

2016

*National Philoptochos Society
Biennial Convention*



AGAPE AWARD

*All Generations Accomplishing
Philanthropic Endeavors*

*July 6, 2016
Nashville, Tennessee*



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AGAPE
AWARD

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The AGAPE AWARD, established in 2008, affords us the unique opportunity at the National Philoptochos Convention to honor and recognize nine outstanding women of the Greek Orthodox Philoptochos Society, who embody the true spirit of Philanthropia.

It is our privilege to bestow this prestigious award to these Philoptochos members who have been tireless workers for their Chapter and have inspired their Chapter members through their actions and even beyond the parish community, as a witness to the wonderful mission of Philoptochos.

Direct Archdiocesan District

Christina Vasilakos

Saint Basil Church Chapter # 0078

Troy, New York



Christina Vasilakos is a member of the Saint Barbara Philoptochos at Saint Basil Greek Orthodox Church in Troy, NY. She has been a Philoptochos member for 20 years, during which time she has stood out for her generosity, stewardship, and her unselfish giving of her time and talent. Her contributions to Philoptochos and to the greater community are a way of life. Her generosity is a way of expressing her thanks to God, and her actions inspire those around her to give more of themselves for the betterment of others. Christina donated the Annual Breakfast Auction so that 100% of the proceeds could benefit Philoptochos charities. She has done the same with the annual Palm Sunday Tsourekis Sale. Christina has donated food and personally purchased gifts for the Sunday School students at Christmas. She has even supported her sister parishes in Albany and Schenectady, NY. Christina also donated the majority of the ingredients for the chapter's annual Spanakopita and Baklava sale, with the proceeds benefiting the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine. She has gone above and beyond – cooking, baking, donating – with the singular goal of helping Philoptochos provide for others. She has also instilled this attitude in her children and grandchildren, as they now work by her side and are also strong stewards of the community. Christina is a humble leader who makes everyone feel welcome. She gives with a kind heart, full of agape, not seeking attention, but rather for the betterment of the parish and the community at-large.

Metropolis of Chicago

Ismini Arges

Saint Demetrios Church Chapter # 2035

Hammond, Indiana



Ismini Arges is a charter member of the Philoptochos Chapter at her parish of Saint Demetrios in Hammond, IN. For 40 years, she has immersed herself in this ministry, and has been an inspired leader, mentor and steward. At the young age of 87, Ismini is still full of boundless energy and her commitment to Philoptochos is as strong as ever. Even though she never learned to drive, Ismini is present at every meeting, visits the sick and shut-ins, and was the first to sign up to serve meals at a homeless shelter. She is careful to connect with the younger members of Philoptochos, encouraging them and making them feel welcome, recognizing their importance to the future of this ministry. Each year she chairs multiple projects including the making of Palm crosses, decorating the Kouvouklion for Good Friday, cleaning the church for Pascha, baking and cooking for various events, and she is the "head fryer" for their successful Loukoumades fundraisers. Ismini has been a pivotal recruiter of younger members and she is a role model for Christian living. She is also a wise advisor to her fellow members and always has the best interest of Philoptochos at heart. Ismini is truly the matriarch of their chapter. A spirited advocate for philanthropy, Ismini would always give to someone in need and she is the embodiment of agape and the values of Philoptochos.

Metropolis of Boston

Catherine Bibilos

Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Chapter # 3044
Woburn, Massachusetts



Catherine "Kaye" Bibilos has been a member of Philoptochos for nearly 50 years at the Annunciation Church in Woburn, MA. She was a young mother at the time she joined, but her youthful energy and enthusiasm was contagious. She is a true leader, showing the way and encouraging others to work with her on projects including the Christmas Bazaar, craft booths, the "Country Kitchen" and eventually to the parish Grecian Festivals. Catherine has always been attentive to details and putting the "finishing touches" on everything with her impeccable eye for design and flair. She transitioned this to floral design and has been responsible for decorating the parish with flowers throughout the ecclesiastical year, especially the Epitaphios on Good Friday which she lovingly adorns with flowers in tribute to the Lord. During Catherine's terms as Chapter President, she always emphasized the need to identify new and innovative ways to raise funds to support the many worthy charitable causes of the chapter, Archdiocese and greater community. She has inspired many others during her service to Philoptochos being most proud of her children and their families, all of whom have joined her in their involvement in the parish – from singing in the choir, to serving of the Parish Council, as members of Philoptochos, and even her young granddaughter who is GOYA president. Catherine is an example of agape and stewardship in all aspects of her life.

Metropolis of Denver

Eleni Kyriazis

Annunciation Cathedral Chapter # 8036

Houston, Texas



Eleni Kyriazis has been a member of the Philoptochos at Annunciation Cathedral in Houston for 35 years. She is a bundle of energy, a dynamic leader, and a true steward in service as a Philoptochos board member, officer, and chair of many successful events. Though Eleni has scleroderma, she has not let the challenges of this condition diminish her service to others through Philoptochos. She has chaired the chapter's major bake sale which raised over \$25,000, as well as chaired the annual Vasilopita celebration in support of Saint Basil's Academy. Eleni also oversees the baking for the parish festival, one of the largest in the country, and takes time to teach others so that the wonderful baking traditions will continue to be enjoyed by future generations. The Annunciation Cathedral Philoptochos Chapter has been extremely generous in their support of many charities within the Archdiocese as well as the greater Houston community due in large part to Eleni's hard work and vision to provide for the needs of others. She has also instilled in her family – her daughters, son in law and granddaughters – the importance of giving back and her example has been an inspiration to them and to many other people in her church family. Eleni exemplifies Philoptochos by using her time, talents and treasure to serve others and her legacy of agape in all that she has done for so many people for so many years is truly inspirational.

Metropolis of Atlanta

Catherine Stuman

Dormition of the Theotokos Chapter # 5024

Greensboro, North Carolina



Catherine Stuman has been a dedicated member of Philoptochos for 30 years. Catherine has shown her grace, patience and a positive attitude in all aspects of her commitment to Philanthropia. She has been a true leader in her Parish Chapter at the Dormition of the Theotokos Church in Greensboro, NC, having held the offices of President, Vice President, Recording Secretary and currently Corresponding Secretary. Catherine chairs the Charitable Ministries Committee which focuses on food bank collection and distribution. Through her efforts, her Chapter has partnered with the Newcomer's School providing for the needs of children of refugee families. Catherine organizes shopping for Christmas presents for families that would have no holiday were it not for the generosity and compassion of Philoptochos as well as her fellow parishioners. She is constantly researching charities for her Philoptochos Chapter to extend philanthropy. Through Catherine's efforts, she initiated the outreach program of "Wreaths Across America" by placing wreaths on the gravesites of veterans in December. This most worthy program crosses generations in her Chapter and parish honoring those who valiantly served our country. Catherine is known within her Chapter as "Ms. Philoptochos" with faith, hope and charity radiating from her smile. She provides transportation to Philoptochos events for several senior members who wish to be active and involved. Catherine searches for ministries that can involve younger women not interfering with their career and family responsibilities. For these reasons and more, Catherine epitomizes AGAPE.

Metropolis of Detroit

Nia Cortese

Holy Trinity Chapter # 7002

Carmel, Indiana



Nia Cortese has been a member of Philoptochos for over 50 years, serving several terms as Chapter President, as well as other offices. Nia has taken the leadership role of our Visitation Ministry which reaches out to those who are homebound, unable to attend services, living alone, or in assisted living or retirement facilities. Nia is sensitive to the various needs of these families and matches her team members with those they visit. Her committee work includes organizing the delivery of the Orthodox Book of Bibles Stories given at the 40-day Blessings of babies, as well as making Koliva for all the Memorials. Nia not only completes a task, she also prepares a report to submit to the Board providing them with all the information as a guide for the next chairman. For the past few years, Nia served as Membership Chair. She was diligent in reminding members to invite their family and friends to join and she reached out to new parishioners. Her outstanding efforts increased Chapter membership by 10% to a new high of 150 members. Nia has demonstrated, through a lifetime of service, dedication, compassion and leadership, her love and commitment to our Church and to Philoptochos. She uses the gifts God has given her to impact so many in so many ways. Mentoring newer members and cultivating leadership in Philoptochos are also very important to Nia so that the good work of this ministry can continue to inspire philanthropy for generations to come.

