



## Faith is Believing Without Seeing



The Philoptochos of *Holy Trinity Church in Westfield, New Jersey* was the first chapter in the Metropolis of New Jersey to kick off the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center Philoptochos Fundraising Initiative in October 2014, and remarkably, they completed their commitment only a few months later. Other chapters in the Metropolis of New Jersey were inspired by this early example of *Holy Trinity* to reach its goal of \$22,000 by adopting a simple program that entailed personal appeals to all stewards. Other plans quickly began to take root.

The Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos fulfilled its commitment of over \$310,000 by the time the National Philoptochos held its 2016 Biennial Convention in Nashville, Tennessee. The last installment came from the *Saint Irene Philoptochos of Saint Thomas Church in Cherry Hill, New Jersey*.

Saint Irene reached and exceeded its goal of \$9,200 by adopting a program that involved two major luncheons, the final one taking place on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Following Sunday Services, Saint Irene's Philoptochos hosted over 180 guests in the parish community center.

The event titled, *Our Women in Leadership*, gave guests the opportunity to hear speakers Catherine Avgiris, Executive Vice President and CFO of Comcast Cable, and Eleni Kousoulis, Esq., an Assistant Federal Public Defender and the sister of Danielle Kousoulis, who lost her life at Ground Zero during the terrorist attack and had been a Vice President at the financial services firm of Cantor Fitzgerald.

During her presentation, Eleni credited her mother and father's immigrant journey to America as being a guiding example, at home and in the family business, laying a path to success in her career as a public defender in Delaware. Eleni's sister and best friend Danielle, was the main focus of her presentation, as she sighted her sister's life in the community of Saint Thomas and in her position at Cantor Fitzgerald.

The life of Danielle Kousoulis is one to be celebrated by all Greek Americans. She was the youngest daughter in a close-knit family who delighted in treating her parents, natives of Greece, to things they thought they would never have. When Danielle was eulogized, a lifelong friend said about her, *she cared more about the feelings and problems of others than those of her own*.

So when chapters of the Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos completed their Saint Nicholas commitments, the task seemed relatively uncomplicated since it was driven by personal memories; stories such as Danielle's and those told by others who knew people who lost their lives on that fateful day. It was driven by women who could still imagine the devastation, as they drove the highway across from the Manhattan skyline, or remembering those who survived the

falling towers getting off of ferries transporting them to safety across the river from lower Manhattan to New Jersey. They heard horrific stories firsthand of what took place.

The task of raising funds for the building of Saint Nicholas may not be so easy for women in parishes far away from downtown Manhattan because many need to see to believe, and most of us have not seen. For the women of the Metropolis of New Jersey, it was easy because we saw. But if you remember the story of our own Danielle, who may not be known but should never be forgotten, the task will be uncomplicated for you, too, because Danielle grew up in Saint Thomas, a New Jersey parish much like your own. And as the Bible says, ***faith is believing without seeing.***

Please support the local Philoptochos chapter(s) in your area or your Metropolis Philoptochos with your donations. For further information and resources, visit [philoptochos.org/news/saintnicholas](http://philoptochos.org/news/saintnicholas).