the prescriptions of the Ordinary of the Diocese.
- (iv) Every Priest and Bishop who is in good standing validly administers the Sacrament of the Sick.
- (v) The Sacrament of the Sick can be administered again to a member of the faithful who, after a period of recovery, begins to decline and once again becomes seriously ill.

#### **Canon 9: Marriage.**

- (i) The matrimonial covenant, by which a couple establish between themselves a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a Sacrament.
- (ii) Marriage is brought about through the consent manifested between the parties who are capable of giving consent. No human power can replace this consent.
- (iii) All persons who are not prohibited by canon law can contract marriage.

- (iv) Pastors of souls are obliged to see to it that their own ecclesial community furnishes the Christian faithful assistance so that the matrimonial state is maintained in a Christian spirit and makes progress towards perfection. This assistance is especially to be furnished through:
- (v) Preaching and catechesis; so that the Christian faithful may be instructed concerning the meaning of Christian marriage and the duty of Christian spouses and parents.
- (vi) Personal preparation for entering marriage so that the parties may be predisposed toward the holiness and duties of their new state.
- (vii) Assistance furnished to those already married so that, while faithfully maintaining and protecting the conjugal covenant, they may come to lead holier and fuller lives.
- (viii) If they can do so without serious inconvenience, Faithful who have not yet received the Sacrament of confirmation are to receive it before being admitted into marriage.
- (ix) It is strongly recommended that those to be married approach the Sacrament of reconciliation and the Most Holy Eucharist so that they may fruitfully receive the Sacrament of Marriage.
- (x) Before marriage is celebrated, it must be evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.
- (xi) All the faithful are obliged to reveal any impediments they are aware of to the Pastor or to the local Ordinary before the celebration of a marriage.
- (xii) A person must have completed their eighteenth year of age prior to entering into the Sacrament of Marriage.
- (xiii) A person who, for the purpose of entering marriage with a certain person, has brought about the death of that person's spouse or one's own spouse, cannot attempt such a marriage.
- (xiv) Affinity in the direct line in any degree whatsoever invalidates matrimony.
- (xv) Those who lack sufficient use of reason are incapable of contracting marriage.
- (xvi) The internal consent of the mind is presumed to be in agreement with the words or signs employed in celebrating matrimony.
- (xvii) Marriage can be contracted through an interpreter.
- (xviii) Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local Ordinary or the Pastor or a Priest or Deacon delegated by either of them, who assists, and in the presence of two witnesses, according to the rules expressed in the following the one assisting at a marriage is understood to be only that person who, present at the ceremony, asks for the manifestation of consent and receives it in the name of the Church.
- (xix) Unless they have been excommunicated, interdicted or suspended from office or declared such, whether by sentence or decree, within the confines of their territory, the local Ordinary and the Pastor, in virtue of their offices, validly assist at the marriages of subjects as well as of non-subjects.
- (xx) As long as they validly hold office, the local Ordinary and the Pastor can delegate to Priests and Deacons the faculty to assist at marriages within the limits of their territory.
- (xxi) Outside of a case of necessity, the rites prescribed in the liturgical books approved by the Church are to be observed in the celebration of marriage.
- (xxii) If the marriage was contracted in a parish where a spouse was baptized, the Pastor of the place where it was celebrated is to send a notice of the contracted marriage as soon as possible to the Pastor where the baptism was conferred.
- (xxiii) Local Ordinaries and other Pastors of souls are to see to it that the Catholic spouse and the children of a ecumenical marriage do not lack spiritual assistance fulfilling their obligations and are to aid the spouses in fostering the unity of conjugal and family life.
- (xxiv) For only serious and urgent reasons can the local Ordinary permit a marriage to be celebrated secretly.
- (xxv) Parents have the most serious duty and the primary right to do all in their power to see to the physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing of their children.

#### **Canon 10: Dissolution of the Marital Bonds and Consecutive Marriage.**

- (i) Recognizing the reality that some marital bonds may dissolve and cannot be reconciled, the Church does not believe that the Sacramental grace can remain present in a marital relationship in which there is emotional or physical violence, permanent abandonment or the inability of marital fidelity. The grace or the Sacrament is not present in such relationships of pain and

misery. Thus, the Church must allow persons the freedom to leave such relationships and to permit such persons the opportunity to invite Christ into a spirit filled marriage.

- (ii) One may petition the Church to declare a marriage non-binding and dissolved for the following conditions:
  - emotional or physical violence.
  - psychological violence.
  - permanent abandonment.
  - habitual inability to maintain marital fidelity.
  - recognition of true sexual orientation inconsistent with the form of the marriage.
- (iii) One who wishes to enter into a consecutive marriage must present documented evidence of such conditions from their previous marriage to their Pastor prior to attempting a consecutive marriage.
- (iv) Upon obtaining all necessary information, evidence and documentation related to a petition, the local Pastor will investigate and ascertain the weight of the evidence and submit a recommendation to the local Ordinary that a Grant of Dissolution be granted:
- (v) (A Grant of Dissolution cannot be granted prior to the finalization of a civil decree of divorce.
- (vi) The local Ordinary must respond to petitions for a Grant of Dissolution within one month of receipt.
- (vii) The local Ordinary has sole faculties to permit a Grant of Dissolution.
- (viii) Petitioners for a Grant of Dissolution, who have had two or more previous marriages, must make their petition directly to the local Ordinary.
- (ix) Petitioners who submit false information or omit information on their applications, will have their petitions summarily dismissed.
- (x) Candidates for a consecutive marriage must be provided with extended Pastoral counselling prior to entering into the Sacrament.
- (xi) Dispensation from Canon 9 can only be made in matters of life and death situations.

#### **Canon 11: Holy Orders.**

- (i) By divine institution, some among the Christian faithful are constituted sacred Ministers through the Sacrament of Orders by means of the indelible character with which they are marked. Accordingly, they are consecrated and deputed to shepherd the people of God, each in accord with their own grade of orders, by fulfilling in the person of Christ the Head the functions of teaching, sanctifying and governing.
- (ii) The Orders are the Episcopacy, the Presbyterate and Diaconate. Orders are conferred by the imposition of hands and by the consecratory prayers which the liturgical books prescribe for the individual grades.
- (iii) Ordination is to be celebrated within the solemnities of Mass of Sunday, however, it can take place on other days, even ordinary weekdays.
- (iv) Ordination is to be celebrated in a Church and the clergy and other members of the Christian faithful are to be invited so that a large congregation may be present for the celebration.
- (v) The Minister of Sacred Ordination is a validly consecrated Bishop.
- (vi) Under traditional circumstances and situations, the principal consecrating Bishop in an Episcopal consecration is to associate at least two other consecrating Bishops; but it is especially appropriate that all Bishops who are present should consecrate the Bishop-elect along with Bishops mentioned.
- (vii) In urgent and exigent circumstances only one Bishop is required to consecrate, and that any Bishop consecrated by a single Bishop still holds valid Order, Office and Apostolic Succession as a Bishop and the consecration cannot be revoked under any circumstances using the reason of consecration by a single Bishop.
- (viii) In the event of a consecration by a single Bishop, it is at the sole and exclusive discretion of the consecrating Bishop whether or not to associate two additional Bishops in an Episcopal consecration.
- (ix) Each Candidate is to be ordained to the Presbyterate or Diaconate by their own Bishop or with legitimate dimissory letters from their Bishop or Religious Superior.

- (x) A Bishop can confer orders outside of their own jurisdiction only with the written permission of the local Diocesan Bishop.
- (xi) Only a baptized and confirmed Candidate validly receives sacred ordination.
- (xii) It is required that in the judgment of the same legitimate superior of a Candidate is considered to be useful for the ministry of the Church.
- (xiii) In order for a Candidate to be ordained he or she must possess the required freedom.
- (xiv) Those who aspire to the Diaconate or the Presbyterate are required to receive and fulfil an accurate program of formation. Candidates for the Diaconate or the Presbyterate must be a full member of the Church prior to their consideration to enter into secular or religious formation.
- (xv) As part of the application process to enter into secular formation, Candidate must fulfil the following requirements:
  - (xvi) provide documentation of their baptism, confirmation and any marriage.
  - (xvii) provide documentation of the dissolution of any marriage.
  - (xviii) complete a criminal background check (criminal history does not automatically exclude Candidates).
  - (xix) complete a standard psychological examination.
  - (xx) provide documentation of academic credentials.
  - (xxi) completion of application forms.
  - (xxii) anticipate their financial obligations for tuition to a graduate school of theology.
  - (xxiii) fulfill the residency requirements of the local Diocese.
  - (xxiv) any of the requirements above may be modified or waived by the Bishop.
  - (xxv) The local Director of Vocations will empanel a review Board of Clerics in good standing to consider the application of all Candidates and present their recommendations of the board to the local Ordinary for final decision.
  - (xxvi) In the event that the local Board of Clerics denies the Candidate's application, the decision may be appealed to the local Bishop:
  - (xxvii)** In the event the Bishop affirms (upholds) the decision of the local Board of Clerics, the decision may be appealed to The Holy Synod.
  - (xxviii)** In the event The Holy Synod affirms (upholds) the decision of the local Bishop, the Candidate may ask the Presiding Bishop to review the findings and decision of the local Board of Clerics.
  - (xxix)** As part of their formation process, Candidates may enter into the minor Orders of Cleric, Porter, Lector, Acolyte, Exorcist, and Sub Deacon prior to the Order of Deacon.
  - (xxx) Candidates will enter into the Order of Deacon just prior to the start of their internship. The local Ordinary must evaluate the readiness of the Candidate prior to calling the Candidate to Order. The length of the internship will be decided by the local Ordinary.
  - (xxxi) The Order of Deacon cannot be dispensed for Candidates to the Presbyterate.
  - (xxxii) After all circumstances have been taken into account in the prudent judgment of the proper Bishop or the competent Major Religious Superior, only those should be promoted to Orders who have an integral faith, motivated by right intention, possess the required knowledge, enjoy a good reputation, good morals, proven virtues, and other physical and psychological qualities which are appropriate to the order received.
  - (xxxiii) Only for a canonical reason, even if it be occult, can the proper Bishop or the competent Major Religious Superior forbid access to orders with due regard for recourse in accord with the norm of law.
  - (xxxiv) The Presbyterate is not to be conferred upon those who are less than twenty-one years old and who do not possess sufficient maturity; an interval of at least six months is to be observed between the Diaconate and the Presbyterate ordinations, unless otherwise decided by the local Bishop.
  - (xxxv) Candidates must complete their theological studies prior entering into the Order of the Presbyterate unless otherwise decided by the local Bishop.
  - (xxxvi) In order to be promoted to the order of Deacon or Presbyter, the Candidate is to give to their own Bishop or to their competent Major Religious Superior a signed declaration written in their own hand, testifying that they are about to receive Sacred Orders of their own accord, and freely, and that they will devote themselves perpetually to the ecclesiastical ministry. This declaration is also to contain their petition for admission to the reception of orders.

(xxxvii) The following are irregular as regards the reception of orders:

- (xxxviii) A person who labors under some form of mental illness or other psychiatric defect due to which, after consultation with experts in the medical field, they are judged incapable of rightly carrying out the ministry.
- (xxxix)** A person who has committed the delict of apostasy or heresy within the Church.
- (xl)** A person who has committed voluntary homicide.
- (xli)** A person who has committed sexual assault.
- (xlii)** (A condition or condition, impediment, or act considered "irregular" as described above does not prevent or prohibit a Bishop from re-conferring the faculties upon the Offender in the event the Offender's (Candidate's) faculties have been removed, or accepting the mentally ill or Offender back into the order in the event the Offender has been removed from the Order.
- (xliii)** Any of the requirements above may be modified or waived by the Bishop.
- (xliv) A neophyte is simply impeded from receiving orders unless they have been sufficiently proven in the judgment of the local Ordinary.
- (xlv) The faithful are obliged to reveal impediments to Sacred Orders, if they know of any, and can provide documentation to the Ordinary or to the Pastor before ordination.
- (xlvi) Ignorance of any irregularities and impediments does not exempt anyone from them, but does not prevent or prohibit a Bishop from excusing or pardoning the person from ignorance or irregularity and bestowing the Blessing of Ordination, Consecration and Incardination. Before a Bishop excuses or pardons a person from ignorance or irregularity the Bishop shall make a formal request in writing, detailing the reasons for excusing and pardoning the person and await the Bishop's instructions or decision.
- (xlvii) For one to be promoted to Sacred Orders, the following documents are required:
- (xlviii) Certification that the studies prescribed have been duly completed.
- (xlix) Certification that the Diaconate has been received if it is a question of those to be ordained to the Presbyterate.
  - (I) Certification that Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage or Grants of Dissolution have been received and that any additional ministries requested have been received, if it is a question of those to be promoted to the Diaconate.
  - (II) Or a Letter or Decree from the Local Bishop with the authorization of the Presiding Archbishop waiving or modifying any requirements above and declaring the promotion to a Sacred Order.
  - (iii) As regards the inquiry concerning the qualities required of an ordinand, the following prescriptions are to be observed testimonials from competent persons; order that the inquiry may be properly conducted, the Bishop or the Major Religious Superior can employ other means which seem useful in accord with the circumstances of time and place and any of the requirements above may be modified or waived by the Bishop.
  - (liii) In order for a Bishop to proceed to the ordination of one who is not the Bishop's subject, it is necessary that the dimissory letters refer to the fact that all necessary documents have been furnished and that the inquiry has been conducted in accordance with these canons and that the suitability of the Candidate has been proved.
  - (liv) If, despite all of the above considerations, the Bishop has certain reasonable concerns doubting the suitability of the Candidate for ordination, the Bishop is not to ordain the Candidate.
  - (lv) After the ordination has been conferred, the names of those ordained and the ordaining Minister, along with the place and date of the ordination, are to be noted in a special register and maintained as part of the official records of the Diocese.
  - (lvi) The ordaining Bishop is to give each of the ordained an authentic certificate of the ordination which was received.

#### **Canon 12: Incardination of a Secular Cleric.**

- (i) Candidates for Clerical incardination into the Church must be full members of the Church prior to their application. No application shall be given prior to reception into the Church as a lay member.
- (ii) As part of the application for Clerical incardination, Candidates must fulfil the same requirements as stated in Canon 10.13.

- (iii) If there is a Pastoral need, the local Ordinary may grant Candidates for Clerical Incardination the title of "Cleric in Care" and provide them with basic faculties to assist the Bishop.
- (iv) The local Director of Vocations will apply Canon 10.14 to the application process for a Candidate for Clerical incardination.
- (v) If it is determined that the Candidate comes from a tradition that does not have valid apostolic succession and/or lacking the completeness of the Rite of Order, the local Ordinary will fulfil the necessary Sacramental validity through the imposition of hands. As a sign of respect to the previous community, the imposition of hands will be done in a manner as to not demean the dignity of the previous community.
- (vi) Candidates for Clerical incardination must possess a Licentiate in Sacred Theology or an equal degree or they must complete their academic studies prior to being incardinated unless this requirement has been waived due to educational and/or life experience by the local Bishop with the authorization of the Presiding Archbishop.
- (vii) The length of time for the process of incardination will be decided upon by the local Ordinary, in consultation with the Candidate and the Bishop

