

Hello Worthies,

With the recent Supreme Court Ruling on same sex marriage, I am providing guidance and summary from our State Advocate. Comments address both council membership and recruiting, as well as Home Associations. Bob, you might consider adding this to the newsletter as it is a timely article, if it is not too late.

Recent Supreme Court Ruling - Explanation by State Advocate Diego Pena

Brother Knights:

I have received several questions regarding the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in Obergefell v. Hodges, the case that now requires States to license marriage between two people of the same sex and to recognize same sex marriages performed lawfully in other States. The questions I am receiving are:

- Has Supreme taken a position on this decision?
- What is Supreme's policy regarding acceptance of gay/bisexual/transgendered men into the Order?
- Has Supreme issued guidelines in the event a lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered couple wishes to rent a Council owned home association facility for a wedding or reception?

The short answers to these questions are as follows:

- Yes, Supreme has taken an official position. Supreme's statement regarding the Obergefell decision can be found on Supreme's website, <http://www.kofc.org>
- Supreme's requirements for membership in the Order has not changed. To be a member of the Order, a man must be 18 years of age or older and a practical Catholic.
- Supreme encourages all Councils and their associated home corporations to comply with all federal, state and local laws and regulations applicable to the operation of their hall facilities. Please see Supreme's recent policy on home corporations issued last year. This policy can be found in the Supreme Advocate's Officers' Desk Reference located on the Supreme website. www.kofc.org.

I encourage all Brother Knights and Catholic families to educate themselves fully regarding the Supreme Court's Obergefell decision. Same sex couples from Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee filed suit claiming that state officials wrongfully denied them marriage licenses or refused to recognize their legal same sex marriages from other states. Federal district courts in Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee held that the state officials wrongfully denied the same sex couples marriage licenses or legal recognition of their out of state marriages. The state officials appealed those rulings to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, a federal appellate court. The Sixth Circuit ruled in favor of the state officials—reversing the lower court decisions. The same sex couples appealed the Sixth Circuit's decision to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decided to hear the case because several courts across the country were deciding this issue differently—what lawyers call, a “split” among the federal and state appellate courts.

In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court decided in favor of the same sex couples. Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the majority opinion, which was joined by Justice Ginsburg, Justice Breyer, Justice Sotomayor, and Justice Kagan. The majority held that the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution requires a State to license a marriage between two people of the same sex and to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully performed in another State. Chief Justice Roberts, Justice Scalia, Justice Thomas, and Justice Alito authored three dissenting opinions highly critical of the majority opinion. The ruling in Obergefell—for now—applies to States and State officials responsible for issuing marriage licenses. As a result of this ruling, States can no longer deny same sex couples the right to obtain a marriage license and cannot refuse to recognize same sex marriages legally.

performed in other states. So, what does Obergefell mean for the Order? Short answer: at this point, it's too early to say.

Not long after the Supreme Court released its ruling, Supreme issued the following statement:

The Knights of Columbus has regularly reaffirmed its commitment to Church teaching on marriage, and we take this opportunity to do so again in union with our country's bishops, whose statement provides clear guidance. Supreme also referred members to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' website which contains a statement authored by Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville. (<http://www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-103.cfm>). Archbishop Kurtz calls the Supreme Court's decision a "tragic error," but encourages the Faithful with the following:

I encourage Catholics to move forward with faith, hope, and love: faith in the unchanging truth about marriage, rooted in the immutable nature of the human person and confirmed by divine revelation; hope that these truths will once again prevail in our society, not only by their logic, but by their great beauty and manifest service to the common good; and love for all our neighbors, even those who hate us or would punish us for our faith and moral convictions.

Lastly, I call upon all people of good will to join us in proclaiming the goodness, truth, and beauty of marriage as rightly understood for millennia, and I ask all in positions of power and authority to respect the God-given freedom to seek, live by, and bear witness to the truth.

Our Texas bishops were also quick to issue statements echoing Archbishop Kurtz. Cardinal DiNardo of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston has called upon all people of good will to promote and defend marriage as the union of one man and one woman for life:

Our Church will continue its efforts to support public policy issues, including a version of the marriage and religious freedom act, which would prohibit the government from discriminating against those who act in accordance with a religious belief or moral conviction that marriage is the union between a man and woman.

Bishop Michael Sis of the Diocese of San Angelo firmly reaffirms the Church's teaching on marriage, but reminds us that in our disagreement with ruling, we need to conduct ourselves as disciplines of Christ: The Catholic Church will not perform same-sex marriages or promote them in any way. We will continue to teach the beliefs that have been passed on to us from Scripture and Christian tradition. Throughout all of this, we must resist any temptation to hatred, scorn, or violence. We must speak the truth as we understand it in our conscience, and we must always speak the truth in love.

While these fundamental differences of worldview can be deeply painful in families, communities, and nations, I believe it is possible to dwell together peacefully in a society alongside those with whom we agree to disagree.

Our other Texas bishops have issued similar statements. I encourage all Brother Knights to read the statements issued by their respective bishops and to educate yourselves more fully on the Church's views regarding same sex unions.

As the State Advocate for the Texas State Council, I do not speak for Supreme on issues regarding membership or home corporation policy. At this time, membership in the Order is limited to men over

18 years of age who are practical Catholics. With regards to home associations, Supreme's recent policy regarding home associations remains the definitive and controlling policy. This policy can be found on the Supreme website in the Supreme Advocate's Officers' Desk Reference, under Home Corporations.

In closing, Bishop Kevin Farrell's statement summarizes our responsibilities as Catholics and Texas Knights of Columbus going forward:

As Catholics we believe in the dignity of each and every human being made in the image and likeness of God. As such, we accept all persons with respect, compassion, and sensitivity and must be mindful that, even in polarizing times, there is no place for derision or smugness. I pray that all persons who hold dear the civil liberties afforded by the United States Constitution will join us in working to safeguard the rights of people of faith to live and exercise that faith as they believe God requires.

I ask all to pray for the sanctity of the Sacrament of Marriage and to join me in continuing to always pray for our country.

Thanks for everything all of you and your families do for our Country, our Church, and our Order.
Respectfully & Fraternaly

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Viva Cristo Rey! Vivat Jesus!
Bill