

Q&A

Q: “Fr. Alex, what is the Orthodox Church’s stand on abortion?”

This is a powerful question. The Orthodox Church counts the gift of life as the greatest of all God’s blessings. So the Church opposes abortion as a form of birth-control. Aside from life itself, free will is another of God’s great gifts to us. But it’s a complicated gift: we need to use it with discernment, love and responsibility. It also has its limits. We don’t believe that there is a “right to choose” in the case of abortion, because a human life is at stake. You can choose to eat a sandwich for lunch tomorrow, but not to end a human life. And concerning the question of when life begins, we believe that spiritual life, personhood, begins at conception. So pregnancy, no matter how early on it is, equals real human life. Of course, the Church loves us and knows the complexity and pain of certain circumstances beyond our control. In cases, for example, where the life of the mother is in jeopardy with the pregnancy, the Church directs us to the counsel of our priests and spiritual fathers for loving guidance. In the end, if a teenager has a related concern or question about the Church’s beliefs concerning pregnancy and/or abortion, after talking to Mom and Dad, the best place to turn is to our priests, Sunday School teachers and youth leaders. They are there to help and guide us whenever we need them—all the better if these questions are brought up early, before crises arise.