



September 1, 2025  
09/002

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

My Beloved Children in the Lord,

Joyous feast and happy New Year!

As we mark the beginning of a new Church year, it is fitting to reflect on the Church's sojourn in time, in the realm of temporality, change, becoming. In the Scriptures, the holy king Solomon seems to take a dim view of this existence, with its cycles, its comings and goings, its beginnings and ends:

Vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains for ever. The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. (Eccles. 1:2–7)

In the New Testament, the holy apostle Paul sounds perhaps even more pessimistic: "The days are evil" (Eph. 5:16). But this grave statement is couched in hope. "Walk as wise, redeem the time," the apostle commands us (Eph. 5:15–16). Indeed, temporal existence, with its fleeting joys, many sorrows, and termination in death, is but vanity apart from the hope that we have in Christ. But in Christ, all of time is open to redemption, to sanctification.

The Church is not just passing the time in this world; the Church is tasked with redeeming the time by carrying forward Christ's saving work in every place and every age. In particular, we, the members of the Orthodox Church in America, have the unique calling to preach the Gospel and proclaim the holy Orthodox Faith to all the people of North America, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, background, or any other consideration. We are not given this New Year for the sake of our selfish pleasure; we are given the time of each new year, the time of our whole life, so that we can grow in godliness and share the goodness of God with others.

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This is not because the Lord frowns on earthly bounty and earthly pleasures; our faith teaches that God made everything that exists and that he made it very good. But our greatest happiness is found, not in self-indulgence, but in communion with God through the saving work of Jesus Christ: participating in the very life of the Trinity by grace, we encounter pleasures that are not temporal, but eternal; not merely human, but divine.

By means of earthly blessings, which are truly good, we can attain to some knowledge of God, some foretaste of the kingdom to come. But the bounty which crowns this new year is first and foremost the bountiful mercy poured out from the wounded side of the God-man when he hung upon the Cross: this is the river of God, filled with the waters of baptism (Ps. 64:9). By means of this spring of loving-kindness, flowing crimson and rose, he makes the pastures of the wilderness—the pastures where he causes his flocks to lie down—to drip with his life-giving Blood and to flourish with the nourishment of his own life-giving Body (Ps. 22:2; Ps. 64:10–12).

The Church sojourns in time so that, by being united to her, many refugees from this world's vanity might be reconciled to God the Father through his Only-begotten Son. “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days,” says the wise Solomon (Eccles. 11:1). Our Lord fulfilled this call to generosity perfectly and ultimately when he gave his own Body as Bread at the time of his Passion. Now, that Bread, scattered upon the mountains, is consumed by many faithful, and it returns to him after many days—all the ages of this mortal world—as the Body of which he is the Head, his beloved Bride, the Church, in accordance with the word spoken to Adam of old: “they become one flesh” (Didache 9; Gen. 2:24).

Thus, as we celebrate this ecclesiastical New Year, I invite each and every member of the Orthodox Church in America to reflect with gratitude on the gracious gift that God has given us: his own divine and co-eternal Son. Reflecting on this gift, we are inspired to recommit ourselves to the mission of the Church in space and time, and specifically to the mission of the Orthodox Church in America in *this* place and at *this* time: to bring the unchanging Faith and the Good News hidden from all eternity to all the peoples of 21<sup>st</sup> century North America, and to do so in humility, with unity of mind and heart, sharing in the single purpose of doing God's will for the salvation of many.

Wishing you all a blessed New Year and many blessed years to come,  
Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Tikhon  
Archbishop of Washington  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

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