

Rector's Letter,

February, 2019

Dear brothers and sisters:

The Orthodox Christian Faith is not the easiest to embrace. It demands a lot of us: long services, fasting and prayer, disciplines and rules, and I'm sure we could name plenty more. As we hear one more time, "Again and again, in peace let us pray to the Lord"; as we are called one more time to fast or come to confess our sins; as we find one more way that Orthodoxy does not fit in with normal American ways; we may ask, "Why do we bother?"

God knows what is on our minds; so why do we need to pray again and again? God does not benefit from our fasts; so why fast? God sees our secret sins; so why confess? Why do anything beyond the minimum we feel is necessary?

But Valentine's Day, coming in just a couple of weeks, gives us a clue. A holiday to celebrate love? It seems a little silly, perhaps. But a husband who fails to do something that says, "I love you," is probably making a serious mistake! In fact, we make a statement, whether we like to or not, every day of a marriage. If we are mindful and conscientious, we act in ways big and small that show our love; and truly, it is the regularity and faithfulness that matters most. If we don't think to act in these ways, it says — whether we mean

it or not — that our spouse is not important, not worthy of attention.

In fact, this principle extends to all our relationships. The way we treat those around us says many things: what we think of those people, yes; but even more, what we are like, ourselves. More than that, these ways of treating people shape who we truly are. If we constantly complain and criticize, we become increasingly embittered, and find it hard to be grateful for anything. If we make a point of giving thanks, though, we find it easier to be at peace, even during troubles. If we think of ways to be charitable to those around us, we become more open to the gifts of God's grace.

And that is why we bother with all the demands of Orthodoxy. It is a straight and narrow road, like marriage. A glamorous wedding may seem very appealing, with a beautiful couple, wealth, style, paparazzi and all the rest. But the glamorous couples hardly ever hold their marriages together when life gets difficult.

Lasting marriages are built on the willingness to faithfully and patiently act in love toward one another, no matter what. They involve doing many of the same things again and again, day after day. They involve sacrifice. They involve saying some obvious but essential words: "Please"; "Thank you"; "I'm sorry"; "I forgive you"; "I love you." If we put our heart behind them and show by our actions that we mean them, they never get old. In fact, we can become better husbands and wives, and find that we love each other more sincerely.

Doesn't church sound a lot like this, too? The Church was not established for God's sake but for ours, to help us become better human beings, that is, more like Jesus Christ. We repeat ourselves because the words still need saying, for our own sake. We fast and pray because it draws us closer to God. We sacrifice time for church services, prayer, and works of love because these help shape our minds and hearts to know God better, to draw into closer communion with God and his saints.

The mystery is that, if we turn from asking, "Why bother?" to asking, "Why not?" we find joy in the same things that were drudgery before. If we wash the dishes in a spirit of complaint, we hate the work, but if we wash them as an offering of love, we find it rather easy. If we pray in a spirit of complaint, we hate that work, too. But if we find the way to be thankful and put our love for God into action, we find that our burden becomes light.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Joshua S. Medlin

Around the Parish

The feast of the **Meeting of the Lord in the Temple** 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 prayer of thanksgiving at every service of Vespers. We will observe the Meeting of the Lord with **Great Vespers at 6 PM on Friday, Feb. 1, and Divine Liturgy at 9:30 on Saturday, Feb. 2.**

On Super Bowl Sunday, February 3, 2019, the Events Committee will host our special "**Souper Bowl!**" luncheon after Divine Liturgy. (Snow date Feb. 10.) The cost is \$10.00 per person. Children under 12 are free.

We look forward with joy to the **baptism of Evelyn Anastasia Sousa** on Sunday, Feb. 25, at 1 PM. May God grant Evelyn and her parents, Natasha and Mario, many years!

There is still opportunity for **house blessings**. Our homes need this spiritual "spring cleaning" each year to free them from the remembrance of sin and fill them with the presence of the Holy Spirit. All that is required is that you prepare a list of the living and departed that you wish to commemorate, and set up a candle and bowl of holy water before an icon. (Fr. Joshua brings holy water, too, in case anyone needs more.) Please speak with Fr. Joshua to arrange a time.

