



January 24, 2021

Protocol 01/003

**Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon
Sanctity of Life Sunday
Sunday, January 24, 2021**

To the Esteemed Clergy, Reverend Monastics, and Beloved Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

Over the past year, Orthodox Christians have become urgently aware of the need to protect the most vulnerable members of our society. In the face of a global pandemic, it became necessary for the world and even our Church to take a series of extraordinary measures in order to safeguard the life and the health of the elderly, the infirm, the defenseless, and the weak. In doing so, we pray that we were given the grace to fulfill the prophetic word, the evangelical command, and the apostolic exhortation not only to show mercy to one another, but also to defend the well-being of all members of the Church and of the world.

In exactly the same spirit, as the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, I take this Sunday—the Sunday that we as a Church dedicate to the proclamation of the Sanctity of Life—as an opportunity to reiterate unequivocally our commitment to the defense of the defenseless, and the protection of the most vulnerable, and thus our opposition to abortion. As Christians it cannot be any other way. Our Lord has taught us throughout the Holy Scriptures to be merciful as He is merciful, to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill His law, to defend the widow and the orphan, to welcome the stranger and the sojourner, and to love one another even as He has loved us. This essential message found throughout Scripture must be all-encompassing and extend to the precious lives carried in the womb. If we are to love even our enemies, as He has commanded us, surely we must also love, defend, and seek to protect precious lives being formed within their mothers' wombs.

Beloved children in the Lord, following the example of our response to the pandemic, we can look to concrete ways in order to fulfill what our Lord has commanded us to do. In other words, the teaching of the Lord should inspire us to seek out ways to provide necessary support for mothers or families who might otherwise consider having an abortion. I, together with the members of the Holy Synod, exhort our

Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate

clergy and faithful to consider different ways that we might be able to serve and assist pregnant mothers, especially within our own local communities. To this end, we should extend the right hand of fellowship to these mothers and their families, provide material support when needed, and assist them in caring for the children who will be born of them. Above all, I believe, we should affirm to the world—to anyone considering an abortion, to anyone counseling someone to have an abortion, or to anyone who supports this practice—the lessons we have been taught by our Master: the ways of mercy, compassion, and love. In so doing, I pray that we will enkindle in their hearts and minds a change, so that they too will learn to walk in these same ways, and will be moved to protect and defend the most vulnerable among us.

May our Lord Jesus Christ inspire us to remain faithful to the vision of human life as a sacred gift, as we recommit ourselves to defending the lives of the unborn, to offering acts of mercy and kindness to struggling single mothers and families facing hardship, and to praying for the salvation of all of mankind.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada