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# Philanthropy Witness



The Official Newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society

March 2017

## Messages for Great and Holy Lent 2017



*Your grace has shone forth, O Lord,  
it has shone forth and given light to our souls.*  
Hymn of Vespers – Sunday of Forgiveness

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we begin this sacred journey through Holy and Great Lent, through a time of earnest prayer and sincere reflection, we are guided by the presence of our Lord and the hymns and prayers of this season to experience the power of God's grace. In preparation for this time, we have witnessed His grace in the forgiveness of the publican. We have seen the depth of His love in the father's loving embrace of the prodigal son. We have heard the words of our Lord concerning the Last Judgement, when He will come in His glory and welcome into the kingdom His servants who have shown mercy to those in need.

In the days and weeks that will come, our worship and prayers will have a somber and reflective tone. We will be called to examine our lives, to purify ourselves through fasting, and to follow the way of the Cross. We will be asked to consider the condition of our souls and affirm our need for God and His great mercy. As we hear on the eve of Great Lent, and we will experience in this journey, our needs will be met by His abundant grace: "Your grace has shone forth, O Lord, it has shone forth and given light to our souls. Behold, now is the acceptable time;

behold, now is the season of repentance. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...."

Our true repentance will be blessed with God's forgiveness in grace. Our return to Him in hope will be met with His compassionate embrace. Our service in His name will lead us to our spiritual inheritance of life in His glorious presence. At the beginning of Lent, we can affirm that our path to abundant joy and celebration will be illuminated by the light of His grace.

With this light that shines in our hearts we will also offer a witness through our observance of Lent and through our lives. As we know and experience God's grace, others will see His offering of forgiveness. They will see the power of grace to transform life and bring healing and restoration. They will find salvation in Christ as the grace of God works in and through us to show all His redeeming love.

May the blessings of God's grace be with you during this holy season as we gather in His presence. As His great love embraces you, may your hope and faith be strengthened for the journey to Cross and to the light and life we have in the Risen Christ.

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS  
Archbishop of America

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My beloved Philotochos Ladies,

As we commence Great Lent, I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you God's blessings as you begin your journey through this sacred period, in the hope, that your spiritual struggles will be crowned with fruits and gifts in the Holy Spirit.

Living in a world that is increasingly demanding of our time and efforts, we find ourselves constantly in a rush and seldom do we find the needed resources to pause and reflect on ourselves, our families, those whom we love and hold dear, and especially to our relationship to the Lord. In the early centuries of Christianity during Great Lent, Christians used to leave the big city and go to the desert where they would sit at the feet of an ascetic monk to seek his advice for their lives. I know that our circumstances here in the United States are much different than in the first centuries of Christianity. Nevertheless we have many opportunities to stop and focus on our spiritual lives. As Christ invites us, take a break from being like *Martha* and instead choose the path of *Maria*. The Church in Her wisdom provides for us ample opportunities during Great Lent to do just that and aid us in our spiritual journey.

Every week during Lent we have the beautiful service of Great Compline: a very solemn service that is marked by the petition: *Lord of the Powers, be with us. For in times of distress we have no other help but You. Lord of the Powers, have mercy on us.* All of the psalms used in this service speak of the contrition and repentance of David the King that we personalize and make our own as we offer them to God for repentance.

The second service of Great Lent is the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy. The Church knowing the extra strength we need

during Lent provides with us an opportunity to receive the Holy Body and Precious Blood of our Lord not only on Sunday but also in the middle of the week so that we are nourished spiritually to fight the good fight.

