

Sanctity of Life: Embracing the Christian Ideal



Dear Parish Faithful,

Yesterday was “Sanctity of Life Sunday” in the Orthodox Church in America. The meaning of this commemoration is manifold, but essentially it is both the confirmation of the “sacred gift of life” that we promote, and a “peaceful protest” against the immoral abortion laws that allow for the destruction of life on a horrific scale – still over a million abortions a year. We affirm that life is a gift from God from conception to the grave and beyond into the eternal Kingdom of God.

In a broader context, we learn of the sanctity of life within the realm of marriage and the task of raising the children conceived and born as the fruit of that marriage as a gift from God. There is both joy and responsibility implied in the decision and then the fact of having children. Perhaps, then, we can approach the awareness of the “sanctity of life” from within our marriages that we hope are inspired by Christian principles that are rooted and grounded in God’s revelation to us concerning the purpose and meaning of life, and the more specific principle that “procreation means co-creation.” We, as parents, “co-create” with God when a child is conceived and born into the world.

From this perspective, I would like to share a passage from Fr. John & Lyn Breck’s book, *Stages on Life’s Way*. This is not a passage dealing directly with abortion, but a passage that asks the question, “Does Christian Marriage Have a Future?” Perhaps that is the broader perspective on the “abortion issue,” and whether or not the practice of abortion will at least remain a burning social issue that disturbs the conscience of American citizens. Fr. John and Lyn Breck write the following:

In the face of all of the challenges thrown up today against the institution of marriage, our vocation as Christian people is clear. It is to rediscover and to relive within our conjugal unions a depth of devotion, commitment, faithfulness, and love that heals and transforms the profound loneliness that threatens the lives of each of us in a hostile and meaningless world. It is to rediscover the truth that marriage is most firmly grounded in friendship – a delight in the other person, a joy in their presence, a respect for their feelings and integrity, and a devotion so pure and boundless that we are willing to die for that person. If the divorce rate is what it is, if domestic violence and neglect are so common in this society, it is largely because the spouses have never discovered in each other a real friend – a unique confidant, a source of intellectual stimulation and spiritual enlightenment, a person with whom they can share laughter, tears, and mutual delight.

Christian marriage certainly has a future, and a promising one as well, to the degree that believing couples assume their conjugal union as a spiritual vocation that is given, blessed, and fulfilled by God. And it will be a union not only of obligation and sacrificed but also of devotion and joy insofar as they take to heart a simple bit of popular wisdom each of us should tape to our refrigerator door: happiness is being married to your best friend. (Stages of Life's Way, p. 72-73)

I know Fr. John well, and he is not a “pie-in-the-sky” dreamer; but a concerned Orthodox theologian and pastor that provides the ideal based upon the Gospel that we commit ourselves to pursuing by embracing the designation of **Christian**.

In Christ,

Fr. Steven