



The Orthodox Church in America

DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

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For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. 18 He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God. (John 3:16ff)

Dear beloved clergy and faithful,

The world in which we live today is nothing like the world in which many of us grew up. Whereas many once professed to be Christians and attended Church regularly, today it is no longer the case. Christian values are being rapidly eroded and made an object of scorn through the media. Some faith communities have succumbed to being politically correct rather than faithful to Christ and the Holy Gospel. Our own members sometimes challenge the moral and ethical teaching of the Church. The word Christian historically was used as an adjective to describe the way one lived their life. Today, while some still call themselves Christian they choose to live their lives in a manner contrary to the Gospel delivered once and for all.

Given the recent decision of the Supreme Court legalizing same-sex unions, as well as other similar moral issues related to human sexuality, our Church has not and will not change its theological and pastoral position. I encourage you to read our Holy Synod's *Affirmation on the Affirmation of Marriage* on the subject of marriage and human sexuality (<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmation-of-the-mystery-of-marriage>). Additionally, the Assembly of Canonical Bishops of the United States issued a statement in 2013 *On Marriage* (<http://www.assemblyofbishops.org/about/documents/2013-assembly-statement-on-marriage-and-sexuality>). By way of reminder, marriage is a Sacrament of the Church and only members in good standing may be married in the Church. No same-sex marriages or unions will be performed in an Orthodox Church or elsewhere by an Orthodox clergyman. That being said, we appear as hypocrites if we are soft on the epidemic of co-habitation, premarital and extramarital relations, but not so with those who fail in their struggle with same sex attraction. St. John Chrysostom says in his Homilies on Romans 1 & 2, that those who fornicate sin against their bodies, whereas those who engage in unnatural relations sin against nature itself. In either case, both need to be restored through the Sacrament of Repentance.

Our Church welcomes everyone who is sincerely seeking the Kingdom of God and desires to live a life of purity and holiness, regardless of their own personal struggles. We all have our own sins. By the Grace of God, we continue to repent daily and struggle to become what the Lord created us to be.

Your unworthy father in Christ,

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