On Fridays we celebrate the Salutations to the Theotokos: a most wonderful poem to the Virgin Mary, Who was one of us and yet became a vessel of the Holy Spirit and was honored to bear the Son of God and be sanctified by Him. What a better example we have in Her and in Her help as an intercessor to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Finally on Sundays during Lent we have the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. Although at first hand it seems similar to the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, it is different as it includes additional beautiful prayers that the priest sometimes may read aloud. These prayers touch the core of our being since they capture every circumstance we may find ourselves in. Here is an example: *In Your goodness (Lord), keep those who are good. In Your kindness, make those who are wicked good. Remember, Lord, the people here present and those who are absent for good reason, and have mercy on them and on us according to the multitude of Your mercy.*

*Fill their storehouses with every good thing; preserve their marriages in peace and concord; nourish the infants, guide the young, strengthen the aged; comfort the fainthearted; bring back those who have gone astray, and join them to Your Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Free those who are troubled by unclean spirits; sail with those who sail; journey with those who journey; champion widows; protect orphans; deliver prisoners; heal the sick.*

*Remember O God, those under trial, in mines, exile, bitter slavery and every tribulation, constraint and trouble, and all who entreat Your great compassion; and those who love us, those who hate us, and those who have asked us, unworthy though we are, to pray for them. And remember all Your people, Lord Our God, and pour out all Your rich mercy, granting to them all their petitions unto salvation. And those whom we have not remembered, through ignorance or forgetfulness or the number of names, do You Yourself remember, O God, Who knows the age and name of each, Who knows each from their mother's womb.*

*For You, Lord, are the help of the helpless, the hope of those without hope, the Savior of the storm-tossed, the Physician of the sick. Be all things to all people, You Who know each and the request of each, their household, and their need.*

May that same God of love be with you this Holy Lent, and may He find us worthy to celebrate His Holy Resurrection.

In Christ's love and service,

+Bishop Sevastianos



## A Time for Reflection and Enlightenment

The Lenten season is a time for introspection and spiritual renewal. We take time to look inwardly and consider our lives and our faith, on a path to celebrate the Holy Resurrection. To guide us through this journey, Philoptochos chapters across the country hold Lenten Retreats. In addition, again this year, the Direct Archdiocesan District Philoptochos and the Philoptochos of the Metropolises of Chicago and Atlanta are presenting their annual retreats.

On March 11, at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, V. Rev. Dr. Nathanael Symeonides served as Retreat Master for the Direct Archdiocesan District Philoptochos, where the topic was, "Humility." The agenda included a reflection on charity and a personal evaluation of one's own altruism. In a collaboration with the HOPE Project through the All Saints Monastery in Calverton, New York, attendees filled custom duffel bags (pictured above) to be given to victims of human trafficking. Items for the bags included clothing, personal care products, and gift cards for food and household items. The HOPE Project, which stands for the services provided to survivors of human trafficking-- Housing, Occupation, Potential and Education, is a ministry of The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and participants of all faiths and beliefs are welcome.

Also on March 11, His Grace, Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, served as Retreat Master at Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church for the spiritually uplifting and informative Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos Lenten Retreat. The topic was "Organ Donation" and special presentations were offered by donors, their families and recipients, as well as by professionals from The Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network. The discussion included what donation means to both living and non-living donors, and the view of the Greek Orthodox Church on the issue. A donation was made to the Illinois Transplant Fund, an organization that provides financial support to patients in need of a transplant who cannot afford medical insurance.

In Salem, South Carolina, at the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta Diakonia Retreat Center, the Metropolis of Atlanta Philoptochos will hold a spiritual retreat on March 17-19. The topic will be, "Philoptochos as a Voice of Encouragement," presented by Father Stavros N. Akrotirianakis, Protopresbyter of St. John Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa, Florida. The event promises to be an unforgettable weekend of friendship, fellowship, inspiring discussions, and deep spiritual reflections, surrounded by the breathtaking, natural beauty of the Diakonia Center.

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### Reminder to Chapters:

### Please complete the Online Membership Excel Form

We love keeping you informed and up-to-date! Help us by sending in your list of chapter members with contact information. Email addresses are very important!

When you fill out the Excel form online and email it to us (no other format should be used) members will be added to the Philoptochos Society Listserv. If you need help filling it out, please call the National Office.

Please put your **CHAPTER NUMBER in the Subject line** (Re:) of your email.

To access [a step-by-step bullet point guide to filling out the Excel form](#), as well as a screen shot tutorial, the form itself and other membership resources, please go to [www.philoptochos.org](http://www.philoptochos.org) > Resources > Membership & Elections > 2017 Elections.

*Individuals can also subscribe (instantaneously) to the Philoptochos Society Listserv by clicking [here](#).*

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## **Metropolis Of New Jersey Solicits Support From Chapters for the 16<sup>th</sup> Children's Medical Fund Luncheon on November 11<sup>th</sup>**

The biennial Children's Medical Fund Luncheon is the primary fund raising event of the National Philoptochos Society. Since its inception in 1989, the National Philoptochos has raised and disbursed approximately \$3.3 million for children's hospitals and medical centers as well as universities and special programs that serve the needs of ill and fragile children, along with their families throughout the United States and in other parts of the world.

As we look back on previous Children's Medical Fund Luncheons, we realize the extensive support that has benefitted countless organizations because of a deep-rooted love of philanthropy that is present in Philoptochos chapters throughout America.

In 2015, when the Metropolis of Boston hosted the event (pictured above), a total of \$167,000 was disbursed as a result of that love and generosity. This included a \$25,000 grant to New England Disabled Sports (NEDS), a program located in Lincoln, New Hampshire, that offers sports and recreation opportunities within a safe, fun, boundary-free environment for adults and children living with a myriad of disabilities who require adaptive instruction.

Also receiving a \$25,000 grant that year was Matthew's Hearts of Hope located in Sherman, Connecticut. Matthew's Hearts of Hope funds research to advance the diagnosis and treatment of Congenital Heart Defects (CHD).

A grant was also awarded to The Family Sponsorship Program at Camp Sunshine at Sebago Lake, Inc., which sponsors a unique, supportive program for families affected by life-threatening childhood illness. Held on the campus of Maine's Sebago Lake, the program provides respite and support to each family member – children, siblings and parents. The children have been diagnosed with cancer, hematologic conditions, renal disease and many other severe illnesses, which adversely affect an entire family, most notably siblings who are often overlooked.

Health Imperatives, Inc. in Brockton, Massachusetts, also received a grant. Health Imperatives is a non-profit, community-based agency that provides health and human services to more than 27,000 families in Southeastern Massachusetts. Funds will be used for the Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) programs, which provide comprehensive, coordinated care to children who are survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

These are examples of the range of projects and programs that the Children's Medical Fund is able to support as a result of the love and support of its chapters throughout the country.

Invitations to this year's Children's Medical Fund Luncheon will reach our parishes and Philoptochos chapters in early September. We look forward to and would be honored if you join us for this memorable, charity event.

We will also be appealing to you for your full support in various additional ways throughout the planning of the Luncheon. Every chapter will receive a Sponsorship form sometime in April in our effort to raise funds for a program that is the true demonstration of our love and commitment for critically ill children. Chapters also will be receiving information about the raffle, which is held concurrently with every Children's Medical Fund luncheon. This year, we have received many outstanding and beautiful gifts, and we ask you once again to support this important part of the fundraiser. Please share Sponsorship forms and raffle information with your parish councils and parishioners. Many people will be interested in supporting this event, which is the essence of philanthropy.

The Metropolis of New Jersey includes the state of New Jersey, the greater Philadelphia area, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. We are blessed to have many wonderful hospitals and facilities that do great work to serve medically fragile children and their families. Our goal is to raise over \$200,000 in order to distribute substantial grant awards to benefit children throughout the Metropolis of New Jersey.

Please email [cmf2017@philoptochos.org](mailto:cmf2017@philoptochos.org) if you have any questions. Anne Michals is the General Chair of the Luncheon. The Luncheon Tri-Chairs are Alexis Limberakis, Evvelyn Tsiadis and Eleni Constantinides.



### **#onemillionmeals**

*Philoptochos chapters across the country continue to provide meals for the homeless and hungry to meet the challenge of serving One Million Meals by July 2018. The St. George Ladies Philoptochos Society of Hartford, Connecticut, gathered to assemble over 200 bagged lunches to bring to a local shelter, House of Bread, that provides urban ministry to the economically disadvantaged in the Hartford area.*

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## **Philoptochos Disburses \$2,057,690 in 2016**

The stewards of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society continue to demonstrate their well-proven commitment to charity, giving and philanthropy through the National Ministry Commitments of the Society and through many other causes. As a result of the hard work of every Philoptochos chapter across the nation and with the support and cooperation of their entire parish families, funds totaling **\$2,057,690** were disbursed from January 1 – December 31, 2016, through our various funds and special drives.

Children were granted medical treatment, senior adults were nurtured and cared for, students at our beloved Scholi received financial aid, economically challenged families were provided infant formula (via Treehouse in Wichita, Kansas, illustrated above), and emergency aid was offered to disaster victims; the list could go on and on. We may all be proud of the Society's respected and widely admired ability to take swift and effective action for worthy and challenging causes.

The ladies of the Philoptochos Society express their heartfelt gratitude to Philoptochos chapters and parishes across the nation for support of their philanthropic programs in 2016. Let us work together to continue these good works. Your efforts are critically necessary to ensure assistance to those most in need. Thank you.

**For a detailed breakdown of donation figures and recipients, click [here](#).**

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## **\*\*\*March National Ministry Commitments\*\*\***



## **National Philoptochos to Make a Presentation to HC/HC Community**

Arlene Siavelis Kehl, Chair

National Philoptochos is pleased to announce that we will be making a presentation to the HC/HC community on Thursday, April 20, 2017. Our objective is to educate the students, our future priests, future lay leaders such as religious educators, youth ministers and young women, on Philoptochos' mission and our ministries. The presentation will be followed by an open dialogue that we hope will lead to a greater mutual understanding and collaborative effort to further our Orthodox Christian philanthropic work in our parishes, metropolises, across the nation and internationally.

The importance of Hellenic College, the only fully accredited Orthodox Christian college in the western hemisphere, and Holy Cross, the oldest and largest Orthodox Theological institution in America to our Church cannot be overestimated. Let's do our part to help our beloved Scholi in promoting our culture and faith. Let's continue to work together with the Hellenic College/Holy Cross administration and faculty, and support their efforts as they educate and develop the mind, body and spirit of its students.

In 2016, on behalf of chapters throughout the country, from the proceeds of our Lenten Appeal Fundraisers, National Philoptochos donated \$75,000 to Hellenic College/Holy Cross to refurbish nine classrooms in the Skouros Classroom Building as well as to update and refurnish the Reading Room in the Archbishop Iakovos Library and Learning Resource Center. In the ten year period between 2007 and 2016, \$760,900 was disbursed in total from this fund.

All Philoptochos chapters are reminded to hold an event to benefit the operational expenses of the school around the Feast of the Veneration of the Holy Cross, which this year is celebrated on Sunday, March 19, 2017. By honoring this national ministry commitment, we, the Philoptochos, are helping HC/HC to make ongoing improvements to the facilities, furnishings and systems and investing in the future of our Church.



## **Orthodox Christian Mission Center**

Marty Driscoll, Chair

In so many ways, Philoptochos is positively impacting Orthodox women's missions in Albania and Kenya!

In 2016, Philoptochos commitments totaling \$24,400 supported two women's mission teams from the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). Targeting churches in Albania and Kenya, where women are the primary source for family spiritual growth, OCMC women's mission teams presented Orthodoxy and leadership skills to select women's groups. For the ten year period from 2007 to 2016, Philoptochos has donated \$349,000 to OCMC.

Over 110 Albanian women attended "At the Well with Christ," an OCMC series of workshops specific to wives of clergy and women staff/volunteers of the Albanian Archdiocese. Led by six American clergy wives and an American female seminary student, the lectures served not only to strengthen Orthodoxy, but to expose the women to the fellowship of a strong and growing Orthodox Church in Albania. According to an OCMC spokesperson, "The effects of centuries of Islam and five decades of Communism, that made religion constitutionally illegal, are still lingering in



this nation."

