

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Charleston, Oakland,
and the Mid-Atlantic

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

June 28, 2015
Feast of Ss. Cyrus and John

Beloved in Christ,

May God bless you always.

On June 26, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down a decision that effectively defines “marriage” as legal between any two consenting adults throughout our country, regardless of their biological sex, a decision that will no doubt have sweeping effects in our society, not just for these couples but for children, families, churches, other religious organizations and all people of faith.

This action by the Court attempting to redefine marriage is deeply wrong, but it gives us an opportunity to reiterate for ourselves and also for our whole country the unchanging, timeless teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church regarding marriage and sexuality.

With the creation of marriage by God for Adam and Eve, the first human bond was instituted. This bond preceded all the other social bonds of humanity, including not just governments but even the covenants that He Himself instituted. It is fundamental to human nature that marriage consists of one man and one woman in a lifelong, exclusive bond. Marriage is therefore not about private desire but about the complementary, conjugal bond of family, as created by God and blessed by Him.

It is only within that blessed bond that sexuality finds its proper expression. All other sexual behavior—whether between a homosexual couple, an unmarried heterosexual couple, multiple people, a person by himself, or anything else—is sinful, meaning that it distorts our relationship with God, each other and ourselves. Yet such actions, including their sanction by entering into one of these new legal unions, which are not truly marriages, can always be repented of. No one is a lost cause. No one is our enemy.

Repenting of our sins is what the Church is for. We are all sinners. Even if you do not have one temptation or one sin, you have others. So we do not condemn anyone for any reason. In love and faith, we hold out the hope of salvation through repentance for every human person.

This is teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. It has never changed and can never change, even if it costs us. We will continue to preach and to practice accordingly, and we expect that all of our pastors, teachers and parents will continue to do so. May God give you courage and love as you do so.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

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