



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

Protocol No. 15/24

Encyclical on the Christian Love of Organ Donation

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” – Galatians 2:20

To the Clergy, the Monastic Communities, and the blessed faithful of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago.

Beloved fathers and brethren, Beloved children in the Lord:

With each day of Great Lent, we draw closer to the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who loved us so much that He gave Himself up for us. In this spirit of love and compassion, I wish to address a timely matter of profound significance: the veritable Christian act of organ donation.

As stewards of God's creation and vessels of His mercy, we are called to reflect His love and selflessness in all our actions, including the freely chosen decision to donate our bodily organs to save and improve the lives of others.

In the teachings of our Church, we find a rich tapestry of wisdom and guidance that illuminates the Christian virtues inherent in organ donation.

Both the Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the saints emphasize the philanthropic characteristics present in a volunteer organ donor. For example, in the Book of Acts, St. Paul repeats Jesus' teaching, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35); Jesus sends out His disciples to “heal the sick” (Luke 10:9); and the whole of Jesus' ministry exhorts us to care for and to love one another, as He has loved us (John 13:34).

The saints' lives and writings remind us continuously that our life and our neighbor's life cannot be sharply separated. Saint Paul depicts the members of the Church as a single body, united with each other and with Christ as our head (Rom 12:5, Eph 4:15-16). Saint Anthony the Great taught that, “Our life and our death is with our neighbor” and Saint Makarios of Egypt stated that “only through our neighbor can we be saved.”

Through these principles of our faith, organ donation can be seen as a Christ-like act, a distinct manifestation of love for one's neighbor—selflessly giving a part of oneself to improve the whole of another. When we freely donate our organs, we proclaim through our actions that ‘our

neighbor is our life' and that, while we are not obligated to donate organs, doing so can be a life-giving—not only biologically for the recipient, but also spiritually for the donor.

April is National Donate Life Month, a time of year that emphasizes the importance of registering the decision to be a donor, honoring deceased and living donors, and celebrating the lives saved.

As we look ahead to the Resurrection with yearning in Christ, I pray that you embrace the timeliness of National Donate Life Month and the Paschal season of renewal. I pray that you reflect on giving the gift of life to others – people we may not know and may never meet – in one of the most authentic expressions of Christian love. And, should you seek the gift of life from another, I pray that the Holy Spirit be with you and that your hopes are buoyed by a shared love in Christ.

With paternal blessings and love in the Risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Nathanael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† NATHANAEL
Metropolitan of Chicago