

What is the Place of Oikonomia in the Abortion Question? (Valarie H. Protopapas)

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Having now examined oikonomia in relation to the so-called «hard cases» of pregnancy due to rape, incest or that which threatens the life of the woman, as well as that which will result in the birth of a «defective» child, the question still remains: is there a place for oikonomia in the abortion question? In practice, oikonomia is presently being applied in this situation. The Orthodox Church today asks of those who are involved with abortion only sincere repentance and a change of heart and mind in order to be received back into the Community of the Faithful. The ecclesiastical penance of ten years excommunication as directed unchanged, in the Canons, is very rarely, if ever, required of those who repent of their involvement with this most heinous of sins and undergo the proscribed penitential exercise of Confession and Absolution. This absolution, in some extreme cases, may involve a proscribed period of abstention from the Eucharist and/or other penitential exercises but this is a discretionary matter between the penitent and his or her priest.



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Who are the Guilty?

For the woman who has had an abortion (and survives), the guilt and pain attending this act are far more bitter and galling than any penance which could possibly be prescribed by the Church. There are priests who tell of women who continue to agonize over an abortion after countless confessions and absolutions. The duty of the Church with respect to these poor sufferers is to bring them to peace with themselves and God, purging them of the delusion that they are unworthy of God's forgiveness and salvation. Bringing the Peace of God to a woman so blighted is a spiritual labor which may take years. Such is the deadly fruit of abortion for its second victim, the woman.

However, and in addition, for every woman who has an abortion, there are hundreds, perhaps thousands who have contributed to her sin and suffering and the death of her child and bear the heavy burden of guilt no less (and, in some cases, more so) than she. These too, if they are Orthodox Christians, must come before Almighty God in the Sacrament of Penance, repent and turn away from their sinful acts.

- the physicians and medical staffs who do the actual abortion procedures.

- the clerical staff, maintenance workers and others whose work in abortuaries allow them to continue to murder children and desecrate women.
- the politicians who vote for abortion legislation or who are too timid, apathetic or ambitious to stand for life.
- the social workers who counsel abortion and deliver women into the hands of the murderers.
- the judges and lawyers who use the legal system to promote abortion as a «right» and persecute those who fight against the killing of the unborn.
- the members of the media who hide the reality of abortion, telling half-truths and lies to lull the American people into accepting abortion as a «right» and a «social necessity.»
- those who are «Orthodox» on Sunday morning and, in the world outside the Church, consider themselves «neutral» or even «pro-choice,» supporting with their resources the advocates of abortion.
- those who are directors of foundations, corporations and companies who fund the powerful advocates of abortion such as the National Organization of Women.
- those who work for the companies which make the suction machines whose only function is to dismember and kill children in the womb and the crematories used to burn the bodies of the slaughtered.
- those whose money and research produce prostaglandins and other abortifacients such as the IUD, the so-called «birth control» pill and the human pesticide, RU-486. • those who promote, advance and/or perpetrate experiments on living children in the womb or who have been aborted in the cause of so-called «fetal tissue research.» • those who work for and/or support Planned Parenthood, which is the world's largest and richest abortion procurer, promoter and provider. (Further, it is necessary to discover if one is supporting a seemingly unrelated organization which advocates abortion, such as the vast majority of conservation and environmental groups.) 43

Finally, the guilty are all who stand idle and allow the killing to continue without protest. To paraphrase the great philosopher Edmund Burke, evil will triumph when good men do nothing. The Responsibility of the Church There is not, nor can there ever be, an oikonomia which allows people engaged in such sinful activities to go to Confession on Saturday, Communion on Sunday and work as usual on Monday. If there is no change of heart, no turning around, if they believe that they can continue to spill innocent blood however removed they might be from the abortion procedure itself and remain an Orthodox Christian, they are deluding themselves. For the Sacrament of Penance to be valid it is necessary for them to abandon their sinful lives, repent and try to make amends for the great evil they have done. Any priest or bishop who practices oikonomia by knowingly allowing such people to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ without demanding that they cease their

bloody course will have to answer for the souls of those who have profaned with his permission, the Holy Eucharist.

(To be continued)