



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 3, 2015

Religious Leaders Cite Duty to Oppose High Court Marriage Ruling

Bishop Joseph Strickland (shown), the leader of the Catholic Diocese of Tyler, Texas, has written a statement condemning the Supreme Court's June 26 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, mandating recognition of same-sex marriage in all 50 states. Strickland's letter will be read to parishioners attending at Mass at all churches throughout the diocese this July 4 weekend. The letter begins:



Let me unambiguously state at the outset that this extremely unfortunate decision by our government is unjust and immoral, and it is our duty to clearly and emphatically oppose it. In spite of the decision by the Supreme Court, there are absolutely no grounds for considering unions between two persons of the same sex to be in any way similar to God's plan for marriage and the family. Regardless of this decision, what God has revealed and what the Church therefore holds to be true about marriage has not changed and is unchangeable.

In urging conscientious objection to the High Court's ruling, Strickland employed the principle first stated by St. Augustine as "*Lex iniusta non est lex*" or "An unjust law is no law at all." Strickland's application of the principle to *Obergefell v. Hodges* states:

We know that unjust laws and other measures contrary to the moral order are not binding in conscience, thus we must now exercise our right to conscientious objection against this interpretation of our law which is contrary to the common good and the true understanding of marriage.

Furthermore, the bishop's statement is no empty rhetoric. In order to enforce the principles, he stated:

I will shortly issue a decree in this Diocese establishing, as particular law, that no member of the clergy or any person acting as employee of the Church may in any way participate in the solemnization or consecration of same-sex marriages, and that no Catholic facilities or properties, including churches, chapels, meeting halls, Catholic educational, health or charitable institutions, or any places dedicated or consecrated, or use for Catholic worship, may be used for the solemnization or consecration of same-sex marriages.

Leaders of other Christian churches have also strongly expressed opposition to the Supreme Court's decision. Shortly after the court's decision was announced, Rev. Franklin Graham (president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association) said: "With all due respect to the court, it did not define marriage, and therefore is not entitled to re-define it." Graham's statement continued:

Long before our government came into existence, marriage was created by the One who created man and woman—Almighty God—and His decisions are not subject to review or revision by any manmade court. God is clear about the definition of marriage in His Holy Word: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"



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(Genesis 2:24).

I pray God will spare America from His judgment, though, by our actions as a nation, we give Him less and less reason to do so.

In an interview with Fox News Radio host Todd Starnes, Graham was even more direct, stating: “Our government is recognizing sin. This court is recognizing sin. And that’s what homosexuality is. It’s a sin against God just like any other sin.”

Rev. Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, also denounced the Supreme Court ruling, saying it was “improper” for the court to redefine an institution that has existed long before man thought of establishing a government.

“I believe this action of finding some illusory Fourteenth Amendment right to same-sex marriage will have wide-ranging and perilous consequences for the stability of families and for freedom of religion,” warned Moore.

Rev. Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, was another influential religious leader to condemn the court’s decision, stating:

I deeply believe in biblical and traditional marriage. The court has determined otherwise. Our number one concern at this point is that religious freedom is protected in every way, honoring our God-given conscience, and that we not be discriminated against for our biblical and traditional stand. This decision shows one thing: Our desperate need for the next Great Awakening and the hope of the Gospel given to all persons. We must rise up like never before with great urgency, to forward the message of Jesus Christ to every person in America and across the world.

Rev. Roger Oldham, vice president for convention communications and relations with the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, was another religious leader who commented publicly on the decision:

When courts legalize actions that contradict the commandments of God, the commitments and life choices of genuine Christ-followers will not change. It should not be surprising when they respectfully express their disagreement with the Court’s decisions, declaring their continued allegiance to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives as did the Apostle Peter when he said, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Photo of Bishop Joseph Strickland: AP Images

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