

January 19, 2014

To the Venerable Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America:

Dearly beloved,

I greet each of you with the love offered us by our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ on this Sunday dedicated to the sanctity of life. Having just celebrated the glorious feasts of the Nativity and the Theophany of Christ, we have been given a unique perspective from which to reflect on the meaning of our life as baptized Orthodox Christians, and on what it means to be a human being striving to live a Christ-like life. As Saint Athanasius tells us, "by the Word made Man, death has been destroyed and life raised up anew." And it is in this spirit that we celebrate today the sanctity of our renewed life.

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons reminds us that "the glory of God is a living human being." Today, as we celebrate the sanctity of life given by and lived in Christ, we are called to remember that all life is an expression and reflection of the glory of God. Life is a sacred gift from God -- a gift that is given at the very moment of conception.

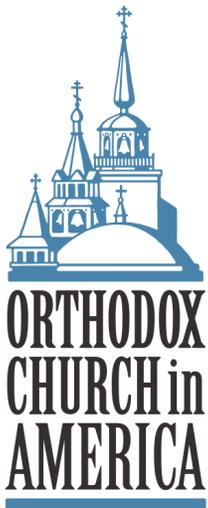
Proclaiming and upholding the sanctity and miracle of life is a sacred calling, one that lies at the heart of who we are as Orthodox Christians. Indeed, it is our ability to feed, clothe, visit, and minister to all of human life which will provide our defense at the dreadful and awesome second coming of our Lord. It is a calling that involves obligations and responsibilities for the common good of all mankind, beginning with the lowest, least and weakest amongst us. And, at the very heart of this calling is the challenge to share, in "truth and love," the reality that human beings -- in the womb, beyond the tomb, and at every point in between -- reflect the glory of God. Hence, we strive not only to work to change laws that are contrary to the teaching of our Lord, or that treat life as just another "expendable commodity," but to purify hearts and minds to embrace the God Who is Love, Life and Existence Itself and Who invites us to become partakers of His divine nature.

Dear brothers and sisters! It is our prophetic task to call a divided and polarized world to live in Christ, to live lives worthy of the glory of God, and to discern His presence and image in all with whom He shares His life and for whom He gave His life. Please join me in remembering, not only today but every day, that the God-given gift of life is the very reflection of His presence in our midst, and that all human life is called to embrace the sanctification and glory of our Creator!

With love in the Lord,



†Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada



P.O. BOX 675
SYOSSET, NY 11791-0675
TEL: 516-922-0550
FAX: 516-922-0954
WEBSITE: WWW.OCA.ORG