

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX

Bishop Innocent of Anchorage, Alaska

“Life: The Treasure of God”

Life is magnificent and awesome to humankind; it is holy and divine to God. Man and woman are the crowning touch of God's creation, because He delights in the work of His hands (Genesis 1:27, “so God created man in His own image of God He created him; male and female, he created them.”). When the child is formed in the womb, he or she is the masterpiece of the Creator, the love of Jesus Christ, the hope of society, the joy of a family. We are given life to rejoice in that life.

When, through illness or some other tragedy, loved ones lose the fullness of life and the ability to function, it is God's desire that healing and our fellow human's health be restored. Jesus Christ, as He walked on the earth, would not bear to see men and woman suffer, so He went about healing those who were not “whole.” It is not God's intention to see us suffer or not be whole through illness. In cooperation with Him, God has given the gift to doctors, nurses, technicians and others to use their hands and minds to help in making our fellow creation be whole.

When I was a newly ordained priest, the first person I saw die was a healthy woman who had died during a simple operation. As I stood by her hospital bed, the doctors mentioned that she donated her eyes to be given to someone upon her death, so they could gaze upon the face of loved ones, see the beauty of the earth, and know the joy of sunlight. You see, this woman's mother was blind and she had yearned to give her dear mother sight; but since she could not, she always remembered. She gave that gift to another when it was possible. This made a deep impression upon me as a young priest and remains with me to this day.

If a younger mother or father can be saved to live, to raise their children through the give of organ or tissue donation, this is the work of God's compassion. Let that person who has departed this life do one last great deed for humanity. Let his or her gift of an organ or tissue be a source of healing and life in this world created by God. I urge everyone to consider this gift of God they can give in love to their fellow men and women. This way, God is glorified by this gift of life.