

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, in bestowing the Order of St. Innocent (gold) upon the Honorable Alex M. Azar II, proclaims its gratitude to a faithful Orthodox Christian who, through his service and leadership, has brought benefit to the whole human race.

Born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania to an Orthodox Christian family, Secretary Azar attended Dartmouth College and Yale University Law School before embarking on a law career. Answering the call to public service in the Bush administration, Secretary Azar served as General Counsel to the Department of Health and Human Services from 2001 to 2005 and as Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services from 2005 to 2007.

After a stint in the private sector, Secretary Azar joined the Trump administration as Secretary of Health and Human Services in 2018. Doubtless, at the time, Secretary Azar could not have foreseen the importance his position would take on during the coming pandemic. But when an unprecedented public health crisis called for unprecedented measures, Secretary Azar rose to the challenge as one of the chief overseers of Operation Warp Speed. This coordinated effort on the part of the public and private sectors resulted in life-saving COVID-19 vaccinations becoming available to segments of the population less than a year after the beginning of the crisis.

Amid all of his successes and contributions in the world of law, business, medicine, and government, Secretary Azar has remained a pious Orthodox Christian, a full participant in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church, both a hearer and a doer of the commandments of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in recognition of Secretary Azar's role as a key overseer of Operation Warp Speed and his life of service to Church and society, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America is pleased to honor this devout Orthodox Christian and extraordinary public servant with the Order of St. Innocent (gold).