



ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

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June 26, 2015

Beloved in the Lord:
Christ is in our midst!

Today we have heard the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States to overturn all bans of same-sex marriages by states. In doing so, it has declared such unions as being a constitutional right. This means that same-sex marriages can be legally performed in all states of our country.

Despite this announcement, nothing has changed the teaching of our Holy Orthodox Church. As hierarchs, clergy and faithful, preserving the Christian Tradition handed down by the Lord Himself, "the faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints" (Jude 3), we re-affirm the meaning of the Mystery of Marriage given to us in His Sacred Scripture:

- 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).
- 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; II Corinthians 11:2).

As further guidance in this matter, I urge you to read the **Synodal Affirmation on the Mystery of Marriage**, issued by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America in 2013:

<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmation-of-the-mystery-of-marriage>

and the 2013 Statement, **On Marriage**, from the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA:

<http://assemblyofbishops.org/about/documents/2013-assembly-statement-on-marriage-and-sexuality>

No matter what the prevailing pressure of the culture or the highest legal court of our land may proclaim, the timeless teaching of the Church echoes the rule of marriage revealed to us by the Lord, written in the Scripture, and re-affirmed by the wisdom and examples of the Saints. Because "we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16), no matter what the government or society may say, like St. Peter and the Apostles, "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

With my prayers, my blessing and my love,

+ Michael

+ MICHAEL

Archbishop of New York and the
Diocese of New York and New Jersey