



Philanthropy Witness



The Official Newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society

April 2015

Pascha 2015

His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela



These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be complete.
John 15:11

On behalf of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, I want to wish each and every one of you a joyous celebration of Pascha. His Eminence's love and blessings for all the members of the Ladies Philoptochos Society is constant and unconditional, and He rejoices in all your labors of love in God's name.

As Orthodox Christians we often overlook what our faith is all about. We focus on the spiritual struggles, sacrifices, fasting, giving, repentance and we forget that all these things, though necessary, are not an end in themselves but rather they should lead us to joy, the joy of the Lord. In the verse quoted above, Christ is inviting His disciples to experience His joy so that their joy may be complete. This invitation came right after Christ spoke about Himself as the vine, and us being the branches, and He concluded by saying:

As the Father loved me, I also have loved you; abide

in my love. If you keep my commandments, you abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. John 15:9-10

Our joy comes from knowing that we are loved unconditionally by God; that God has loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son so that we will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:6); that He did not do that two thousand years ago but that He is offering His Son to us today, that He is ever present with us every minute of our lives. The joy of the Lord can be experienced when we are connected with Him, because He is the source of love and joy. Then we realize that we are not alone, but that we belong to each other as a family of God, that our burdens are lifted from our shoulders by God, Who has the power to forgive us and make us innocent again. Our joy comes from caring and giving to others, our joy comes when our hearts are filled with gratitude even when we receive the smallest gifts and blessings from God or others, joy comes when we are satisfied with basic necessities and we are not dependent on external factors to make us happy. But in order to do that we need to be disconnected from our dependence on the substitutes of love and joy. We live our life, looking for recognition, fame, material things to make us happy, external and artificial ways to make us euphoric for a few moments or a few hours, and when all is said and done, we feel miserable again.

This Holy Pascha, Christ is inviting us to trample upon death like He did, to be free from all substitutes and discover what is real and meaningful in our lives. Let us love ourselves and each other, for who we are, unconditionally. Let us regard our jobs and the material world for what they are but not as absolutes. Decide wisely what is necessary in our lives and what is not, and be happy, free and grateful for what we have. Recognize the kinship between us and the world that we are part of, and that we all belong to one

another. Celebrate that Christ overcame the world, inviting us to do the same, and begin living a new reality, the reality of joy and love. This is the joy of the Resurrection; this is the joy that we are called to experience so that our joy may be complete.

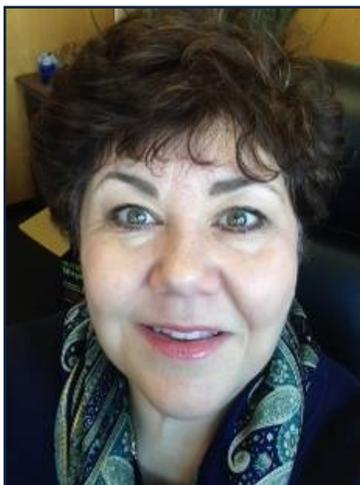
*Pascha of delight! Pascha, the Lord's Pascha!
A Pascha all venerable has risen for us. Pascha!*

*With joy let us embrace one
another. Pascha, the ransom from sorrow!
Today from the sepulcher Christ emerged
resplendently as from a bridal chamber,
and the women He filled with joy, saying,
"Proclaim this to the Apostles."
(Hymn of Holy Pascha)*

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Pascha 2015

Maria Logus, National Philoptochos President



Dear National Board Members, Chapter Presidents and Stewards of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society,

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

On Pascha we celebrate the moment when good conquered evil and life triumphed over death. Just as Spring brings warmth and bright colors to the earth after a harsh Winter, Pascha brings joy and new life to the spirit, offering us the hope of renewal and a time to recommit ourselves to our Faith, our Holy Church, our families and friends, and, of course, to those in need.

As faithful stewards of Philoptochos, we have a daily opportunity, indeed an obligation, to follow the selfless example of Christ's love, to share the "light" by helping those in need. Some of you may have heard about the Butterfly Effect, a physics concept, which suggests that a single butterfly flapping its wings on one side of the globe can, in theory, cause a significant weather event on the other side of the world. What if a simple act of kindness, a very small change not unlike the movement of a butterfly's wings, could also result in significant consequences?

