



CREMATION

Since the Orthodox Church affirms the fundamental goodness of creation, it understands that ***the body is an integral part of the human person and temple of the Holy Spirit***, and awaits the resurrection of the dead.

The Church views cremation as a deliberate desecration and destruction of what God made and ordained for us. The Church, on the other hand, insists that the body be buried so that the natural physical process of decomposition can take place.

The Church does not guarantee funerals, whether at the shrine or at the funeral home, or anywhere else, to people who choose to be cremated. In addition, memorial services with the *kollyva* (boiled wheat) are also not permitted in such cases, since the resemblance between the "grain of wheat" and the "body" has been destroyed.

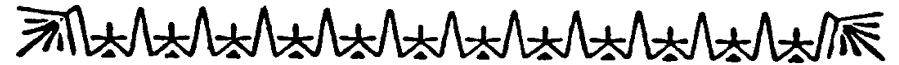


AUTOPSY

When a person dies under questionable circumstances, a qualified medical investigator may, with the permission of close family members, perform an autopsy ***to determine the cause of death***.

In some states, it is required by law. In all cases, however, ***the Orthodox Church expects the body of the deceased to be treated with respect and dignity.***

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:21-22)



IN THIS WE BELIEVE VI

MARRIAGE

Marriage in the Orthodox Church is forever. It is not reduced to a mere exchange of vows or the establishment of a legal contract between the bride and groom.

Rather, it is God Himself who unites a man and a woman into "*one flesh*" in the same sense that the Church is united to Christ (Ephesians 5:31-32).

The success of marriage does not depend on human promises to each other, but on God's promises and blessing. In the Orthodox marriage rite, ***the bride and groom offer their lives to Christ and to each other, literally as crowned martyrs.***



DIVORCE



While extending love and mercy to the divorced, ***the Orthodox Church suffers from the tragedy and pain that divorce causes.***

Although, marriage is understood as a sacrament, and therefore, is consummated by the grace of God, and is permanent; ***the Church does not treat divorce legalistically, but with compassion.***

After appropriate pastoral counsel, ***divorce may be permitted when avenues for reconciliation have been exhausted.*** If there is a new marriage, the service for the second marriage includes prayers of repentance for the previous divorce, asking God for forgiveness, and protection for the new union.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25).





SEXUAL RELATIONS

The Orthodox Church upholds the biblical teaching that **sexual relations are reserved for marriage**. Sex is a gift from God to be fully enjoyed and experienced only within marriage.

The marital bed is to be kept "*undefiled*" (Hebrews 13:4, KJV), and men and women are called to remain celibate outside of marriage.

Our sexuality, like so many other human things, affects our relationship with God, with ourselves, and with others. It can be used as a means of glorifying God and realizing His image in us, or it can be perverted and abused as an instrument of sin, causing great harm to us and others.

St. Paul writes: "*Do you not know that your body is the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, who is in you and has received from God, and that you do not belong to yourselves? You've been well bought! Therefore, glorify God in your body*" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

ABORTION

The Church from the beginning of its existence has sought to protect "life in the womb" and **has considered abortion a form of murder** in its theology and canons.

Orthodox Christians are cautioned not to encourage abortion in women, nor to assist in the performance of abortion. Those who perform abortions and those who seek them perform an immoral act, and are called to repentance.

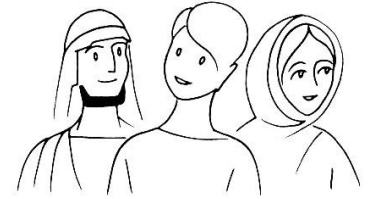


For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb... My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret... Thine eyes did see my substance...
(Psalm 139 [138]: 13-16)



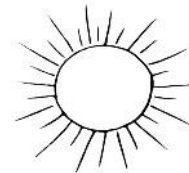
THE HUMAN LIFE

The Church's teaching on human life is based on Holy Tradition, which includes Scripture as the primary resource and the ongoing teaching and interpretation of the Orthodox Faith.



Life is a gift from God in the formation of the created world. **All life is precious**, for God uniquely created human life "*in the image and likeness of God*." Human life as such deserves deep respect and **human beings must be treated in accordance with their inherent human dignity**. Therefore, racism, unfair and harmful treatment of men and women, genocide, forms of sexual exploitation, domestic violence, child abuse, abduction, theft and destruction of legitimate property, deception and deception, environmental plunder and other similar manipulative behaviour violate the human dignity of others. **Human life as a gift from God must be respected.**

SUICIDE



Suicide, taking one's own life, **is self-murder and as such, it is a sin**.

But much more importantly, it can be evidence of the loss of faith in our loving, forgiving, and sustaining God.

If a person has committed suicide as a result of the belief that such an action is rationally or ethically defensible, **the Orthodox Church denies that person the funeral service, because those beliefs and actions separate the person from the faith community.**



The Church shows compassion, however, to those who have taken their own lives as a result of mental illness or severe emotional stress, when the condition of reason can be verified by a doctor.

