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May 28/June 10, 2012

Sunday of All Saints

**A Directive
to all Priests of the Eastern American Diocese**

Dear in the Lord Reverend Fathers,

It has come to my attention that some priests of our Diocese are performing the sacrament of Holy Matrimony for couples without proper legal documentation. The following is what each priest must obtain from **any** couple seeking a wedding in the Church, **prior** to performing the sacrament:

- 1) a wedding license from the municipal clerk (this must be signed by the officiating priest on the day the sacrament is performed and returned to municipal authorities);
- 2) if a couple has been civilly married for many years, a copy of the civil marriage certificate;
- 3) if one or both have been divorced, a copy of the most recent civil divorce order(s);
- 4) if one or both were previously wed in the Orthodox Church (any jurisdiction), a copy of the ecclesiastical divorce order(s);
- 5) if one is heterodox (non-Orthodox couples cannot wed in the Orthodox Church, but if one of the persons marrying is of a non-Orthodox Christian faith and has been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity (e.g., Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, or non-Chalcedonian), then a wedding may be performed), a signed statement agreeing to baptize and raise any children in the Orthodox faith;

Failure to comply with items 1, 2, or 3 has the potential to result in legal action against the priest, the parish, or the Eastern American Diocese or its hierarchs.

Additionally, weddings may not be performed during any fast period, in the *Svyatki* period from Nativity to Epiphany, or on Bright Week. Weddings may only be performed on Sundays, Mondays, and Wednesday and Friday evenings after 4:00 PM (after Vespers). If an exception to the above is to be made, a blessing must be obtained from my vicar Bishops, Their Graces George or Jerome, or from me.

Lastly, all weddings **and baptisms** should be performed in white vestments whenever possible, regardless of the liturgical time of year, even during Great Lent.

With love in Christ,

+ *Hilarion*

Metropolitan of Eastern America & New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Fr. Serge Lukianov

Archpriest Serge Lukianov
Diocesan Secretary