We in Philoptochos can be that small change. Unknown good and great things can flow from every kindness we show – without our knowledge or design. There are things we can do right now to start the change. Today, 50 million Americans struggle with hunger. Even more disturbing is that one in five children in our country, the richest in the world, goes to bed hungry.

Philoptochos chapters across the country have recently been challenged to serve 250,000 meals to those in need by Summer 2016. Imagine that each person we help then helps another and another and another. We could be the start of a network of unanticipated kindness, a renewed goodness in our lives. The possibilities are extraordinary and boundless.

On behalf of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society and the people we help, I thank you for your devoted service to Christ and His Church.

With love in the Resurrected Christ,

Maria Logus

Maria Logus
National Philoptochos President



*Facts To Know About
The Saint Nicholas National Shrine*



Did you know...?

- The Saint Nicholas National Shrine, although it is for all people of the world, will be the only House of Worship in the entire sixteen-acre rebuilt World Trade Center site, and it will be a Greek Orthodox Church, which will look and feel like any other Naos, a true dwelling of God.
- The National Shrine will house the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and will function as any other parish with a rich liturgical life centered around our transfiguring cycles of feasts and fasts that define every year of the grace of the Lord, including sacraments like baptisms and weddings.
- The Byzantine Cross mounted at the top of the dome of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine will be made of a strong coated metal and stand four feet high.
- The curtain wall, the outer structure of the Saint Nicholas National Shrine, will be composed of stone and glass with a unique lighting system, and when it is turned on, the Church will glow from within, similar to a lit candle.

- The architectural inspirations came from Hagia Sophia, the Church of the Savior in Chora and the very Walls of Constantinople, where our beloved Patriarchate is located.
- The interior of the finished Naos will be instantly recognizable as an Orthodox Church complete with iconography and furnishings.
- The church will face East as every Greek Orthodox Church does, and it will be our beacon of Orthodox Christianity at the World Trade Center site.
- The Shrine is the only private monument built on public land.
- An estimated ten million people will visit the World Trade Center site each year, and the Saint Nicholas National Shrine of our Holy Archdiocese will be a place where people of the world come to this sacred ground that has been set aside to remember the fallen of September 11th.

For information and resources visit:

www.philoptochos.org/news/saintnicholas

To be a part of the Saint Nicholas National Shrine Philoptochos Fundraising Initiative, please donate directly to your local Philoptochos chapter or your Metropolis Philoptochos.

SAVE THE DATE

*Fifteenth National Philoptochos
Children's Medical Fund Luncheon*

Saturday, October 31, 2015

*Renaissance Waterfront Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts*

Children's Medical Fund Donation Helps Keep Wings in the Air



Last fall, a group from the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos visited an airplane hangar in Missouri and presented \$5,000 toward the overhaul of an airplane engine. Have the Greek Ladies suddenly taken up an interest in aviation? Was Amelia Earhart Greek?

No, this check was a charitable contribution to *Wings of Hope*, an aviation charity that flies seriously ill and disabled patients, mostly children, to the country's best medical specialists. Keeping the planes maintained is critical, because when one is grounded, fewer children can be flown to care.

"Our Philoptochos organization is in the business of helping others, but we were in awe of *Wings of Hope*," said National Board member Marilyn Tzakis, who was part of the group that delivered the donation to the St. Louis charity.

Exactly what were these ladies in awe of? Volunteers! In particular, the volunteer pilots who dedicate their time and own personal safety to fly sick children to the care they so desperately need.

"It was a beautiful experience to see everyone in action," added National Board member Pam Argyris, part of the Metropolis group that attended the Hangar Meeting and heard about the recent *Wings of Hope* flights to Sierra Leone and Central America. Members of Philoptochos were taken on a tour of the facility and saw several planes that were recently used to transport patients and medical supplies as far away as

Africa. A bus, which was outfitted to be a mobile medical station complete with an operating room, was also on the tour.

By the time a parent calls *Wings of Hope*, they have exhausted all other options. Their local doctors either don't know what else to do or they have told them that their child's only hope lies in the care of a specialist, who may be hundreds of miles away.



The smiling faces of Claire, her mother Marianne and her sister Zoey. Claire's life was saved through Wings of Hope, which was the recipient of a grant from the National Philoptochos Children's Medical Fund.

These families often cannot afford the travel, and many of the children cannot fly commercial. One of these children is Claire, a little girl from St. Louis, who was just 2-years-old when she developed a life-threatening autoimmune disease that required treatment at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. Because exposure to even the common cold could prove fatal, Claire's parents, at first, drove her more than five hours to treatment. But this long car ride became increasingly uncomfortable for Claire — she could not even use a public restroom — so her parents called *Wings of Hope*. Wings flew Claire and her mother seven times for treatment and she is now in remission. Claire's mother, Marianne, will tell you that *Wings of Hope* saved her daughter's life. By keeping that plane in the air, Philoptochos played a small, but vital, role.

To learn more about how *Wings of Hope* helps sick children in the U.S. and poor individuals worldwide, go to www.wings-of-hope.org or visit <https://www.facebook.com/wingsofhopeinc>

*2015
Children's Medical Fund Applications*

On October 31, 2015, the Metropolis of Boston Philoptochos will host the 15th National Philoptochos Children's Medical Fund Luncheon at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel in Boston, MA.

The Children's Medical Fund (CMF) was created by the National Philoptochos for the specific purpose of aiding children with life-threatening illnesses.

Established in 1989 as the Cancer Fund Luncheon, the event was officially named the Children's Medical Fund Luncheon in 1991, and it became a biennial event hosted on a rotating basis within the Direct Archdiocesan District and eight Metropolises of the Archdiocese.

Since that time, nearly \$3 million has been contributed through our fund to support children's health care organizations at the forefront of innovative programs and services, to provide financial assistance for the medical care of critically ill children whose families are either uninsured or under-insured, and to provide funding for hospital equipment, programs and research which benefit all children with serious medical or surgical diagnoses.

Applicant organizations for the 2015 CMF must have current 501(c)(3) status and be located in or serve populations of the Metropolis of Boston, which includes the states of Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont, and the areas in the state of Connecticut surrounding the cities of Danielson, Enfield, New London and Norwich.

If you know of such an organization, program or project, please direct them to the Philoptochos website for 2015 Children's Medical Fund Grant Application material, on this page:

www.philoptochos.org/outreach/cmfsection

All applications must be received by May, 22, 2015.

*Children's Medical Fund
Awards Grant to the Timothy School*



Left to right: Effie Hionis, grandmother of Timothy School student Eleni Gerovasiliou and St. George parishioner, Alexis Limberakis, National Philoptochos Board Member and Metropolis of New Jersey First Vice President, Reverend Father Anastasios Bourantas, parish priest of St. George in Media, PA. and Diane Nayman, St. George Philoptochos Chapter President.

The National Philoptochos Children's Medical Fund is a nationwide effort and benefits each Metropolis. Recently, the Metropolis of New Jersey donated a check to the Timothy School in Berwyn, PA. The school has been teaching children with autism for over 40 years.

The mission of the Timothy School is to provide students diagnosed with autism with skills to enable them to function effectively, and to provide their parents with training and support.

*National Philoptochos Society
Honored with Inaugural
Daughters of Penelope Philanthropy Award*



Philoptochos First Vice President Arlene Siavelis Kehl, His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, Daughters of Penelope Grand President Anna-Helene Grossomanides.

On Friday, March 20, 2015, National Philoptochos First Vice President Arlene Siavelis Kehl accepted the inaugural Daughters of Penelope Philanthropy Award at the Daughters of Penelope National Reception held at the General Federation of Women's Clubs Headquarters in Washington, DC.

The Daughters of Penelope (DOP) Grand President, Anna-Helene Grossomanides, and the Officers of the Grand Lodge hosted the event in recognition of the work of the Philoptochos Society.

"We honor the National Philoptochos Society for its implementation of philanthropic programs to benefit the community," said DOP Grand President Grossomanides, who presented the award-- an inscribed crystal vase-- to National Philoptochos First Vice President Kehl on behalf of National Philoptochos President Maria Logus and the 26,000 stewards of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society.

"We accept this award with humility and gratitude, mixed with the comfort and camaraderie that comes from the heritage and advocacy of worthy causes shared by our sister organizations," said

First Vice President Kehl. "We are women working together to give back to our communities, eager to take on any challenge and prepared to make things better for those in need."

His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, National Philoptochos Spiritual Advisor, represented Archbishop Demetrios and read a letter on his behalf, and also offered a blessing for the proceedings.

In attendance were Father Dimitrios and Presvytera Maria Antokas of St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Bethesda, MD, Father Michael Eaccarino, of SS. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church of Washington, DC, as well as Eleftheria Aristotelous, second secretary, Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus, who represented Ambassador George Chacalli. Also present were National Philoptochos Board Members, including Daughters of Penelope Past Grand Presidents Elaine Kevgas and Evellyn Tsiadis.

The General Federation of Women's Clubs Headquarters served as an appropriate venue, since it houses an alliance that celebrates women's volunteer groups seeking to create positive change. As philanthropy is key to the mission of both Philoptochos and DOP, First Vice President Kehl commented on the initiatives shared by both organizations, such as helping victims of domestic violence, responding to those in need in times of national or international crises, honoring and assisting veterans, nurturing Saint Basil Academy and most recently, building the Saint Nicholas National Shrine at the World Trade Center.

First Vice President Kehl applauded Daughters of Penelope projects such as Penelope House, in Mobile, Alabama and Penelope's Place in Brockton, Massachusetts that provide shelter for victims of domestic violence, and the University of Miami, Sylvester Cancer Research Center, a world leader in the search for a cure for cancer.

The Daughters of Penelope is an international women's organization and an affiliate of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA). Founded in 1929, the organization has 10,000 members and aims to promote the ancient Greek ideals of education,

philanthropy, civic responsibility, and family and individual excellence through community service and volunteerism.

The Daughters of Penelope National Reception served as a fundraiser for the organization's campaign to build the Saint Nicholas National Shrine at the World Trade Center.



Center: His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, Daughters of Penelope Grand President Anna-Helene Grossomanides (left), National Philoptochos First Vice President Arlene Siavelis Kehl (right) and National Philoptochos Board Members.

*Philoptochos Is
Philanthropy~Fellowship~Faith in Action*

Looking for ways to grow membership and activate current membership is important. The most important thing a person can do if they are passionate about something is to share that passion with someone else. If you find someone who shares that passion or is moved by it, they will take up the challenge and become a member.

So share with others the *reasons you do what you do* in Philoptochos! Changing lives, sometimes one at a time, makes a difference. All of us, who do what we do, know that the feeling we get when we help a person in need is remarkable and sometimes life changing. Recruiting members to Philoptochos should be all about sharing the passion of *why we do what we do*.

Passion can also be shown through the personal testimony of those whose lives have been touched by Philoptochos. Simple acts of love and sacrifice have changed lives for the better. Every chance you have to present these testimonials to parishioners is an opportunity to recruit a new member and re-energize experienced members.

You must also get information out to the community and publicize the 'good works' of Philoptochos. Members and potential members can't become more active if they're not aware of the work we do. *A tech savvy PR Chairman can be vital.*

Creating the right article for your Parish bulletin or newsletter, and using your Parish bulletin board to your best advantage is important. Keeping your Parish Council and community informed about meetings and activities is the start of a good PR effort. The PR Committee should use all media outlets, especially those being used by your Parish, to promote the Ministry. Social Media should be used to post invitations and meetings and this can attract younger women to the Ministry. It should also be used to tell our story; the *why we do what we do*.

So share what you believe. Human emotion is the force of life; that thing that moves us to action. Philoptochos is about emotionally connecting with others, understanding their needs and acting on them.

The other part of our story is that through our contribution to the world, our churches, our communities, we will gain personal fulfillment. *Give and you shall receive.* Giving to others brings about an emotional connection that is unmatched. Have you ever spoken to someone you helped during a crisis? What they say is remarkable. They usually walk away from the experience and say *I can't believe strangers cared and now I am going to make a difference.*

Your decision to emotionally connect and get involved will shape someone's destiny. Experience the joy of giving and know the art of fulfillment. Let's build a culture of giving together.

Sisterhood of Saint Basil Academy



During the Philoptochos National Conference in Buffalo, NY in 1960, the Sisterhood of Saint Basil Academy program was founded and to this day continues providing dedicated support for the children of the Academy. The Sisterhood fund provides for the physical needs of the children, graduation celebrations, awards and gifts, and facilitates the mission of Saint Basil Academy which is "to shelter, protect, love and educate the youth so that they grow up to be healthy, wholesome, well-rounded Orthodox Christians, as well as productive members of society with vision and hope."

Many of the ongoing needs for the children include clothing, furnishings, equipment and other essentials for the dormitories and kitchens. As with any home, there is regular maintenance. Over the years the Sisterhood fund, through the generosity of Philoptochos Chapters across the country, has assisted in:

- replacing roofs
- renovating bathrooms
- replacing appliances in the dormitory kitchens
- purchasing carpeting
- remodeling of the dormitories
- repairing plumbing
- general repairs

In 2014, the Sisterhood Commitment distributed \$21,950 for the continued support of the physical needs of the children at Saint Basil Academy, including the purchase of a four-wheel-drive

vehicle to assist in transporting the children, from a portion of these funds. Our family is our greatest blessing, and our Saint Basil family thanks and blesses us as their caretakers. Philoptochos stewards are devoted and committed to caring for the needs of others as the Lord offered of Himself to us. As we approach Holy Week and await the light of our Risen Lord, may we remember the children of the Academy and support the Sisterhood with love and generosity.

For more information, please contact Saint Basil Academy Co-Chairs: Joanne Stavrakas and Kali Tsitsipas

International Orthodox Christian Charities



IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need world-wide, without discrimination, to enable them to continue to improve their own lives and communities and to have means to live with dignity, respect and hope. In addition, with team members on the ground at disaster sites, the IOCC strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to respond quickly and compassionately. IOCC has distributed nearly \$500 million in emergency assistance and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries and across 4 continents.

Philoptochos has been committed to generously supporting IOCC. The mission and focus of IOCC, of helping those in great need, is deeply aligned with the work that Philoptochos also seeks to do.

Through the years, and with the generosity of the chapters, Philoptochos has partnered with IOCC on many projects. Some of these projects include:

- The distribution of two containers, each containing 280 wheelchairs. These wheelchairs were distributed to 280 individuals in the Republic of Georgia and to 280 individuals in Thessaloniki, Greece. In addition, funds collected from the chapters provided for vocational training for the 560 individuals who received the wheelchairs.
- The establishment of a Children’s Medical Clinic in Woliso, Ethiopia in the Western Highlands.
- The Fund has provided for donations towards famine relief in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia as well as for 2 shipments of cholera kits with pharmaceuticals and supplies to treat the victims of cholera and dysentery due to the Pakistani floods.
- Philoptochos in partnership with IOCC was among the first responders to send aid in support of the victims suffering as a result of the economic crisis in Greece.
- In 2014, the National Philoptochos donated \$45,000 in continued support to Ethiopia for the prevention and treatment of the epidemic tropical disease, Podoconiosis. Podoconiosis is a disease of the lymph vessels of the lower extremities that is caused by chronic exposure to irritant soils. It is characterized by prominent swelling of the lower extremities, which leads to disfigurement and disability. To help prevent this disease, the Philoptochos partnered with IOCC and Tom’s Shoes to provide shoes for women and children in Ethiopia.

All chapters are urged to continue their generous support for this vital national ministry commitment.

For information, please contact IOCC coordinators Patricia Aleck and Athanasia Ward.

New Email Address for Communications



The PR/Communications Committee would love to hear from you! Please send us Philoptochos related news or announcements or submit articles (up to 300 words) and photographs (in JPG form) to our new group email address, communications@philoptochos.org. If you have ideas you would like to share with the Committee, send them our way!

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