

**The Reading from the First Epistle of the Holy Apostle  
Paul to Timothy (1:15–17)**

My son Timothy, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

**The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to  
St. Matthew (15:21–28)**

At that time, Jesus departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.” But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.” And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

**On the Canaanite Woman**

When Lent and Pascha come later, like this year, we hear the story of the Canaanite Woman on the Sunday before the Sunday of Zacchaeus. Like Zacchaeus, this woman zealously pursued the Lord, even when others wanted to hold her back. She knew her need—that only the Lord could heal her daughter—and she did not stop asking until she was heard. Even when it seemed Jesus himself rebuffed her, she pressed on. And for that, the Lord praised her faith and her daughter was healed. From that time, the Church has pointed to her as an example of prayer in the face of adversity. When it seems that no one hears us, or that the Lord has turned a deaf ear to our need, remember the Canaanite Woman. Lord, hear us and have mercy!

**Saints Peter & Paul  
Orthodox Church**

Meriden, Connecticut

website: [sspeterpaul.org](http://sspeterpaul.org)

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31st Sunday after Pentecost—Tone 6 Sanctity of Life Sunday January 26, 2025	Martyrs and Confessors who suffered under the Soviet yoke. Ven. Xenophon, his wife, Mary, and their two sons, Arcadius and John, of Constantinople (5th–6th c.).
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**Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!**

We welcome everyone who has come into this house of the Lord. We especially welcome all guests and newcomers.

Today, we begin with Matins, the morning service with readings and hymns illuminating the meaning of this particular Sunday. You can follow along with a Matins service booklet, found beside these bulletins on the table at the glass doors. The Divine Liturgy, the primary celebration this morning, immediately follows. You can follow along with a black Liturgy book from the stack on the same table as the bulletins and Matins booklet. This Sunday and most of the year, we use the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom at the beginning of the book. The most significant hymns and responses specifically for today are printed inside this bulletin.

Holy Communion is a solemn responsibility: Orthodox Christians who have prepared through Confession, prayer, and fasting may participate. At the end of the Liturgy, everyone is welcome to come for a blessing and to share in the blessed bread (called “antidoron,” this bread is used in our prayers but is not itself a sacrament). Afterward, please join us downstairs for fellowship and refreshment. We look forward to greeting you personally, and we are glad that you are here.

## Upcoming Events in Parish Life

We invite anyone to pray along with us, following our services online. Visit our website ([sspeterpaul.org](http://sspeterpaul.org)) for details.

Saturday, Jan. 25	Great Vespers, followed by confessions	5 PM
	Supper & Fellowship after Vespers—Bring a board game or craft project, or just come and enjoy time together. Bring friends and family too!	
Sunday, Jan. 26	Matins, leading into Divine Liturgy	9 AM
	Chrismation of Michael Panico before the Liturgy	
	Prayers for Our Lady’s Sisterhood after	
Tuesday, Jan. 28	Online Study of the Gospel of St. John Link and details: <a href="http://sspeterpaul.org/study">sspeterpaul.org/study</a>	7 PM
Wednesdays	Weekday Matins	8:15 AM
Saturday, Feb. 1	Great Vespers, followed by confessions	
Sunday, Feb. 2	Matins, leading into Divine Liturgy	9 AM
	The feast of the <b>Meeting of the Lord in the Temple</b> is on Feb. 2. This is the day when our Lord Jesus Christ was brought into the temple as a forty-day-old child by his parents. There the Righteous Simeon testified that he saw the promised salvation of Israel fulfilled: “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation....” We sing his thanksgiving at every service of Vespers.	
Sunday, Feb. 9	“Souper Bowl” Fundraiser	
Sunday, Feb. 23	Meatfare Sunday—Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Bishop Benedict presiding, followed by Meatfare Dinner	

**We are holding a special collection in January for a supplemental contribution to the Diocese of New England.** As discussed at the Annual Meeting, the Diocese invited parishes to make a voluntary contribution, on top of our mandatory Fair Share, to cover the funding gap in 2025 relating to our having a resident bishop (who needs a permanent home!) for the first time in decades. The Parish Council has set a target of \$800, with anything received beyond to be applied to similar expected needs in 2026.

