



October 30, 2018

10/ 028

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

On Saturday, October 27, 2018 as congregants at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh were observing the Jewish Sabbath, a man of violence entered into their midst and murdered eleven men and women at worship. Before finishing his acts of horror, he wounded several others, including four brave police officers who had rushed to the scene. Reports indicate that this man had the sole intention of killing Jewish people, and that he shouted "all Jews must be killed" while he committed this atrocity. The Orthodox Church in America grieves with the families of the murdered. We pray fervently to God for the healing of the wounded, and consolation for all who are affected.

The perpetrator of this barbarous crime sought to falsely justify his actions with a particular hatred for a Jewish organization that gives support to refugees and immigrants of diverse nationalities, races, and religions, thus fulfilling the command of God himself who said to the people of Israel through the Prophet Moses, "The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19.34)." Orthodox Christians have received this same teaching in the parable of the Good Samaritan., in which our Lord teaches us that the "neighbor" we are enjoined by God to love is hidden in the "other," who is a human being of a different nationality, race, or religion.

We abhor and condemn this wicked deed, and reject its false justification. Instead, we offer the hope that can be found in God alone. In Him, we are free from the assault of attitudes and ideologies of prejudice and hatred, fear and anxiety about those who are indeed our neighbors. As we stagger under the impact of the murders in the Pittsburgh synagogue, and as we walk alongside the Jewish citizens of our nations while sharing their grief and their anxiety, we must turn to God, the source of mercy, consolation, and hope.

May the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ comfort the victims and their families, strengthen the first responders, and bring peace and healing to our communities.

With love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tikhon", with a cross symbol to the left.

+ Tikhon  
Archbishop of Washington  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada