

Message of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon for Independence Day

SYOSSET, NY [OCA]



**To the Honorable
Clergy, Venerable
Monastics, and Pious
Faithful of the Orthodox
Church in America,**

My Beloved Brethren and Blessed
Children in the Lord,

I wish you all a happy and safe 4th of July! As this Independence Day comes in the midst of a viral pandemic and renewed social tensions it is fitting to recall that the fundamental principle that we celebrate today is that “all men are created equal. ,” Let us joyfully “let freedom ring!” as we celebrate this American principle!

Yet, we must admit, our nation remains “in travail”, struggling to “give birth” to a society in which all are treated as equals. Despite some progress, racism has not been fully stamped out. As the Church, in which “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free,” we oppose racism, for we believe that “all are one in Christ Jesus.”

Crucially, evils such as racism are only stamped out when each of us individually takes responsibility for his or her actions. Each of us has the independence of free will to choose to do good or evil. The claim that groups are responsible for evil, rather than individuals, is a claim which risks ignoring individual free will.

We must search out the evil in our own hearts, and labor to remove it, and then let Christ enter and take His place in our hearts, and then we will see social change. We take responsibility for the evil we contribute to, and then act responsibly to make Christ's kingdom present now through our words and deeds, and change will happen.

For the meaning of being created "in the image of God", of all men and women being created equal, is that each of us has freedom of will. And it is only through each of us freely choosing to do "the good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do" that evil will be stamped out, bit by bit, in society.

So this Independence Day, let us remember that freedom is not just an American ideal, but a sacred responsibility given to each of us through our God-given free will. We are each "independent" to do what we may will; but through following the example of Christ, may each of us do the will of His Father always, this day, and every day.

With love in Christ,

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada