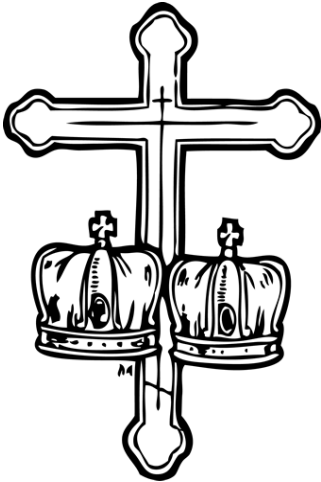


Archpastoral Letter of His Grace, Bishop Michael,
RE-AFFIRMING THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE

June 24, 2011

Feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist



Beloved Fathers and Mothers, Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

Christ is in our midst! – He is and ever shall be!

On this very day, we have witnessed the successful efforts of public officials in the State of New York to legally re-define the meaning of marriage to include unions between two persons of the same gender. It is important for us, as Christians of the Orthodox Church, preserving the Tradition of teaching the truth handed down by the Lord Himself, “the faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints” (Jude 3), to re-affirm the meaning of marriage given to us in His Sacred Scripture.

In the document, **Affirmations on Marriage, Family, Sexuality, and the Sanctity of Life**, written and adopted by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America in 1992, we read (in part) the following summary of the teaching of our Faith on this matter:

- 1) *God wills that men and women marry, becoming husbands and wives. He commands them to increase and multiply in the procreation of children, being joined into “one flesh” by His divine grace and love. He wills that human beings live within families (Genesis 1:27; 2:21-24; Orthodox Marriage Service).*
- 2) *The Lord went even further to declare that people who look at others to lust after them in their hearts have “committed adultery” (cf. Matthew 5:27-30).*
- 3) *Christ’s apostles repeat the teachings of their Master, likening the unique marriage between one man and one woman to the union between Christ and His Church which they experience as the Lord’s very body and His bride (Ephesians 5:21-33; 2 Corinthians 11:2).*
- 4) *Marriage and family life are to be defended and protected against every open and subtle attack and ridicule.*
- 5) *Sexual intercourse is to be protected as a sacred expression of love within the community of heterosexual monogamous marriage in which alone it can be that for which God has given it to human beings for their sanctification.*

