



Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania

Office of the Bishop

June 27, 2015

St. Sampson the Hospitable of Constantinople, St. Joanna the Myrrhbearer

Reg. 15-102

To the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania:

It is by now common knowledge that the Supreme Court of the United States rendered a decision on Friday, June 26, which declared that marriage between members of the same sex is a constitutional right. This ruling effectively overturned laws in several states which declared such unions to be illegal, and ruled that such unions can be legally performed in all states.

While this ruling marks a significant change in the way that homosexuality is regarded according to the civil statutes, it in no way affects the teaching and practice of the Orthodox Christian Church either in this country or anywhere else in the world. In the interests of clarity, it should be understood that Orthodox Parish Churches are not "Wedding Chapels". Our Churches do not function as places where the sacrament of Holy Matrimony is offered to the public at large on a non-sectarian basis for a fee. Nobody can be married in an Orthodox Church who is not a member in good standing. The qualifications to be a "Member in good standing" have not changed. A member in good standing must be someone who has been properly received into the Church, a faithful believer in the teachings of the Church, a regular participant in the sacraments of Confession and Communion, and gives regular financial and material support to the parish. Persons who do not meet these criteria do not have a blessing to be married in the Church, and no clergy have a blessing to ignore or in any way set aside these criteria.

The Church, following the direct teaching of Jesus Christ, " ...He which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matthew 19:4-6)", allows for no other form of marriage. Thus anyone who contracts or who has, in the past, contracted such a relationship and does not repent of that relationship, in addition to those who live together in a conjugal relationship without being married are not to be communed.

I encourage our clergy and faithful to refresh their knowledge of Church teaching on these matters by reading the Synodal Affirmation on the Mystery of Marriage <http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmation-of-the-mystery-of-marriage>. and the Statement of the Assembly of Bishops of the United States <http://assemblyofbishops.org/about/documents/2013-assembly-statement-on-marriage-and-sexuality>.

Any further questions may be addressed through my office

Sincerely in Christ

+ Melchisedek

+Melchisedek
Archbishop of Pittsburgh
and Western Pennsylvania