### **Canon 13: Episcopal Incardination.**

- (i) Members of the Episcopacy from another Catholic community are automatic members and Clergy of this Church, but will not be authorized to exercise the duties and obligations of their vocation and order unless and until such time as the local Bishop investigates Clerics' qualifications and faculties and order and correct ordination, and then reports the findings to the Presiding Bishop for authorization to allow the Cleric to concelebrate Mass and have his faculties and Order recognized.
- (ii) Candidates for Episcopal incardination must fulfil the requirements of Canon 10.13.
- (iii) Candidates for Episcopal incardination must fulfil the requirements of Canon 11.1.
- (iv) Candidates for Episcopal incardination must make their application to the Presiding Bishop of this Church, who will then act as Episcopal Director of Vocations.
- (v) Once a Candidate for Episcopal incardination has received into this faith community, the Bishop may grant Presbyterial faculties to Bishops who have begun the process of incardination. Such Bishops, granted Presbyterial faculties, will be given the title of "Bishop in Care." While accorded the respect of their office, such Bishops are ineligible to participate in the Synod of Bishops, nor can they act as spokesperson for the Church. If a Candidate for Episcopal incardination has not fulfilled Canon 11.6, they must do so prior to making final petition for incardination.
- (vi) Upon completion of a one to three year transitional process, The Holy Synod will make their decision regarding the granting of full episcopal incardination in the Church and make a recommendation to the Presiding Bishop for final decision.
- (vii) Upon being incardinated into the Church, such Bishops will take their seat within The Holy Synod and be given full Episcopal faculties and duties.

### **Canon 14: Bishops.**

- (i) Bishops within this Church are called forth in service and in leadership by the Presiding Archbishop with recommendation of The Holy Synod and the recommendations of the Clergy and the People of God.
- (ii) Bishops shall serve the Church as either a local Ordinary of a Diocese, Auxiliary Bishop of a Diocese, Titular Bishop of a Diocese, or Prefect for a Vicariate. In certain circumstances, the status of Vicar Bishop or Titular Bishop may be granted. In such cases, said Bishops serve as special auxiliaries to the Presiding Bishop.
- (iii) Bishops are called forth because of a Liturgical, Sacramental or Pastoral needs. Bishops are also called forth for their spiritual guidance, theological knowledge, academic wisdom and Pastoral ability.
- (iv) Candidates for the Episcopacy shall be Priests who have been ordained or incardinated into the Church for a period of no less than three years, are active in their standing without leave of absences during the three year period prior to candidacy and are currently in good standing

within the Church any of the requirements or time periods above may be modified or waived by the Bishop.

- (v) Candidates for the Episcopacy must possess appropriate academic credentials.
- (vi) For a just cause a Bishop may request a leave of absence from their faculties. Such requests are made to the Presiding Bishop, who shall grant such leaves after appropriate Pastoral investigation of the cause and appointment of an administrator for the period of the leave of absence, who will work directly with the presiding Bishop.
- (vii) Auxiliary Bishops requesting a leave of absence must apply to their local Ordinary, who will submit the request to the Presiding Bishop.
- (viii) The Bishop of a Diocese or local Vicariate must reside within the jurisdiction to which they are appointed.
- (ix) The Bishop of a Diocese or Vicariate possesses all the rights, prerogatives and responsibilities inherent in that office, as long as they are not in violation to the Canons of the Church.
- (x) Auxiliary Bishops shall assist the local Ordinary in the Pastoral care of the Diocese or Vicariate they are called to serve.

#### **Canon 15: House of Clergy.**

- (i) All clergy who are on active status and in good standing in their Diocese or Religious Community are members of the House of Clergy.
- (ii) The House of Clergy shall actively involve themselves in matters concerning the Church and shall make recommendations to The Holy Synod regarding matters of importance to the Church.
- (iii) The House of Clergy shall be convened and presided over by the Vicar of Clergy who shall act as a member of the Council of Advisors.
- (iv) **Canon 16. Council of Advisors.**  
The Council of Advisors shall be responsible for advising the Holy Synod on matters pertaining to the House of Clergy; the House of Laity; the Worldwide Church Policy.
- (v) The Council of Advisors shall be comprised of Directors of Vocations from each Diocese, the Worldwide Treasurer, the Vicar of the House of Clergy, the Legal Counsel of the Church and all Bishops Emeriti of the Church.

#### **Canon 17: Holy Synod.**

- (i) The Church shall accept its responsibility as an organization that must effectively and efficiently respond to the needs of its members.
- (ii) The Holy Synod shall be responsible for Pastorally governing the Church on matters of Theology, Doctrine, Christology and Orthodoxy. In addition, The Holy Synod shall also be responsible to ensure that the Church functions within the confines of civil and federal law in whatever geographical territory the Church may be located in a solemn vow to God, the Confessional is a sacred domain and whatever is heard or transpires during the confession, the Deacon, Pastor, Vicar, Bishops are bound by Canon 6.11 and 6.13 above, under all circumstances, though the Church functions within the confines of civil and federal law in whatever geographical territory the Church may be located in, and these Canon relating to confession, and the Seal of Confession, can never be broken or violated under any circumstances.
- (iii) All secular and Religious Order Bishops, who are active and in good standing in the Church shall be members of The Holy Synod.
- (iv) The Holy Synod shall be responsible for the spiritual life of the Church and of all its members.
- (v) The Holy Synod shall be responsible for the collective adherence to the spirit and letter of the properly approved Canons and Policies of the Church.
- (vi) The Office of Presiding Bishop and the election of a new Presiding Bishop.
- (vii) The Office of the Supreme Holy Authority of the physical Church and its members is overseen the Bishop who is elected to the position.
- (viii) The Office of Presiding Bishop is for 10 years.
- (ix) The authority of the Presiding Bishop is supreme and autonomous and can only be superseded, removed or revoked as contained in the Canon Law of this Church.

- (x) The Presiding Bishop, upon and during retirement, will maintain His autonomous authority unless He is otherwise unable, precluded and prohibited from carrying out his authority as contained in this body of Canon Law.
- (xi) Candidates for the office of Presiding Bishop must be active within the Church and in good standing for one full year prior to assuming office unless this time period is waived by the Presiding Bishop.
- (xii) If, at the time of the election of a new presiding Bishop, there is no Candidate who fulfils the one year membership requirement within The Holy Synod, then the requirement is automatically dispensed with.
- (xiii) Upon the recommendation of those members concerned with the welfare of the Church who are in good and active standing, The Holy Synod shall elect one of their peers to serve this Church as presiding Bishop for a term of 10 years.
- (xiv) In the event during the active sitting of a Presiding Bishop there occurs a perceived or actual mental health, medical health or other disability that the The Holy Synod is of the opinion will prevent the Presiding Bishop from executing, carrying out, and exercising his obligations and duties of his office, if able, the Presiding Bishop may choose a Representative to act on His behalf and further choose a disinterested, third party.
- (xv) During this period of challenge and investigation of the Presiding Bishops perceived or actual disability, the Presiding Bishop will remain in office until such time as a disinterested, third party determines the fitness of the mental and/or physical state of the Presiding Bishop and determine if he is capable of executing, carrying out, and exercising the duties and obligations of his office.
- (xvi) A civil or criminal legal impediment, circumstance, reason or irregularity does not automatically reclude the Presiding Bishop from executing, carrying out, and exercising the duties and obligations of his office, nor can this legal impediment, circumstance, reason or irregularity be used to remove him from office or prohibit him in any way from executing, carrying out, and exercising the duties and obligations of his office.
- (xvii) In the event that it is determined that the Presiding Archbishop is unable to execute, carry out, and exercise the duties and obligations of his office, The Holy Synod has the duty and obligation to elect a suitable replacement, and the replacement Bishop may take office as the Acting Presiding Bishop on an interim basis until such time as the disabled Presiding Bishop is able enough to resume executing, carrying out, and exercising the duties and obligations of his office.
- (xviii) In the event that the Presiding Bishop is determined by a disinterested third party to be incapacitated and unable to execute, carry out, and exercise the duties and obligations of his office on a permanent basis, The Holy Synod has the duty and obligation to replace the Presiding Bishop on a permanent basis and place the Presiding Archbishop in permanent, paid retirement and maintain the mental health, medical health and physical care of the retired Bishop, providing living and other accommodations to maintain the quality of life for the retired Bishop.
- (xix) In the event that Canon 16.6(ix) shall occur and be present, the duly elected replacement Bishop may take office of the Presiding Bishop.
- (xx) Upon election as Presiding Bishop, he/she shall appoint a Vicar General.
- (xxi) The Vicar General shall assume the duties of Presiding Bishop should the office become vacant prior to the end of the sitting Bishop's term, and the Vicar General will remain acting until such time as Holy Synod duly elects and installs into office a replacement Presiding Bishop.
- (xxii) The Vicar General shall have the responsibility to contact the members of The Holy Synod, House of Advisors, House of Clergy and House of Laity of the vacancy.
- (xxiii) The Houses of Advisors, Clergy and Laity shall make recommendations to The Holy Synod regarding the selection of a new Presiding Archbishop no later than three months after the vacancy occurs, and at that time of their recommendations, The Holy Synod shall elect a new Presiding Archbishop.
- (xxiv) The Vicar General shall perform other duties assigned by The Holy Synod.
- (xxv) During the transitional period, the Vicar General shall act as spokesperson for the Church consulting with The Holy Synod and the Council of Advisors for guidance prior to making any pronouncements binding upon the Church and its members.

**Canon 18: Presiding Bishop.**

- (i) The presiding Bishop shall pro-actively serve as worldwide spokesperson for the Church.
- (ii) The presiding Bishop shall pro-actively evangelize the Gospels.
- (iii) The presiding Bishop is responsible for convening the monthly meetings of the House of Bishops (Synod of bishop\Curia\College of Bishops\Holy Synod).
- (iv) The presiding Bishop is responsible for convening the worldwide Church Conference at a location accessible for all to attend.

**Canon 19: Clerical Leaves of Absences.**

1. Upon written request to their local Ordinary or competent Major Religious Superior, Clerics may petition for a leave of absence from their Clerical functions and duties.
2. Upon receiving the permission of the local Ordinary or the competent Major Religious Superior to enter into a leave of absence, all Clerical faculties are on hiatus and no Cleric on leave is permitted to publicly function in a Clerical role unless otherwise authorized by the Bishop.
3. A Cleric shall be granted a six month leave of absence, with the option for an additional six months. After one year's leave of absence, a serious review must be taken prior to granting any additional leave time.

**Canon 20: Clerical Suspension.**

- i. If after one full year's leave of absence, a Cleric declines or refuses to discuss their future with their local Ordinary or competent Major Religious Superior, the Cleric shall be placed upon full Clerical suspension, with the possibility of Canonical removal from office.
- ii. Should any Cleric remain steadfast in disobedience to Theology, Christology, Dogma, Sacramental Theology, Orthodoxy or Orthopraxis, despite the efforts of their local Ordinary or competent Major Religious Superior, that Cleric shall be placed under Clerical suspension until such time that they correct their errors.
- iii. Any Cleric who fails to fulfill their vows of obedience to their Ordinary or Presiding Archbishop, regarding Pastoral policies or directives and matters stated in 19.2, such Clerics shall be placed under Clerical suspension until such time that they correct their errors.
- iv. Suspended Clerics who habitually decline to correct their errors shall be removed from their Clerical offices by action of the appropriate Ordinary, Major Religious Superior or the Presiding Bishop.

**Canon 21: Clerical Resignation from the Church.**

Any Cleric can petition to leave the Church by submitting a letter of resignation to their local Ordinary or competent Major Religious Superior. By Such an act, the Cleric surrenders all Clerical faculties, rights, privileges and honours within the Church.

**Canon 22: Ecumenical Faculties.**

- i. With the exception as defined in Canon 3.1 above, dual affiliations with other denominations not in communion with this Church are prohibited for secular Clerics and professed religious, faculties may be granted to a Cleric of this Church to Pastorally function within another Christian community.
- ii. A Cleric of this Church may petition for permission from their local Ordinary to provide Ecumenical Pastoral assistance to a community that is not in communion with this Church, who are without Pastoral care or are in transition and attempting to secure Pastoral care from their denomination. In such cases, in the event that Ecumenical Pastoral assistance to a community that is not in communion with this Church is granted, this Church and its Clerics are forbidden from initiating any type of recruitment of that parish body. To do otherwise would be in violation of the spirit of cooperative Ecumenism.
- iii. A Cleric of this Church may petition their local Ordinary to provide Pastoral care to a community that is not in communion with this Church, only if that faith community has formally expressed, in writing, their desire to discern the possibility of continuing their journey in faith with this Church or which maintains a separate identity but is established in the faith of Catholicism as a whole.
- iv. It shall be the responsibility of the local Ordinary of this Church to choose a Cleric suitable to assist such parishes in their discernment process. It shall be the direct, personal responsibility of the local Ordinary to remain involved in such a discernment process.

- v. Clerics of this Church may freely celebrate or concelebrate with a faith community which has entered into a formal covenant of Intercommunion, or upon authorization of the with the authorization of the Presiding Archbishop.
- vi. Pastoral free lancing by Clerics of this Church to obtain stipends or other forms of personal financial gains is strictly prohibited unless otherwise authorized by the Presiding Bishop. Clerics engaged in such activities without authorization of the Presiding Bishop shall have their faculties suspended.

### **Canon 23: Faithful to Support The Church and Presiding bishop.**

It is the inherent duty and obligation of the Church faithful to:

- i. Spiritually Love, Labour, and Financially support this Church in its endeavours and affairs in its mission to spread the Gospel and Love of Jesus Christ and assist others in their needs throughout the world.
- ii. Spiritually and Financially support this Church in its endeavours and affairs in its mission to help the less fortunate of the world and work to improve the quality of life for others.
- iii. Spiritually support this Church in its endeavours and affairs in its mission to love, forgive and accept one another as Brothers and Sisters unconditionally as Jesus Christ had loved, forgave and accepted us unconditionally.
- iv. Spiritually Love, support, edify and encourage one another in the Catholic Faith and remain in Unity with the Trinity - God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
- v. Spiritually and Financially support the Presiding Bishop in his endeavours and affairs in the growth of this Church and in His mission to spread the Gospel and love of Jesus Christ and to assist others throughout the world

### **Canon 24: Protection of Minors.**

The UOCCI takes all matters relating to child protection and vulnerable persons seriously and any reports of misconduct by clergy or staff will be investigated fully in accordance with the legal system of the country in which the misconduct took place. UOCCI will cooperate with the police and authorities in relation to these matters. Any concerns should be raised with Bishop Ted Wooldridge in the first instance

#### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to protect children who may come into contact with clergy of The United Old Catholic Church International in the context of ministry, and to ensure that clergy can work within a supportive framework that sets out clear guidelines for their actions.

#### **II. Criminal Record checks**

- i. Every member of clergy of The United Old Catholic Church International shall be required at the time of application for ordination or incardination to produce a recent check obtained from the Criminal Records Bureau and/or the Police National Computer. Regular and ongoing checks will be required thereafter.
- ii. No person who has been placed on the Sex Offenders Register shall be admitted to any form of ministry involving children.

#### **III. Ministry**

- i. In ministering to children and young people below the age of eighteen, all members of clergy of The United Old Catholic Church International shall ensure that they are accompanied by a second responsible adult at all times. If the second responsible adult is not present, ministry may not take place.
- ii. In the event that a member of clergy of The United Old Catholic Church International participates in the running of any youth organisation such as a club or Bible study group, they shall ensure that a register of attendance is kept of each meeting. If the group consists of members of both sexes, the second responsible adult present shall be of the opposite sex to the clergyperson.

#### **IV. Avoidance of false allegations**

Clergy shall conduct themselves in such a way as not to facilitate the making of false allegations by young people. In particular, in the event that they are placed in a situation where they feel that their integrity is at

risk, they shall have the full support of the College of Bishops in immediately removing themselves from that situation or activity. Clergy must not give lifts to children and young people under the age of 18 without a second responsible adult being present.

**V. Child protection policies of other organisations**

Clergy will observe the child protection policies of other organisations when involved in activities within those organisations.

**VI. Designated child protection officer**

The designated child protection officer for The United Old Catholic Church International is the Presiding Bishop, to whom all inquiries concerning this policy should be addressed.