

National Philoptochos Society 2016-2018 Committee Report



Saint Photios Shrine

Chair: Betty A. Lantz
Liaison: Evangeline Mekras Scurtis
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The Saint Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine is the first Greek Orthodox Shrine in America in the beautiful historic city of Saint Augustine, Florida. Known as “the Jewel of Saint George Street,” the Shrine is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The 35th Anniversary of the dedication of the Shrine took place in February 2017, and in 2018 the Shrine celebrated the 250th anniversary of the landing and immigration of 500 Greek settlers and others of Mediterranean descent. In May, there were Greek Week celebrations with lectures and a “glendi”. Our committee had an active conference call discussion of this very significant and exciting time to celebrate our beloved Shrine, our heritage, and the history of the first Greek settlers in the United States landing in New Smyrna, Florida.

The committee calls upon all of our Philoptochos chapters across the nation to encourage their members to visit the Saint Photios Shrine and/or to organize a trip to the Shrine, which is located in the Colonial Spanish Quarter of downtown Saint Augustine, the oldest city in the United States. The Shrine’s chapel is beautiful, the site is historical, and it is a true tribute to our Greek Orthodox faith. The Shrine has an extensive shoppe, where one can purchase icons, books, cards, jewelry and other lovely gift items. Your parish can also order bottles of holy water and other religious items.

The committee also encourages all Philoptochos sisters to support the “Light a Candle” programs, which offers prayers with a 7-day votive candle and service for those we wish to honor, to pray for the health of, and to remember.

The “Wall of Tribute” program was initiated in 1982 to support the Shrine by honoring and remembering family, loved ones and friends. The Wall of Tribute lists all benefactors, supporters and ancestors. There is also a wonderful program to engage our Greek Orthodox youth to identify with the Shrine through an annual 100-word essay showcasing their understanding of the survivors of New Smyrna in 1777 and why they are remembered through the Shrine.

The committee emphasizes the importance of the Saint Photios Shrine as a “living memorial” to all Greek Orthodox pioneers whose love of freedom and the desire for a better life for themselves and their families brought them to the New World. We encourage all Greek Orthodox faithful to visit the Shrine, our first Greek Orthodox Shrine in America.