We are exploring the possibility of holding **Adult Education after coffee hour on Sundays**. Deepening our understanding Orthodox Christian faith is essential to our own spiritual growth

— and our encouragement of others, especially our children. Is this a good time for many? What questions would you most want to explore? Please share your feedback with Fr. Joshua.

We are conducting a year-end **parish inventory of keys**. Please speak with Alexia Tassmer (atassmer@sbcglobal.net or 203-284-0856) so she can record each parish key in your possession. You may also return unneeded keys to her.

Meatfare Sunday is March 3. His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon will be making his annual visitation that weekend, and plans to join us for Meatfare Dinner that Sunday. Tickets will be available soon!

The season of Great Lent begins with the **Rite of Forgiveness** on Sunday afternoon, March 10. Each of us has the responsibility to ask and offer forgiveness before Lent starts. Unless we are homebound, we shouldn't be anywhere but in church that day.

In the first week of **Great Lent**, we will have services most of the week, to enter into the spirit of repentance and spiritual effort which makes the time of fasting fruitful. In addition to the Rite of Forgiveness, we will celebrate the **Canon of St. Andrew and the first Presanctified Liturgy** and Lenten Supper on Wednesday. These services begin at 6 PM, Monday through Thursday of the first week of Lent.

Our parish is honored to host one of the Connecticut Deanery's Lenten Vespers, on

the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent, April 7, at 4 PM. Please mark the date on your calendar; we will be asking for your support in hosting this event.

A note on parish safety:

Our parish abides by a code of conduct that expects adults to interact with unrelated children at our church in plain view and always with other adults present. We also expect everyone to follow common-sense safety standards. Our community has kept this standard very well, but if there is ever a concern about safety, please bring the matter to the attention of Fr. Joshua, the parish council president, or a member of the parish council, so that it can be addressed appropriately.

Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon Sanctity of Life Sunday

January 20, 2019

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

For forty-six years, we have lamented the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion in the United States of America. And for forty-six years, those who consider life to be a sacred gift from God have gathered each January in Washington,

DC and elsewhere in this nation to proclaim this most sacred gift. Created as we are in the very image and likeness of God, we turn to the One Whom we worship as the “Giver of Life” in thanksgiving for sharing His very life with “every man who comes into the world,” even “from his mother’s womb.”

In our liturgical worship, we continuously acknowledge God as the “Bestower of Life.” And in doing so, we recognize that His precious gift is imparted at the moment of conception—a reality underscored in Luke 1:41, in which we read that John the Baptist “leaped” in his mother Elizabeth’s womb, rejoicing in her encounter with the Mother of God. It has become increasingly evident, however, that proclaiming the sanctity of life involves much more than lamenting the legalization of abortion and protecting the unborn, crucial as these are.

While we so often speak of life “in the womb” and eternal life “beyond the tomb,” there are many related issues that are encountered “in between.” Our commitment to life of necessity extends to care for our infants, our infirm, our elderly—and ourselves. While expressing our concern and offering our prayers for the unborn, we are called to recognize that issues such as the opioid crisis, the cost of quality health care, capital punishment, the marked increase in addictions and suicide, to name but a few, are intimately connected to our recognition and proclamation of God’s gift of life.

Our Christian witness demands not only concern for the unborn, but a sense of responsibility to ensure that living a “life well lived”—seeking the blessedness to which we have been called—extends to the unborn and born alike. As we discern the will of God in our own lives, we are called to preserve and protect all life in recognition of God’s plan for His people on this earth and in anticipation of “the life of the world to come.”

As we mark this sorrowful anniversary, may we turn our attention to the “Giver of Life,” Who created us in His ever-abundant love. May we, each in our own way, proclaim His sacred gift. And may we embrace His will, that in all things He and He alone might be glorified as the “Fountain of Life” and the “Light of the world,” Who brings all mankind to that Kingdom which has yet to be fully revealed, but is already fully present in the life of His people, the Church.

With love in Christ,
+ *Tikbon*
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

