

Orthodox Pro-Life Statement

The Orthodox Church has consistently and unequivocally recognized the full humanity of every person beginning at the moment of conception. This position is informed by Scripture and Holy Tradition and is validated by modern science, which confirms that a new, distinct human organism comes into existence at conception. The Orthodox Church is, and always has been, unabashedly pro-life, regarding abortion as the killing of another human being.

In recent weeks, this position has been called into question, and, consequently, we, Orthodox Presiding Hierarchs representing several canonical jurisdictions in the United States of America, are compelled to proclaim the only true and correct teaching of the Church on this matter. We reiterate the words of the Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations (the "Didache"), which dates to the earliest generations of the Church: "Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant" (οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον ἐν φθορᾷ οὐδὲ γεννηθέντα ἀποκτενεῖς).

The Orthodox Church strives to stand above politics; yet, the Church also stands for order, against the forces of chaos and lawlessness. All civilized societies prohibit the intentional taking of the life of one human being by another human being, except under extreme and unusual circumstances. The United States of America is certainly no exception: in every state, intentional homicide is outlawed. Yet our laws are inconsistent, banning the killing of some humans but not others. There is no basis in either law or science, and certainly not in morality or religion, to draw a distinction between a human who is in the womb and a human who is outside of it. Thus, the Orthodox Church calls upon the civil authorities, not only in the United States but globally, and especially in traditionally Orthodox lands, to treat all humans equally under the law, and thus to forbid the evil practice of abortion.

It is true that the Most Holy Theotokos gave her consent to the Incarnation of the Uncreated Word of God. The Lord did not impose Himself on humanity, but took on our nature with the permission of us humans, represented by the greatest of us, the Virgin Mary. Once this consent was given, the Incarnation took place: the Word became flesh at that moment. The Orthodox Church embraces this paradox of the Incarnation, of the Uncreated becoming one of His creatures. Yet while paradoxes of this kind are essential to our faith, so too is clarity: the clarity that the newly-conceived human – including the Lord Himself at the moment of His conception – is a full human. Here, then, the consent of the Theotokos ends, and her duties as a mother begin: once she conceived the Lord, she had the sacred responsibility of nurturing and caring for Him, which she fulfilled perfectly.

This same Lord Who became incarnate of the Virgin Mary on the Feast of the Annunciation loves every human being He creates, from the moment of their conception. He loves their mothers, along

with the fathers, who suffer and sacrifice for their children. The Church, and, indeed, all of humanity, has a duty to care for and support these children and their mothers.

No less equally, the Lord also loves the mothers who, victims of deceitful pressures from this world, make the tragic choice to have their children killed. For these mothers, the Church offers forgiveness, compassion, and healing through repentance and reconciliation both to God and to their lost children.

The Lord loves those fathers and other men who, failing in their duty to provide and protect, instead pressure and even force mothers to have their children killed.

The Lord loves those physicians and other practitioners who, themselves victims of deceit, have allowed themselves to become instruments of evil in the murder of innocent children.

Finally, let us all implore the same Lord, Who desires that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, that His all-encompassing love and mercy will enfold all who are affected by the tragedy of abortion and bring healing to our land.



Metropolitan Joseph
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America



Bishop Longin
Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America



Metropolitan Nicolae
Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas



Metropolitan Joseph
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada, and Australia

A PRAYER FOR THE SANCTITY OF UNBORN LIFE

O our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who in the beginning fashioned man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life so that he became a living soul, Who knowest the time of life and name of each even from his mother's womb, Who numberest even the hairs of our heads, and Who keepest a watchful eye over every living thing in Thy creation, do Thou now look upon Thy creation which Thou hast fashioned according to Thine own image, and grant to those who are in their mother's wombs and to their mothers the protection that Thou gavest Thine own Virgin Mother when she carried Thee, and fill them with the Holy Spirit even as Thou once filled Elizabeth such that John the Forerunner leaped in her womb at encountering Thee.

As Thou becamest incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became true man, hidden within the veil of Thy Mother's flesh, joining Thy divinity with our humanity, join Thyself now with us and all Thy human creation through Thy grace. As Thou didst enter into the womb of Thy Mother, be present also in the wombs of all mothers, with them and with their children. Protect them from all assaults of the evil one and his foul spirits, that in due time all may come unto Thee, as Thou didst say, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

O Thou Who at Thy birth heard the weeping of Rachel in lamentation, who would not be comforted for her children were no more, crying out at the slaughter of the innocents by the wicked Herod for Thy sake, hear also the weeping of all those who lament the deaths of Thy little children, who cry out for Thy love and peace in the midst of terror and inhumanity.

As Thou once granted true contrition of heart to David and to Manasseh and to Peter, who sinned against Thee, grant true repentance to all who in malice or greed or desperation or hopelessness or ignorance sin against Thee and Thy creatures in the untimely taking of their lives. Receive their tears as the tears of the Publican, which flow from the depths of their hearts, as Thou didst receive David, who had taken life unjustly, and Manasseh, who had permitted the worship of idols, and Peter, who thrice denied Thee. Receive them as the Prodigal, with eagerness and rejoicing, clothing them with the robe of holiness and glory and celebrating with them the feast of faith.

Speak words of justice into the hearts of our rulers, that they may be guided by divine wisdom in protecting and nurturing life in every good way. Give strength and love to those who minister to all who suffer in desperation and need, granting through them every spiritual and earthly blessing. Protect the widows and orphans and the abandoned, be Father to the fatherless and hope to the hopeless, raise the young, protect the bond of marriage in peace and concord. Remember the forgotten and bring them to mind in all of us who pray unto Thee. Grant eternal rest to the fallen, and raise them up at the last day.

O Christ our God, Who knowest us all in our depths and receivest the supplications of Thy servants who call out to Thee in our own transgressions and imperfection, hear this our humble prayer and give us all Thy divine blessing from on high, for Thou are ever glorified with Thy Father Who is from everlasting and Thine all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.