



An Orthodox Christian Initiative
 3352 Mayfield Road
 Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
 440/893-9990
 www.zoeforlife.org

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The Difficult Times We Live In

During the past six months, we have all been challenged by the pandemic that has affected nearly every aspect of our lives. Simple tasks have become complex as we deal with a world in crisis, arisen through circumstances beyond our control. We all do the very best we can to protect ourselves and those around us.

Our first act of defense should be prayer. Every day should begin with it; every undertaking protected by it; every evening thankful through it. Prayer is our connection with The Almighty; we can never forget that all is permitted through His benevolent love for us, even though it may not appear to be so at the moment.

All our clergy and church leaders are struggling through the murky waters surrounding the pandemic. Those in authority in government do too. Whether we agree with their directives or not, we must still be obedient, and we must lift them up in prayer. They are in authority through God's provision. As Jesus told Pontius Pilate, *"You could have no power at all against Me, unless it had been given to you from above."*

John 19:11
 We must pray for them all continually.

The times are troubling. But how often have we looked back at unhappy situations in our past, and recognized that we were blessed by it? Incidences that appeared

devastating at the moment, are transformed by His Grace, into blessings. Haven't we all experienced this?

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications prayers intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle – I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying – a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. I desire therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Timothy 1, 1-8

Your prayers are powerful. When joined together, they become a very great force for good. Praying for what is right and good becomes Grace.



Be His children of the Light, putting your hearts into prayer and fasting; praying that what is right will triumph. We, the faithful, are a force to be reckoned with. Remain steadfast in the fray, and be on guard, to continue to protect all that is right and good.

We Hold These Truths ...

Fr. Stephen Callos, Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral, Cleveland Heights, OH

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ..." The Declaration of Independence lifts my spirit, but I am troubled by the realization that its author, Thomas Jefferson, himself owned many slaves. George Washington owned slaves. Apparently he struggled with the idea of slaves. Upon his death, he freed all slaves that belonged to him personally, but he kept his decision as a secret from his wife. She found out when his will was read.

America is reexamining its heroes. We talk about statues of Confederate generals and of Teddy Roosevelt, or renaming the city of Columbus, Ohio. We need to acknowledge their complexities – there are no perfect heroes. Even Abraham Lincoln held views of African Americans that we would consider reprehensible.

None of our Orthodox saints were perfect. We need to recognize our own personal imperfections and inner struggles. In this context, we look to the words of St. Paul to the Christians of Rome. "While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man — though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Christ did not die for us because we deserved or had earned His love; He died for us because He loved us anyway. Knowing who we are and how we live, He

died for us. The challenge is to not take His blessing for granted. Some mistakenly think that since God loves us, we can do whatever we want, and God will forgive us anyway. Not so! God loves us, not because we deserve His love, but because He loves us anyway. In the same way, we owe our love to others, even to those who are

"unlovable," not because they have earned our love, but because we are called to love just as God does.

Heroes and history are complex. But first, we need to look inside our own hearts and history and acknowledge that we share in fallen nature and we, too, look to a God who loves us despite our imperfections. Seeing our imperfections means that we have to correct them, not ignore them.

God inspired Jefferson to write, "That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights ..." I thank God for that, and for loving me in the way described by St. Paul – "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

A Greek proverb says, "Know thyself." To know

oneself is to know that deep inside is an imperfect human. To know thyself is to recognize one's sins and never stop fighting them. To know thyself is also to acknowledge that God works through our imperfections, as He did when He inspired Thomas Jefferson and George Washington.

We ask God to bless our nation and to bless each of us. And we commit ourselves to becoming the nation and the people that God wants us to be.



You Will Know They Are Christians by Their Love

Many social service and support ministries have closed their doors to clients during this COVID-19 pandemic. We at ZOE for Life!® stand as witnesses that God's abiding love and provision for His children never falters. Thanks to your support, we are able to continue to offer His love compassion to our clients.

Executive Director, Kathy Kovalak, and her team of dedicated volunteers exemplify selfless service to others, and have been creative in responding to the needs of women and families in distress. Insuring everyone's safety and maintaining social distancing is a definite challenge. At ZOE House™ they are prayerfully serving those whose needs are more pressing than ever.

ZOE Women's Center® continues to realize its mission. The healing portion of this ministry uses technology to allow volunteers to meet and work with clients from across the country. Locally, while physical togetherness is hampered for reasons of safety, ZOOM and other methods allow ZOE Women's Center® contact with clients, offering an oasis of peace, love, support and healing to women before and after crisis pregnancies, and to any who have suffered from sexual trauma.

One of our volunteers is working toward certification as a Registered Diagnostic Medical Sonographer, so

that when we can safely open our doors, she will be ready to serve. How truly blessed we are to have volunteers who work tirelessly to share His Mercy and Love with those who come to us.

The other crucial need we have at the Women's Center® is for women to receive training to meet with those who come to us for support; peer mentors who will offer our clients non-judgemental friendship, and be willing to nurture them through a very challenging time in their lives. If you live in Northeast Ohio, and this sounds like something you would like to do, please call Paula at 440-893-9990 for more information on how you can make the difference in the lives of those around us.

For your continued prayers and support, we thank you. In these most trying of times, the thanks of hundreds of our clients are yours as well. God bless you!

Coming Soon ...

ZOE for Life!® is excited to be working with Orthodox Ministry Services, in order to optimize our performance and maximize our impact. Looking forward to sharing those results with you.

How Your Planned Gift Benefits ZOE for Life!®

- It ensures we continue to be here for women and families in need.
- It increases our ability to provide ongoing support.
- A more secure income stream allows us to concentrate on our mission and services to meet the needs of clients.
- It sets an example for others to consider a planned gift.
- It benefits the community by providing support for vital services.

How To Donate To ZOE for Life!®

Suggested ways to support ZOE for Life!®:

- 1) Amazon baby registry for ZOE for Life!®
- 2) Smile.amazon.com – select ZOE for Life!® as your charity and a portion of every purchase you make will be donated to ZOE for Life!®
- 3) PayPal on our Facebook page.
- 4) Checks made out to ZOE for Life!® and mailed to:
3352 Mayfield Road
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

Thank you!



Join Our Bottles for Babies Campaign

We want to send you a baby bottle, and ask you to fill it with loose change. What could be simpler? Simply empty your change into the bottle every day. When it is full, take it to the bank and send the cash to ZOE. Reuse and repeat! Contact Georgiann at cgbod@sbcglobal.net.



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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

“ZOE for Life!® is a Christian ministry which affirms the value of all life by helping women in a confidential manner during and after crisis pregnancies. We are committed to providing care, support and education to empower women to make decisions everyone can live with.”

Help Wanted ...

ZOE for Life!® is expanding its reach once again, and is seeking two volunteers interested in serving in the following areas:

Grant Writer | Social Media Coordinator

If you are talented in either of these areas and are willing to share your gifts with ZOE for Life!®, please reach out to our office at 440-893-9990.

Most Relevant Verses

Psalm 22:10

→ Verse Concepts

Upon You I was cast from birth;
You have been my God from my mother's womb.

Isaiah 49:5

→ Verse Concepts

And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him
(For I am honored in the sight of the LORD,
And My God is My strength),



Completely have trust in God, leave everything in His hands, and believe that His love will act for your own benefit. Then God will take care of everything, because there is nothing He cannot do; everything is easy for Him. The difficult thing is for man to decide to humble himself and leave everything to God's providence and love

- St Paisios of Mt Athos