**Orthodox Volunteer Corps (OVC)** is a year-long domestic service program for Orthodox young adults ages 21–29. OVC gives the opportunity to serve those in need while being formed in Orthodoxy and leadership training, live in community with other Orthodox young adults, and engage local parishes. Housing, transportation, and food are 100% covered. **Applications for Fall 2025 are open now and due February 20: [orthodoxvolunteercorps.org](http://orthodoxvolunteercorps.org)**

### We Ask Your Prayers

**For Ephraim**, who has as his heavenly patron the **Ven. Ephraim the Syrian** (Jan. 28).

**For those celebrating birthdays:** Benjamin Lindstrom, Michael Barra, and Serge Pavlov on Jan. 30. Christina Craig on Jan. 31.

**For the Sick & Suffering:**


Archbishop Anastasios of Albania  
 Archpriest Vladimir (Aleandro)  
 Corey (Knap)—nephew of Valentina Knap, recovering from a serious accident  
 William (Weidmann)  
 Raisa (Morosan)—recently hospitalized  
 Carol—friend of Mary Jane Rodgers  
 Ed—friend of Sierra Levesque

Gregory (Mankevich)	Christopher (Sullivan)	
Anita (Propheter)	Rosemary (Delaney)	
Steven (Rygiel)	Catherine (Barra)	
Raisa (Fahy)	Michael (Edwards)	
Shawwna (Kelly)	Susan (Shulga Waas)	
Timothy (Waas)	Irene	Lorraine
Jacob	Katelyn	Joseph
Crystal	Angela	Innocent
Georgiy	Larissa	Valentin
Andrei	Stacia	Jose
Cyprian and Dana	Nicole and Naaman	Helen and Helene
<b>For Our Shut-Ins:</b>	Yvonne (Rutcho)	Margaret (Savchik)

To share news in the bulletin, or to add someone to our prayer list, please contact Fr. Joshua: [priest@sspeterpaul.org](mailto:priest@sspeterpaul.org) or 203-237-4539.

In order to commemorate loved ones by lighting the cross in church, please contact Alexia Tassmer: 203-623-5336.

Give thanks to God, and support the work he is doing through SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church:  
<https://sspeterpaul.org/donate> or use this QR Code →



# Sanctity of Life Sunday 2025

## Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon

January 26, 2025

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

My Beloved Children in the Lord,

As we mark our annual Sanctity of Life Sunday, I would like to speak to you about martyrdom. Specifically, by understanding martyrdom, which we might consider the most pure, fundamental realization of the Christian vocation, we understand just why we hold life sacred.

At first, this may appear paradoxical. Martyrdom, after all, is willingly surrendering one's life for the sake of the Christian faith. Martyrdom teaches us that life in this world is not to be compared with the glorious and everlasting life that awaits us in the world to come. As the Lord says, "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mk. 8:35).

Christ promises us in his Beatitudes that "blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11–12). When we are rejected by the world because we accept the Gospel—when we reject the world in order to take up our Cross—then we display the Christian faith in all its truth and power and glory. Martyrdom, etymologically and in fact, always means "bearing witness," and the greatest and most fundamental way to bear witness to the Gospel is to die for the sake of the Gospel.

However, martyrdom, even when it points us towards the next life, also testifies to the immeasurable sacredness of our mortal life in this world. Here, in this life, it is possible for us to bear witness; here, in this life, we have the possibility of accepting Christ's gift of salvation. This is true for the literal martyrs, but it is also possible for every Christian through the bloodless martyrdom of asceticism. Whenever we die to our fleshly desires for the sake of the Gospel, we suffer a little martyrdom. Whenever we forgo power or wealth or gratification for the sake of Christ's commandments, we are bearing witness, in a small way, to the truth of the Christian faith.

In other words, martyrdom proper, as well as the ascetic martyrdom to which we are all called, are a way of "redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16). Through Christ's Incarnation and Passion, the fallen world and passing present age have become an arena of spiritual struggle and the place where salvation is accomplished.

Seen from this perspective, life in this world is not something cheap and utilitarian, but incredibly dear. The Lord gives us this life that we might offer it back to him, fulfilling our primordial role as priest and mediator of creation: man is called to commend himself and his fellow-men and all his life to Christ our God.

