



January 25, 2026

01/006

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, beloved children in the Lord:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

During these winter months, the Church celebrates a number of feasts dedicated to the appearing of the Lord in the flesh.

At his Nativity, he is born an infant, with all the needs of an infant; he requires his Mother's nourishment, warmth, and care, and also his foster-father's protection.

At his Baptism, he enters into the rushing waters of this world, into the cascading elements of creation, into the onrushing flow of life, into the change and flux of the present age.

At his Meeting in the temple, he enters into the religious and cultural life of his people while also already showing himself to be the Fulfillment of their deepest religious yearnings, the Salvation for whom they have longed.

Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, becoming incarnate and appearing in the world, did so in order to fill every aspect of our life with himself. He has willed to be present in our basic weakness and our everyday needs; to be present among all the changes and cycles of nature and history that swirl around us; to be present in the highest aspirations of human culture, which reach beyond this life and grasp at the undying life of the age to come.

In the midst of this luminous season of feasts, we also mark our annual Sanctity of Life Sunday. Reflecting on the meaning of the sanctity of life in light of the great feasts that we have celebrated and will soon celebrate, we realize that the Lord has come so that we might have life and have it more abundantly, not just in the age to come, but in this present age as well.

Therefore, every moment of human life, from conception to natural death, is infinitely precious, because every moment of human life, every facet of human existence—except for sin—has been hallowed by the presence of the Lord. Every phase of life, every circumstance, is an opportunity to encounter the Lord.

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Our Orthodox Christian understanding of the sanctity of all human life is not, therefore, a cold and abstract principle, but an affirmation of the love of the living God revealed in Jesus Christ. This is a love that opens up the fullness of life's possibilities at every moment, fills the world with meaning, and offers the promise of renewal for individuals, communities, and entire cultures.

Therefore, as we mark this Sanctity of Life Sunday, we pray not just for legal protections for all human beings, from conception to natural death. We also pray that our entire culture would be oriented toward the physical and spiritual well-being of all people in all phases of life so that, without undue fear or trouble, in peace and health, all of us may experience this life as a place of encounter with the radiant and life-giving Love of God, Jesus Christ incarnate in human flesh.

To him who gave us life in the beginning, who sustains our life in this world and desires to fill it with himself, and who willed to save us and lead us to everlasting life in the age to come, our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, be all thanks and adoration, together with his Father and his All-holy Spirit: now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

+Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada