

## **Greek Orthodox Bishop Says Church Leaders Should Consider Giving Up State Salaries**



A Greek Orthodox bishop has said senior Church leaders should examine whether they should give up their state salaries, as Greece debates proposed pay increases for the country's highest-ranking clergy.

Metropolitan Nektarios of Corfu made the remarks in a personal article on the controversy surrounding a new legislative provision that would raise and standardize salaries for senior officials of the Church of Greece. He said the issue touches not only on clergy pay, but also on how society understands the Church, the role of a bishop, and the relationship between Church and state.

Writing amid strong public criticism, Nektarios said he had followed the debate closely and understood the frustration of citizens facing economic pressure. He wrote that he had heard "the disappointment of many of our brothers" and had seen "the understandable discomfort of a society that is being tested financially," while cautioning that "exaggerations, simplifications and impressions" had also shaped the public discussion.

Bishop says Church service cannot be measured by salary

Metropolitan Nektarios said the controversy raises a broader question about how society understands the Church, the role of the bishop, and the relationship between Church and state.

A bishop's life, he wrote, should not rest on salary demands, while his mission cannot be judged by "the amount of his salary."

According to Nektarios, bishops do not serve the Church in order to seek personal financial gain. Their role, he said, is to serve the faithful, teach, comfort, support, and unite people.

He also pointed to the Church's charitable and social work, including institutions, soup kitchens, children's programs, camps, and support for the sick, the unemployed, families, students, and the elderly.

However, he emphasized that the center of episcopal ministry is not social work as an end in itself, but the spiritual care of people and their relationship with God.

Metropolitan Nektarios raises the question of leaving the state payroll  
Nektarios also raised the possibility that senior Church hierarchs should examine whether they should leave the state payroll altogether.

He said he had already expressed this view within the Holy Synod and chose to repeat it publicly in his article.

"Perhaps we hierarchs should seriously examine our complete resignation from the state payroll," he wrote.

The bishop said he was not making the proposal for public impression, but as a matter of spiritual independence.

"The spiritual freedom of the Church has greater value than any financial arrangement," he wrote.

Until 1986, he recalled, senior Church figures received their compensation through the former Church property management body, rather than through the current state payroll system. Nektarios suggested that the Church could explore another model and direct money now used for bishops toward parish priests, especially those serving small, poor, or remote communities.

"The Church can care for us," he wrote, adding that the faithful would support a bishop "when they know that their bishop lives without a salary."

Corfu bishop points to hidden needs inside local dioceses

Nektarios also argued that the public debate often overlooks the hidden needs local dioceses face and the number of people who turn to the Church for quiet help.

“In every Metropolis there are needs that are not visible,” he wrote, referring to people who lack basic necessities, students who cannot afford to study, families struggling to pay rent, elderly people living alone, and patients who need care.

He described dioceses not merely as administrative offices, but as “daily shelters of human pain.”

As an example, Nektarios cited a project in Corfu for the planned construction of around 80 studios for students and about 20 small two-room apartments for teachers and civil servants who arrive on the island and struggle to find affordable housing.

According to him, the study for the project cost €615,000 and has nearly reached completion. The Metropolis now awaits the necessary permits before moving forward.

Nektarios also referred to a long-term care institution, which has operated for 25 years under the Metropolis of Corfu and hosts around 65 to 70 residents. The institution needs renovation funding, he said, while many parishes already struggle with electricity bills, taxation, church maintenance, and daily expenses.

Greek Orthodox bishop says debate over senior clergy salaries needs accuracy  
Metropolitan Nektarios also criticized the way the issue entered public debate, saying it risked provoking a society already under pressure.

The discussion, he wrote, seemed to call bishops to account, while few people ask how a bishop uses the money he receives or what needs he covers through his ministry.

He also argued that public attention focused on large gross salary figures before Parliament completed the legislative process and before the measure took final effect.

“It is true that there is talk of increased gross pay,” he wrote. “But it is also true that net amounts, after legal deductions and tax burdens, are not identical to the amounts heard in the media.”

Public sensitivity over the issue remains understandable, he said, but accuracy still

matters.

“When a number is presented detached from reality, society is not informed but enraged,” he wrote.

‘A bishop cannot live as a lord of this world’

In a personal passage, Nektarios said he had never wanted salary support as a form of personal security and had tried throughout his life to entrust his care to God.

After his election, he recalled, a professor from the Theological School told him that “a bishop cannot live as a lord of this world.”

“He is called to live as a father, as a minister, as a man who spends himself,” Nektarios wrote.

The bishop added that if the people he serves are in pain, he cannot be at ease. If they face deprivation, he cannot live comfortably. When people question the Church, he said, a bishop should not respond with anger, but with explanation, repentance where needed, and a witness to truth.

“The concern of the Church cannot be salary, public impression, or temporary human acceptance,” he wrote. “Its concern is the Cross of Christ, the humility of service, and the responsibility to stand close to people when they are being tested.”

Nektarios concluded that the debate over clergy pay will eventually fade. The deeper question, he said, is whether the Church responds with truth, humility, responsibility, transparency, charity, and spiritual freedom.

Proposed bill would reshape salaries for Greek Orthodox bishops in Greece

The controversy follows a new bill from the Greek Ministry of Finance that would significantly increase salaries for the highest-ranking officials of the Church of Greece. Under the proposed legislation, the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece and Metropolitan Bishops would receive standardized monthly gross pay of €4,671.90, with some hierarchs seeing increases of up to 95 percent.

Article 56 of the wider finance bill would change how the Greek state compensates senior clerics. The provision would replace the previous tiered allowance system and equalize the pay of Metropolitan Bishops with that of the Archbishop.

Under the new framework, senior hierarchs would receive 90 percent of the maximum gross salary granted to a Ministry General Secretary. That salary limit will rise to €5,191 from April 1, 2026, making the clergy rate €4,671.90. The bill

also rules out additional benefits or allowances beyond that amount.

Before the proposed change, senior clergy salaries varied according to representation expenses and educational qualifications, including whether a cleric held a master's or doctoral degree.

The Archbishop previously earned between €2,840 and €2,915 per month in gross pay, so the new rate would represent an increase of roughly 60 percent. Metropolitan Bishops previously received between €2,400 and €2,475 per month, meaning the new equalized rate would raise their gross pay by as much as 95 percent.

Assistant and Titular Bishops would also move to a standardized pay structure, with their monthly salaries set at 70 percent of the top-tier rate.

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