



Statement of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs Regarding Marriage

The following statement was approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America during a session of the Holy Synod on June 16, 2016 at Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery in Rives Junction, MI. It is approved for posting and use by all dioceses, parishes, institutions and monasteries of the Orthodox Church in America.

General Standard

The Orthodox Church in America teaches and maintains as a sincerely held religious belief that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman, and that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral, and therefore sin (Genesis 2:24-25; Exodus 20:14, 17, 22:19; Leviticus 18:22-23, 20:13, 15-16; Matthew 19:4-6, 9; Romans 1:18-31; I Corinthians 6:9-10, 15-20; I Timothy 1:8-11; Jude 7). This principle undergirds the teaching of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America that Marriage is the most perfect realization of love between a man and a woman in which two become one and in which love unites in such a way that two lives become one life in perfect harmony. We believe that God created the human race male and female and that all conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one's birth gender is immoral and therefore sin (Genesis 1:27; Deuteronomy 22:5). Marriage can only be between two people whose birth sex is male and female. The Orthodox Church's marriage service specifically states, "Establish them in the holy union which is from Thee. For in the beginning Thou didst make them male and female, and by Thee the woman is joined unto the man as a helper and for the procreation of the human race." Again the service states explicitly, "For by Thee is the husband joined unto the wife. Unite them in one mind; wed them into one flesh, granting to them of the fruit of the body, and the procreation of fair children."

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America upholds and reaffirms such statements such as the July 2, 2013 *Synodal Affirmation of Marriage* (<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmation-of-the-mystery-of-marriage>); the July, 1992 Synodal Affirmations on Marriage, Family Life, Sexuality, and the Sanctity of Life (<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmations-on-marriage-family-sexuality-and-the-sanctity-of-life>); and other such statements and pastoral letters including the June 28, 2015 Statement on US Supreme Court Decision by His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon

<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/his-beatitude-metropolitan-tikhon/statement-concerning-june-26-us-supreme-court-decision>).

Facilities Use

The Orthodox Church in America teaches and maintains as a sincerely held religious belief “that the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1). The Church rejects the notion that there is a division between the material and spiritual world and that the two are somehow subject to separate and distinct moral and religious standards. It is for this reason that the resources of the Church – its property, its financial assets, and all that belongs to it of a material nature – may be used only for purposes and in ways consistent with the Church’s sincerely held religious beliefs and doctrines as reflected in Holy Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, the Holy Canons of the Church, and the encyclicals of our Holy Synod defining our faith, morals, and doctrines. The facilities of the Church may, in the sole discretion of the Church, be made available for use by other parties for activities consistent with the sincerely held religious beliefs of the Church and upon terms and conditions established by the Parish Council under guidelines approved by the diocesan bishop. Under no circumstances will such activities include those contrary to and incompatible with the sincerely held religious beliefs of the Church, including, but not limited to, events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including weddings between persons of the same sex and related receptions), non-Orthodox worship services, and partisan political activities.

The following is an example of a statement that will be adopted by each diocese, parish, institution and monastery of the Orthodox Church in America. The Diocesan Hierarch can adjust the statement in conjunction with the considered needs and circumstances.

The *(Name of the Parish/Hall/Facility)* is the property of the *(Name of the Parish/Institution/Monastery)*, a non-profit church organization located in *(Location)*. Due to sincerely held religious beliefs, documented in the Biblical, dogmatic and canonical documents of the Orthodox Church, we do not permit the *(Name of the Parish/Hall/Facility)* to be used for the following purposes: events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including, but not limited to, baptisms, weddings or funerals); non-Orthodox worship services; and partisan political or social rallies."