Every opportunity to bring Albanian Orthodox women together in mission programs rekindles the establishment of strong religious traditions in that country. In Kenya, forty women from seven tribal communities, joined together for an OCMC workshop headed by two American women and a woman from Finland. Lessons translated by Kenyan clergy focused on the Orthodox calendar, Orthodox Sacraments, and the task of raising children in the Orthodox Church. Prayer, songs, crafts, and meals highlighted fellowship in faith and promoted a new Orthodox network for these Kenyan women.

In 2016, Philoptochos OCMC commitment donations also helped mission clergy to provide for their family's needs while on assignment. A Philoptochos donation of \$32,000 aided "Support A Mission Priest" (SAMP) assistance to 376 priests in sixteen different countries, including Kenya, Cameroon, and Indonesia. From 2007 to 2016, Philoptochos has donated \$433,000 to SAMP.

Philoptochos chapters are encouraged to continue their support for OCMC by generously supporting this March commitment.

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## **Philoptochos Helps To Shine Light Where Darkness Had Fallen**

Jennifer Constantin, Arlene Siavelis Kehl, Anastasia Michals, Tri-Chairs

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8:12 The Orthodox Study Bible, New Testament and Psalms*

Following the words of Christ, as of the beginning of March 2017, Philoptochos chapters and metropolises throughout the nation have collectively raised over \$1.4 million towards the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at The World Trade Center, which will serve as a beacon of hope and a declaration of our Greek ideals and Orthodox Christian faith to the world. Once we have raised \$2.0 million, our commitment will be met and our noble mission will be complete.

Through Philoptochos' tireless participation in this initiative, we offer the country and the world a place for prayer and reflection, a place to pray for loved ones, to memorialize the victims of September 11, and to reflect on the magnitude of that fateful day. The Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church will be the only house of worship on the hallowed ground of The World Trade Center, and the National Shrine will stand as a testament to our strength, our

courage and our faith for all generations.

As an army of women, our role is critical to the support of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America's St. Nicholas Building Fund. Please do your part to help your local Philoptochos chapter or Metropolis Philoptochos with small or large fundraising activities. To date, funds have been raised through a variety of activities – boat cruises, concerts, sales of baked goods, candles, candy and cookbooks, drive-thru gyros sales, luncheons, Agape dinners, intimate receptions at members' homes, display of donation containers in the design and shape of the Shrine at our parishes, direct mail appeals, individual donations and much more.

Visit our website shop at [www.philoptochos.org/resources/shoppe-philoptochos](http://www.philoptochos.org/resources/shoppe-philoptochos), and order Saint Nicholas National Shrine merchandise whereby 100% of the profits support our Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine Philoptochos Fundraising Initiative. Our Saint Nicholas National Shrine Charm is a beautifully crafted sterling silver charm which may be attached to our sterling silver National Philoptochos Logo Charm Bracelet or worn on another Tiffany-like bracelet, chain or cord. Our Saint Nicholas National Shrine Men's Ties are 100% silk, available in navy blue or ruby wine with tone on tone Philoptochos logo and colorful pin dot design. The charms, bracelets and ties are the perfect gifts for the family members and friends in your lives. The gift recipients are sure to wear these items with pride, and you'll be supporting our important initiative.

For further information and resources, visit [www.philoptochos.org/news/saintnicholas](http://www.philoptochos.org/news/saintnicholas). To be part of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at The World Trade Center Philoptochos Fundraising Initiative, please donate fundraising proceeds directly to your local Philoptochos chapter or your Metropolis Philoptochos.

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## **Contributors Wanted!**

If your Metropolis or chapter has an event or ministry you would like to submit for consideration in the Philanthropy Witness newsletter, the Orthodox Observer or the Philanthropy by Philoptochos Blog, please send your information to [communications@philoptochos.org](mailto:communications@philoptochos.org). We look forward to hearing from you!