

OCA Bishop Matthias Reaffirms Orthodox Teaching on Homosexuality

AUGUST 3, 2011 POSTED BY: **FR. JOHANNES JACOBSE**

Editor's commentary:

When the light shines, the darkness is made manifest scripture tells us and nowhere is this clearer than in the debate about the morality of homosexuality in the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). Most readers know that this debate is heating up, driven in large part by the Facebook group [Listening: Breaking the Silence on Sexuality within the Orthodox Church](#).

True to its tendentious name (there is no "silence" that needs "breaking"), the group follows the playbook of homosexual activism that crippled the Episcopal Church: Accept the premise that the prohibitions against homosexuality need to be "revisited" (a favorite phrase) and thereby undermine the authority of the moral tradition. Refuse and you will be castigated as unloving, uncharitable, closed-minded, ignorant, homophobic, responsible for teen suicides — all the usual pejoratives that are foisted on those who disagree. It's all done with a smile of course. Call it intimidation through church-speak.

The OCA is hampered with the problem of homosexuality because past leaders were active homosexuals. These leaders did not champion the homosexual agenda, but because they were morally compromised the homosexual behavior in some ranks of Church leadership went unchallenged.

Met. Jonah, a moral traditionalist, recognizes the institutional corruption that the tacit acceptance of homosexual behavior can cause and does not tolerate it as past leaders have. This was one reason why detractors rose up and attempted to remove him. Other bishops have since come to recognize that the attempt to create moral parity between homosexual and heterosexual behavior has institutional as well as personal ramifications. They are joining with Met. Jonah in the clarification of the moral tradition not only in teaching, but in practice.

It is very important that Bishops speak out. The Episcopal Church fell because its bishops gave in to homosexual ideology. Had the Bishops resisted, and had they developed a deeper anthropological understanding of the human person (knowledge that the Orthodox already possess but must uncover, examine and explain in greater detail), their collapse may have been avoided.

We are foolish to think that collapse cannot happen in the Orthodox Church. True, the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church, but only God determines where those gates are located. And Bishops, as Orthodox ecclesiology teaches, are first the guardians of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the tradition that flows from it. If they fail, the Church fails.

There is no need for "dialogue" with homosexual activists. The moral legitimacy of homosexual behavior is a closed question. It would be better if the Facebook group and their fellow-travelers used the moral tradition as their baseline rather than attempt to Episcopalians the Orthodox Church. They are dragging the culture wars into the Church and won't rest until it contravenes the moral tradition regarding homosexual behavior just as the Episcopalians have. My question to them: If you feel that strongly, why not join the Episcopal Church?

A personal note. Every time I write about homosexuality, I get letters from men dealing with same-sex attraction urging me to keep the teachings of the moral tradition crystal clear. They write that many men are seeking a way out of the homosexual lifestyle because it imposes a severe psychic and

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emotional penalty. This drives some to Christ where they discover that life in Christ and an active homosexuality are simply not compatible. One or the other has to give and if they accept their attraction as a cross, salvation begins.

I even received a letter from a man who transgendered to a woman, found Christ, and made the switch back again. I'm not sure how that works mechanically but his story is a moving and powerful tribute to the love and mercy of God. He too urged moral clarity saying that if we compromise on the tradition, we steal the hope of finding Christ from those caught up in the homosexual lifestyle who are trying to find Him.

AXIOS to Bp. Nathaniel, [Bp. Michael](#), and [Met. Jonah](#) who have taken on this difficult issue in these confused times with pastoral sensitivity and faithfulness to the moral tradition. Bp. Matthias' encyclical follows.

Source: [The Diocese in the Midwest – Orthodox Church in America](#)

Archpastoral Message of His Grace, Bishop Matthias

Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest,

Christ is in our midst!



Bp. Matthias (OCA)

*“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their **error** which was due.” (Romans 1:24-27)*

In light of the ongoing discussions and debates about “same sex marriage”, I felt the need to address our faithful concerning this issue. Although it would appear to me that the Church doctrine and Scripture

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has been clear about this issue, there are those who “twist” the Scriptures and the Canons of the Church to fit their own needs. We have always believed that the interpretation of Scripture lies within the framework of “Holy Tradition” and the experience and interpretation of the Holy Fathers before us. Who are we to interpret the Scripture outside of this Sacred Tradition? Only those, who do not have the light of Christ, will interpret Scripture to their own ends.

In the above passage from Romans, St. Paul writes that because of the “lusts of their hearts,” they exchanged the truth of God for the lie. Society and our culture is trying to sell us the “lie,” that “gay marriage” is a right and that it is a natural thing. This could not be further from the truth! An error is a delusion. The delusion that St. Paul refers to is the belief that homosexuality or an “alternative life-style” is acceptable. It is unnatural and unacceptable to God! As with all sins, Christ forgives the sinner who repents. If there is no repentance though, or admittance of sin, there can be no forgiveness. The words of the Prophet Isaiah apply here, *“The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe is them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.”* (Isaiah 3:9)

Our society challenges the beliefs of Christ and the Church. They not only justify the sin, but they expect that this sin become acceptable. It is not! His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, shared in his pastoral letter concerning this issue the affirmations, principles and guidelines that the Orthodox Church in America proclaimed nearly twenty years ago. They are as follow:

- God wills that men and women marry, becoming husbands and wives. He commands them to increase and multiply in the procreation of children, being joined into “one flesh” by His divine grace and love. He wills that human beings live within families (Genesis 1:27; 2:21-24; Orthodox Marriage Service).
- The Lord went even further to declare that people who look at others in order to lust after them in their hearts have “committed adultery” (cf. Matthew 5:27-30).
- Christ’s apostles repeat the teachings of their Master, likening the unique marriage between one man and one woman to the union between Christ and His Church which they experience as the Lord’s very body and His Bride (Ephesians 5:21-33; 2 Corinthians 11:2).
- Marriage and family life are to be defended and protected against every open and subtle attack and ridicule.
- Sexual intercourse is to be protected as a sacred expression of love within the community of heterosexual monogamous marriage in which alone it can be that for which God has given it to human beings for their sanctification.
- Homosexuality is to be approached as the result of humanity’s rebellion against God, and so against its own nature and well-being. It is not to be taken as a way of living and acting for men and women made in God’s image and likeness.
- Men and women with homosexual feelings and emotions are to be treated with the understanding, acceptance, love, justice and mercy due to all human beings.
- People with homosexual tendencies are to be helped to admit these feelings to themselves and to others who will not reject or harm them. They are to seek assistance in discovering the

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specific causes of their homosexual orientation, and to work toward overcoming its harmful effects in their lives.

- Persons struggling with homosexuality who accept the Orthodox faith and strive to fulfill the Orthodox way of life may be communicants of the Church with everyone else who believes and struggles. Those instructed and counseled (sic) in Orthodox Christian doctrine and ascetical life who still want to justify their behavior may not participate in the Church's sacramental mysteries, since to do so would not help, but harm them.

On the second day of August, we commemorate Saint Basil the Blessed, fool for Christ's sake and wonderworker of Moscow. At Great Vespers we sing, "*...and that He (Christ) may grant to our hierarchs victory over heresies, unity in the Church, order to the world, and great mercy to our souls.*" Still, to this day, we must face modern heresies, which are really old heresies "repackaged." I pray that the Orthodox Church and its hierarchs can remain united in standing for Jesus Christ, Who is, **The Truth!**

Your Shepherd in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+Matthias". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

+MATTHIAS
Bishop of Chicago
and the Midwest