



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

To be read from the pulpit, Sunday, March 22, 2009; the Veneration of the Holy Cross.
And to be disseminated to all parishioners through appropriate parish media.

March 19, 2009

Beloved Faithful
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Dearly Beloved,

As we pursue the struggle of repentance and holiness during this season of Great Lent with the renewal of our commitment to Christ our Lord, we have become aware of a threat to the freedom of our spiritual and religious lives in the State of Illinois, though such dangers are appearing more frequently throughout our nation.

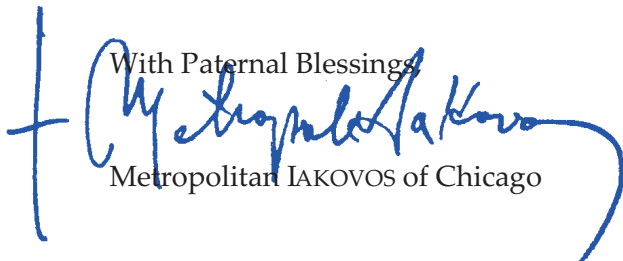
The Illinois General Assembly is considering a bill (HB 2354; "Reproductive Health and Access Act") that would affect all health care workers by removing their right to conscientious objection to abortion and related procedures, forcing them to participate in or provide abortions or face legal punishments. This bill would basically make the right to an abortion a fundamental human right in the State of Illinois.

Not only will this severely impact health care providers, especially the many excellent Catholic hospitals of our State where the sanctity of life is always respected and many Orthodox Christian doctors and nurses, but it will also contribute to the ever-increasing callousness of our society when it comes to all perception of life's sanctity at all ages, from the pre-born children in the womb to the elderly.

In our nation, the right to conscientious objection on religious grounds has always been respected in times of war and for those who choose to refuse to participate in acts of capital punishment. It seems now that some Illinois lawmakers want to infringe on this hallmark of our democracy. It seems such lawmakers have forgotten the "weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matt 23:23) just as our Lord pointed out so long ago. This proposed law is unjust and violates the very principles of our faith in Jesus Christ, the Life of the world.

The forces that oppose religious freedom and are actually seeking to increase the number of abortions in our society are well organized, well funded, and well connected to the political process. It is high time for Christians to raise their own voices to demand their elected officials attend to the “weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.” Perhaps those who want this bill believe we will be distracted by the economic crisis facing our nation and affecting many of us personally. We must resist the temptation, especially during this Lenten season, to neglect this matter as “someone else’s problem.” None of us wants the government to come between us and our doctor. We should likewise not want the government to come between health care workers and their God. If we allow one step, we will never prevent the next.

Let us Christians unite together to put an end to our lawmakers bowing before the powers of those opposed to life. Therefore, for the faithful in Illinois, we urge you to contact your State Representatives and insist that this bill, HB 2354, be defeated. You may contact your representative on the internet at www.ilga.gov, or obtain proper contact information by calling The Catholic Conference of Illinois (312) 368-1066. For our beloved faithful outside of Illinois, pray that this bill be defeated, and contact your own local officials to protest the ever-increasing callousness of our society when it comes to the sanctity of human life. And thus may we arrive at the conclusion of this Lenten season truly proclaiming the victory of the Life of the World, our Lord and Savior, over the dominion of death!

With Paternal Blessings

Metropolitan IAKOVOS of Chicago