Metropolis of Pittsburgh

Tessie Lekas

Saint Paul Church Chapter # 6011 North

Royalton, Ohio



Tessie Lekas has been actively involved with Philoptochos since 1966. As a two term Chapter President, Tessie, has been able to recruit multiple generations of women to join our Chapter at Saint Paul Greek Orthodox Church in North Royalton, OH. Her kind and patient nature gravitates people toward Tessie. She inspires all to support her efforts; working with her to accomplish whatever task is at hand. Beyond this, she has chaired numerous other initiatives, all of which have expanded the ministry of Philoptochos and brought unconditional love to those around her. Tessie has displayed countless acts of kindness over the years; the afghans she crochets for the 40 day blessings, her participation in the Prison Ministry, and visits to our homebound parishioners. Recently Tessie started a Philoptochos Scarf Project, making use of donated yarn that is not suitable for afghans and creating beautiful scarves. The money from the sale of the scarves is used to purchase yarn for the 40-day Blessing Afghans. Our Chapter's most creative fundraising events all stemmed from Tessie's suggestions: *The Harvest Ball; Ribs, Wings and other things; the Epicurean Feast*. Tessie's ideas and events put smiles on the faces of our guests, while funding our Chapters philanthropic charities. Tessie's exceptional efforts all come from her love of God, her Church and family. She is a wonderful, loving, philanthropic leader deeply rooted in her faith, who is everything a Philoptochos member should be.

Metropolis of San Francisco

Elaine Sotiropulos

Saint George Church Chapter # 4008

Fresno, California



Elaine Sotiropulos is a very active steward at Saint George Greek Orthodox Church in Fresno, CA. She is currently serving as Philoptochos Treasurer, and has been a chapter member for over 15 years. In addition to her involvement with Philoptochos, she has also served as President and Vice President of the Parish Council. Through all of her work, Elaine has constantly challenged her fellow Philoptochos members and parishioners to extend beyond their comfort zone and make a difference in the lives of others. Through the Angel Babies project, Elaine has done just that, mobilizing young and old, parishioners, Philoptochos members, and the greater civic community to embrace this special project which involved repurpose old wedding gowns and make tiny infant clothes for families who have lost an infant child. Many times these grieving families have to shop for doll clothes to find a burial garment, but through Angel Babies, Elaine has created a program that includes making tiny gown, diapers, caps, blankets, and small keepsake envelopes for holding treasured mementos for these short lives. Donations from the parish and beyond are abundant, as is the love of the many volunteers who come with scissors, sewing machines and an eagerness to bring comfort to those suffering a tremendous loss. These special creations are donated on a regular basis to the local hospice organization which estimates needing 50 garments per month. This is not just a ministry of love and Agape, but one of compassion and comfort.

Metropolis of New Jersey

Maria Antonakas

Saint Demetrios Chapter # 1018

Parkville, Maryland



Maria Antonakas is looked upon as both a mother and sister to her parish of Saint Demetrios in Baltimore, MD. She has been a member of Philoptochos for over 30 years during which time she has immersed herself in all aspects of this ministry – serving as Chapter President, as a Metropolis Board Member, and as the chair of many unique and thoughtful programs. Maria has been able to take the important work of Philoptochos and weave it into many other parish ministries so that these combined efforts can be more impactful. These programs include Sunday School, a toddlers group, Little Angels, the parish Consecration, coordinating the Makaria meals, and even a diaper drive for a parish family who had triplets. Maria was also instrumental in the development of an Orthodox Summer Camp through the Chesapeake Youth Council, and she coordinates outreach to local schools in need to the Ronald McDonald House. She has taken the work of Philoptochos to all ages while emphasizing the consistent message of serving others. Maria has been referred to as the glue that bonds her Chapter together. She is gentle, empathetic, and instills a sense of belonging to all who join Philoptochos – young and not so young. Maria's inner spirit has positively affected the lives of others and her support of her parish, church family, and her Philoptochos sisters has brought deeper commitment, energy and enthusiasm to all those around her.

