

**Benediction for the Rose Banquet
Offered by Metropolitan Tikhon
January 22, 2015**

Brothers and Sisters,

It is customary, in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, to begin all endeavors, whether it be a major event, such as the powerful witness of today's 42nd Annual March For Life, or small gathering of two or three, with the following invocation to the Holy Spirit:

*O Heavenly King
The Comforter, the Spirit of Truth
Who art everywhere present and fillest all things
Treasury of Blessings
And Giver of Life
Come and abide in us
And cleanse us from every impurity
And save our souls, O Good One.*

Tonight, as we gather for this meal and this fellowship, we ask the Holy Spirit to remind us that, in a world full of despair and brokenness, of defeat and division, of anger and death, there is hope, there is joy and there is life. These cannot be found in anything earthly but only in the eternal victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over death and corruption. As a contemporary saint tells us:

“Christ’s victory is the only victory in which all humanity can rejoice, from the first-created to the last. Every other victory on earth has divided, and still divides, men from one another.

When an earthly king gains the victory over another earthly king, one of them rejoices and the other laments. When a man is victorious over his neighbor, there is singing under one roof and weeping under the other.

Christ’s victory alone is like a sun that sheds bright rays on all that are beneath it. Christ’s victory alone fills all the souls of men with invincible joy. It alone is without malice or evil.”

We are here today, for the 42nd Annual March For Life, to receive this light, to partake of this joy and to celebrate this victory:

A victory we share with the bishops, priests and pastors, who have chosen a *good work* and have offered themselves as examples of *blamelessness, temperance, sobermindedness, hospitality and teaching* to their flocks, calling them to hold fast to the sanctity of life and to be mindful that *the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.*

A victory we share with those who proclaimed it most loudly and most beautifully today: the young men and women who are here with us in such great numbers as examples of those who are *believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

A victory shared by the souls of the millions of lives that have been lost through the tragedy of abortion. We remember them in our hearts and in our prayers and are not overwhelmed by this tragedy, but are encouraged by the promise of the resurrection and eternal life.

O Holy Trinity, Our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, have mercy on us, bless our meal and our fellowship and save our souls, O Good One, both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.