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## Office of Communications

# Orthodox Church in America Diocese of New York and New Jersey

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**To:** The Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

The political and ethical current of contemporary American society has once again been agitated by the recent legislative legalization of so-called “same sex marriages” in the State of New York. While the majority of Orthodox Christians are familiar with the Church’s consistent and constant teaching about same-sex attraction and the nature of marriage, this is an opportune time to repeat the Church’s teaching so that no ambiguity exists in the minds of the faithful.

Therefore, we, the Chancellor and Deans of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, wish to thank His Grace, Bishop Michael for his recent archpastoral letter and join him in reaffirming the teaching of the Orthodox Church in this regard.

We are well aware that the work of pastoral care is indeed a difficult one, as pastors are entrusted with the souls of those whom God has formed and loved and known even before the womb and, being so-entrusted, pastors must always be sensitive to the difficult challenges faced by Christians living in the midst of the modern world. Nevertheless, recognizing the fragility of the soul and human nature and the often difficult struggles of those we are called to serve, we must also acknowledge that nothing can be gained from ignoring the teachings of the Church.

Nothing in the Tradition of the Church -- in the Scriptures, the writings of the saints, the canons, or the hymnography of the services -- suggests that same-sex relations are a desirable or acceptable expression of human sexuality. In creating Eve from Adam's rib, God sought to give the first-created man a suitable helpmate. In performing His first miracle at the wedding of Cana in Galilee, Christ blessed the union of man and woman. In answering the Pharisees, Christ revealed that the union of man and woman is indeed God-given, that it is a mystical union of “one flesh,” and that man must not do violence to God's creation. No saint or council has expressed anything in contradiction to the Lord's teaching on marriage.