All life comes from God; all life belongs to God; and through the saving work of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, biological life in this world is now open to the possibility of true and everlasting life in the world to come.

Thus, on this Sanctity of Life Sunday, we bear witness to the truth that all human life, from conception to natural death, is sacred. We pray that the scales will fall from the eyes of our countrymen who do not recognize this basic truth, and we beseech the Lord that all violations of this holy principle—abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and the rest—would come to a swift end in our age and our land. Finally, we pray that we might find the strength to live in accordance with this teaching, showing forth the sanctity of life by devoting our own life to the pursuit of sanctity, thus bearing witness in our flesh to the truth of the holy Orthodox Christian faith.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Tikhon

Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada

## Sanctity of Life Resources

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America has established an annual commemoration of the Sanctity of Life on a Sunday close to the anniversary of the Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision, which eliminated almost all legal restrictions on abortion in the United States.

The OCA shares through a Sanctity of Life Resources page a wide range of statements, reflections, and organizations which faithfully present a loving, non-partisan and clear witness from the Orthodox Faith, going back to the earliest days of the Church. Learn more at <https://www.oca.org/sanctity-life-resources>

## Hymns of the Day

### **Tone 6 Troparion** *(Resurrection)*

The Angelic Powers were at Your tomb;  
the guards became as dead men.  
Mary stood by Your grave,  
seeking Your most pure body.  
You captured hell, not being tempted by it.  
You came to the Virgin, granting life.  
O Lord, Who rose from the dead, //  
glory to You.

### **Tone 4 Troparion** *(Apostles Peter & Paul)*

O first-enthroned of the Apostles,  
teachers of the universe:  
entreat the Master of all  
to grant peace to the world, //  
and to our souls great mercy!

### **Tone 4 Troparion** *(Ven. Xenophon)*

O God of our Fathers,  
always act with kindness towards us;  
take not Your mercy from us,  
but guide our lives in peace //  
through the prayers of Venerable Xenophon and his family!

### **Tone 6 Kontakion** *(Resurrection)*

When Christ God, the Giver of Life,  
raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand,  
He bestowed resurrection on the human race. //  
He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.

### **Tone 2 Kontakion** *(Apostles Peter & Paul)*

O Lord, You have taken up to eternal rest  
and to the enjoyment of Your blessings  
the two divinely inspired preachers, the leaders of the Apostles,  
for You have accepted their labors and deaths as a sweet-smelling sacrifice, //  
for You alone know what lies in the hearts of men.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

### **Tone 4 Kontakion** *(Ven. Xenophon)*

You kept vigil in the courts of the Lord with your wife and two children,  
blessed Xenophon,  
and you gladly lavished your wealth on the poor. //  
Therefore, you have inherited divine joy.  
  
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

### **Tone 6 Kontakion** *Steadfast Protectress*

#### **Prokeimenon in the Sixth Tone** *(Resurrection)*

O Lord, save Your people, / and bless Your inheritance! *(Ps. 27:9a)*  
*Verse:* To You, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me! *(Ps. 27:1a)*

#### **Before the Gospel, the Alleluia**

*Verse:* He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the  
shadow of the heavenly God. *(Ps. 90:1)*

*Verse:* He will say to the Lord: “My Protector and my Refuge; my God, in  
Whom I trust.” *(Ps. 90:2)*

#### **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! *(Ps. 148:1)*  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

#### **Notes on the Week**

This Sunday is filled with special commemorations. We commemorate all the martyrs and confessors who suffered under the Soviet yoke, starting with the Russian Revolution. Untold numbers of clergy, monastics, and faithful suffered for the Faith, as Communist oppressors sought to establish a godless society. Out of this horror, God raised up bright witnesses that shine for us today, reminding us always to live with courage and hope.

We also keep this day as Sanctity of Life Sunday—please read Metropolitan Tikhon’s letter to us, reminding us of our calling to uphold the sacredness of every human life, especially in cultivating holiness in our own life. We pray for an end to all violations of the sanctity of life, particularly abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia. Today, we will add several petitions dedicated to this holy purpose.

With courage, and with faith, hope, and love, we assemble this day, as we do every Divine Liturgy, offering up our prayers of intercession and thanksgiving “on behalf of all, and for all.”