



Philanthropy Witness



The Official Newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society

September 2014

A Tribute to Aphrodite Skeadas

From the Editors of the Philanthropy Witness



For the past 6 years, President Aphrodite Skeadas has served our philanthropic sisterhood with great faith, humility, commitment and love. As a token of appreciation for her dedicated service, this issue of the *Philanthropy Witness* is offered in her honor.

Aphrodite Skeadas was appointed National President in 2008 by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios. From the moment of her installation as President, Aphrodite has continually dedicated herself, unceasingly and tirelessly, to fulfilling the magnanimous mission of Philoptochos. Meeting the call of every need, every crisis, every challenge, with great love, compassion and sensitivity, is ultimately the hallmark of Aphrodite's Presidency. Her example of servant leadership is the embodiment of what Philoptochos represents and the depth of her service is what became manifested by the

realization of the Philoptochos Center of Philanthropy.

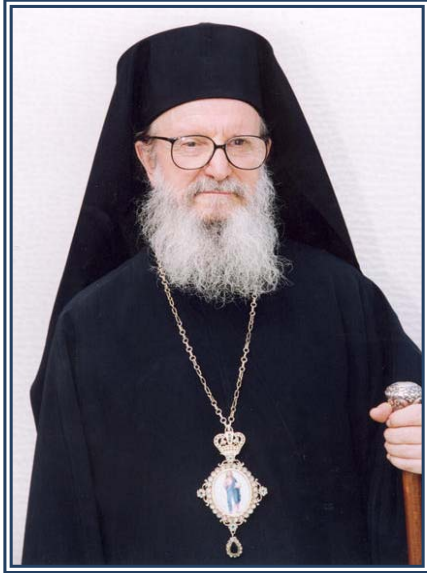
Throughout Aphrodite's tenure, the philanthropic outreach to the many ministries, projects and causes that are at the core of Philoptochos was never compromised in order to fulfill the vision of the Center of Philanthropy. Furthermore, not only was the Center of Philanthropy realized but the mortgage was fully satisfied, all while Philoptochos simultaneously achieved record-breaking philanthropic giving. Philoptochos' commitment to ministries and causes such as St. Basil's Academy, Hellenic College/Holy Cross School of Theology, Social Services, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, Super Storm Sandy Relief, and Aid to Greece and Cyprus, never wavered but remained in the forefront of the Philoptochos mission. This is an incredible accomplishment and a true testament to Aphrodite's devoted leadership.

Above and beyond all the accomplishments however, the most dynamic element of the past 6 years has been the agape (love) which has permeated throughout Philoptochos. St. Paul exalts in 1 Corinthians 13:13 *"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love"* since it is only through love that true grace and charity can flourish. By her words and deeds, Aphrodite has continually exemplified Christian love by honoring and embracing every Sister of Philoptochos and by representing our Sisterhood in all her travels with extraordinary faith, respect and grace. It is with this same agape that we applaud and thank Aphrodite for the blessing of her friendship and leadership and proclaim:

"Well done, good and faithful servant"

Matthew 25:23

New Year Ecclesiastical Message
His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America



September 1, 2014

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we commemorate this Feast of the Indiction, the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year, we ask our great and merciful God to “bless the crown of this year which His goodness has allowed us to begin” (Hymn of Orthros). It is His goodness and grace that has brought us to the beginning of one more ecclesiastical year and to another blessed cycle of the feasts and observances of our Holy Orthodox Faith. In anticipation of the marvelous and wonderful things our Lord will accomplish in our lives, parishes, and families, we look forward to the blessings that will come through our worship, prayer, service, and

This time of year is also the beginning of the academic year when our children, youth, and young adults return to school. In addition, it is the time in association with the new Church year and the academic year that our religious, Greek education, and day school programs begin in parishes throughout our Holy Archdiocese.

These ministries are vital in teaching and nurturing our spiritual and cultural heritage among our youth, but they are also essential to the well-being of the Orthodox Christian family.

With our continued emphasis on the theme of our recent Clergy-Laity Congress, “The Orthodox Christian Family: A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel,” we begin this ecclesiastical year reflecting on the priority of strengthening families through the educational ministries of our parishes. It is also a time to focus on the important role of Christian education in the home.

In our sacred work of teaching, we must affirm that education in the parish and in the home involve a collaborative and committed effort on the part of clergy, teachers and parents. In addition to offering knowledge about our faith and Hellenic culture or teaching basic academic disciplines, programs in the parish should emphasize the identity of the Orthodox Christian family and offer resources that guide families in staying connected to God and the Church. Through worship, prayer, reflection, and teaching in the home, families should reinforce the guidance received through the educational ministries of the parish, nurturing family members in the faith and becoming a *kat’oikon ekklesia* – the Church in the home (Romans 16:5, Colossians 4:15).

The Orthodox Christian family that is strengthened and guided by the educational ministry of the parish becomes a dwelling of Christ and a witness of the Gospel. The members of the family are connected to God and to the primary mission of the Church. Children and youth are nurtured in the faith. They connect the values, ideals, and treasures of their cultural heritage to life today as an Orthodox family. And the family receives the wisdom and spiritual guidance needed to seek the potential of each member, to mature in Christ, to serve others, and to bring honor and glory to God.

As we reflect on the beginning of the ecclesiastical year and our ministry to families, we also recognize that this day has been

designated by the Ecumenical Patriarchate as the Day for the Protection of our Natural Environment. With grateful hearts and as faithful stewards, we must also renew our commitment to protect all that God has created. We do this when we identify abuse, waste, and destructive practices and affirm the priority of sustaining and respecting life. We are also witnesses of our Creator and His grace when we seek to conserve, to renew, and to transform the world around us so that it is productive and beneficial for all people and for generations to come.

As we begin this new ecclesiastical year, I ask each of you to consider your efforts and concern for the natural environment and to make every effort to protect the created order. Regarding the family, I also ask all of our parishes to plan, evaluate, and offer the resources to ensure that our educational programs are helping families become Orthodox Christian families. May we make every effort to equip and edify families in unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13) so that each family member has the spiritual foundation to mature in the fullness of Christ, and the family becomes a dwelling of Him and a witness of His Gospel. Also, as we ask for our Lord's generous blessings through the cycle of this year, may we also pray that He will keep our families and the natural environment in peace, safe and secure from all harm.

With paternal love in Christ,



†DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America

September 11: A Day of Remembrance



Dear Philoptochos Sisters,

Thirteen years after the egregious terrorist acts on American soil, we remember the thousands who lost their lives at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania. We are also reminded of the fragility of our God-given freedoms and liberties.

We offer tribute to the firefighters, first responders and rescue workers who are heroes for their selfless bravery in the aftermath of the destruction. On that dark day we lost the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church which was the only house of worship destroyed in the attack. St. Nicholas Church will be resurrected as a National Shrine, bearing witness to the victory of Christ over evil, death and destruction that will unite those who believe in the power of love, hope and faith.

The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society remembers and prays for those who lost their lives, sacrificed for the safety of others, tended to those in distress and those who lost their precious loved ones.

May their memories be eternal.

Aphrodite Skeadas and the Executive Board of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society

New Year Ecclesiastical Message
Aphrodite Skeadas, National President



Beloved Philoptochos Sisters,

On behalf of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, I greet you in thanksgiving as the Greek Orthodox Church commemorates the Feast of the Indiction, that is, the Ecclesiastical New Year. September 1 marks this beginning as it relates historically to harvest gathering and prayers of gratitude to God. In more contemporary times, it signifies the beginning of the school year, life changes and opportunities.

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has established September 1 as the Day for the Protection of our Natural Environment. The protection of our global environment and conservation of natural resources is our sacred responsibility as stewards of God's gifts. The natural order indicates a period of renewal for all that grows and lives in God's world. We have a hallowed responsibility to be good stewards of the manifold gifts of God and to conserve His creation according to His will.

For the Philoptochos Sisterhood, the Ecclesiastical New Year marks the beginning of our evaluation and recommitment of service and stewardship, renewing the Myrrh Bearing roles we assume to foster healthy and productive relationships helping the broken, underprivileged and disenfranchised, embracing them not only into our personal lives but into the

vibrancy of the community. This is not a job, not even a duty, but our joy of offering love and assistance.

At the 42nd Clergy Laity Congress and 2014 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention in Philadelphia, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios addressed the entire Congress and charged the leaders of our Church in the theme, The Orthodox Christian Family: A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel. We are asked to actively live the Orthodox Faith tradition and fulfill our responsibility through service to the community while promoting and preserving the spiritual health of family. Inspired by His Eminence's call, the Convention program included lively presentations and interactive seminars impacting the family and the many challenges it faces. As we begin the New Ecclesiastical Year, thoughtfully and devotedly, we strive to strengthen our family unit and fortify our extended Parish family while we creatively immerse and humbly minister with love and respect *"to the least of our brothers and sisters."*

Among the many memorable, stirring and edifying presentations and deliberations in Philadelphia, the over 400 Philoptochos Convention delegates overwhelmingly and resolutely supported with a thunderous exclamation "Yes!" in support of the resurrection of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at Ground Zero. Details on this national initiative are forthcoming.

This month we are blessed to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of Archiepiscopal Ministry of our beloved Spiritual Father, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios. Each of us, united in heart, in mind and in soul, proclaims with one loud voice to our Spiritual Father: *Eis Polla Eti Despota!*

Let us lift up our hearts, in respect and love of God's work.

In His Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aphrodite Skeadas".

Aphrodite Skeadas

*Retired Clergy and Widowed Presvyteres
Benevolent Fund*

His Grace Bishop Andonios of Phasiane



September 2014

You who created all things in Your infinite wisdom, and set the times by Your own authority, grant Your people victories. Blessing our comings and goings throughout this year, guide our works according to Your divine will.

(Kontakion for the new Ecclesiastical year)

My dear ladies and friends of Philoptochos,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior and restful summer together with your families and loved ones. As we embark upon Jesus Christ, and pray that you have enjoyed a good the beginning of a New Ecclesiastical Year, we are reminded of the dedicated services our retired clergy and widowed presvyteres offered so many years to our Church. Very thoughtfully, the National Philoptochos Society has designated the month of September as the opportunity to tangibly assist these individuals through one of its national commitments with a special collection designated for the *Retired Clergy and Widowed Presvyteres Benevolent Fund* of our Archdiocese.

As you may know, some of our retired clergy and

widowed presvyteres lack adequate incomes and have to rely on the generosity of others in order to meet their day-to-day living expenses. These individuals live on a total annual retirement income ranging from \$14,500 to \$21,000, and as you can imagine, that is challenging in this day and age. Through your magnanimous support, this Fund has been able to augment the meager retirement income of retired clergy and widowed presvyteres. In the past nine years, in great part through your generosity, we have distributed over \$600,000 in assistance to these individuals. Without your support for the *Benevolent Fund*, the quality of life for some of these individuals would be greatly diminished.

As Chancellor of our Holy Archdiocese of America and overseer of the *Benevolence Fund for Retired Clergy and Widowed Presvyteres*, which distributes monthly stipends to these people, I humbly ask that you respond most generously once again this year to this annual commitment of all chapters. It is indeed a great comfort for these individuals to know that they are not alone, but that people like yourselves are ready and willing to offer whatever assistance they need.

The grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the love of God and Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Faithfully service in the our Lord,



† Bishop Andonios of Phasiane

*September
National Commitments*

Aid to Greece & Cyprus Campaign

**Hellenic College Holy Cross
Scholarship Fund**

**Retired Clergy & Widowed Presvyteres
Benevolent Fund**

Aid to Greece and Cyprus Campaign
Elaine Cladis, Committee Chair



Your generous hearts serve in so many different capacities. Your good works demonstrate your love for humanity and “for the least of our brethren.”

During this dire time that has befallen our brothers and sisters in Greece and Cyprus, Philoptochos wholeheartedly responded and supported through the *Aid to Greece and Cyprus Campaign*. We respectfully ask you to continue these good works on Sunday, September 28, 2014 in an effort designated as National Philoptochos Fellowship Sunday by once again hosting the Coffee Hour in your Parishes following the Divine Liturgy.

Please ask your Parish Priest to bless this endeavor and encourage Parish participation by speaking on the importance of the continuing effort to provide solace and assistance to those in need. Chapters are asked to host the event by supplying coffee, tea, finger sandwiches, fruit, pastry and other delicacies. A donation basket recommended for monetary contributions that will help greatly our Greek and Greek Cypriot brethren during this persisting and trying period.

In 2012 and 2013, almost \$400,000 was disbursed as a result of your great efforts. This magnanimity was a result of your dedication, vitality and steely determination. It was the army of church women in your Chapters that was and continues to be responsible for the philanthropic and humanitarian aid targeting children, families, the elderly and those most in need in Greece and Cyprus.

The state in Greece and Cyprus is still very critical as people continue to suffer. On a daily basis many feel their plight to be hopeless. Food kitchens in both countries feed thousands daily,

as children and senior adults are particularly at risk. It is important that we, as Philoptochos Stewards, continue our efforts to assist to relieve the suffering and hardship in our homelands.

We ask all Chapters to join hands throughout our Holy Archdiocese, and in every Parish across the nation, and host the Coffee Hour on Sunday, September 28 for National Philoptochos Fellowship Sunday with all proceeds again benefitting the National Philoptochos Aid to Greece and Cyprus Campaign. Please select, if you prefer, an alternate date to better suit the needs of your Parish. Please send your Philoptochos Chapter collection marked 2014 Aid to Greece and Cyprus Campaign to the National Philoptochos Society at 126 East 37th Street, New York, NY 10016.

Hellenic College
Holy Cross School of Theology
Diane Mimos, Committee Chair



As we begin the new ecclesiastical year and prepare to celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society continues the tradition of offering love and support to the students and seminarians at Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology. Our mission statement charges each of us to “promote the Greek Orthodox Faith” and our faithful membership accepts this responsibility through the generous support of the September Scholarship Appeal.

Over the past several years, enrollment has shown an increase at both Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology with more married couples, families and women choosing to embrace an Orthodox Christian centered education. However, the reality is that many of these students depend upon scholarships and financial aid to continue their studies. With the combined efforts of all of our chapters, the National Philoptochos Society donated a total of

\$74,000 in scholarships to both male and female students in the 2013 Spring and Fall semesters. Challenge your chapters to be as generous as possible to the Scholarship Appeal so that the students can continue their academic studies in an environment of faith, love and worship as they prepare to serve our parishes and ministries.

Continue to promote HCHC in your parishes and remember our beloved students and seminarians in your prayers.

Recent Children's Medical Fund National Philoptochos Disbursements

The National Philoptochos Children's Medical Fund is a nationwide effort and benefits each Metropolis. Recently, the Metropolises of Atlanta, Chicago and Denver had the opportunity to present CMF grants in their communities.

Metropolis of Atlanta

**Aflac Cancer & Blood Disorders Center
Atlanta, GA
By Valine Georgeson**

The familiar axiom *"It is better to give than to receive"* was certainly called to mind in Atlanta, Georgia in early September of this year.

At the National Philoptochos meetings in Philadelphia, Pa. that were held in July, 2014, the National Philoptochos Board announced that it was awarding a \$15,000 grant to the Aflac Cancer & Blood Disorders Center located at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. These funds were part of the proceeds generated by the Children's Medical Fund Luncheon held in Pittsburgh, Pa. in 2013.

This grant will go towards serving young patients with Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemia who come to the Aflac Center in Atlanta, which is a national referral center treating patients from 43 states, serving a diverse group from urban, suburban and rural areas.



Presenting the check to Effie Mougianis, Dr. L. Cohen and Dr. Anya Griffin of the Aflac Center were Father George Tsahakis, Metropolis of Atlanta Chancellor, Father Paul Kaplanis, Dean of the Atlanta Annunciation Cathedral, Dee Nicolaou, Metropolis of Atlanta Philoptochos President, National Philoptochos Board members Marty Driscoll, Valine Georgeson & Vickie Scaljon, Metropolis of Atlanta Board members Presbytera Evi Kaplanis & Joanna Snider.

The recipients were elated and the givers were humbled. It was an enlightening visit and a joyful presentation.

Metropolis of Chicago

**Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
Milwaukee, WI**

National Philoptochos Board and Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos Board members presented a \$10,000 check to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin following the National Philoptochos Convention. Children's Hospital of Wisconsin supports full-time school nurses in nine schools located in central Milwaukee neighborhoods where we are providing a number of community-based services. Children's Hospital of Wisconsin is investing significant resources to address health disparities and the most pressing health and wellness needs in these neighborhoods. Through our School Nurse Program, we bring health services directly to children who need them. The school nurses role includes traditional school nursing support from student daily care, medication administration, vision screening, chronic disease management and education, and support and implementation of health policies.

In addition, our school nurses educate children and families about the importance of preventative care and a variety of other health topics including anger management, drugs and alcohol, hygiene, nutrition, and stress.



Pictured from Children's Hospital of Wisconsin with Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos Board members (from left to right): Bottom Row: Bob Duncan, Executive Vice President Community Services, Brenna Holly, Foundation Relations Manager, Arlene Siavelis Kehl, National Philoptochos 1st Vice President, Sara Siedenbug, School Health Nurse Manager 2nd row: Irene Arsoniadis, Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos President, Patricia Galanis, Bridget Clementi, Executive Director Community Health & Education 3rd Row: Kathy Siavelis, Marilyn Tzakis, Pam Argyris 4th Row: Carol Stamas, Kathy Katrakis, Peggy Vranas, Georgia Sarlas

**Metropolis of Denver
Healing House
Kansas City, MO**

The Healing House organization provides faith-based recovery homes in the Kansas City metro area for the spiritual growth, emotional stability and direction to prepare men and women on their journey from addiction while seeking a purposeful life in our community. National Philoptochos donated to this important center and received words of thanks from Halee Stimson:

Healing House was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the National Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society! On August 25th, Marian Catechis (Philoptochos Metropolis President) along with five ladies from the local chapter

toured Healing House facilities and presented funds to be used for the purchase and installation of much needed windows at our family-friendly Spruce Apartments. The existing windows are an estimated 50-years-old with inefficiencies that have resulted in exorbitant energy costs. The installation of energy-saving windows is expected to markedly reduce annual heating and cooling costs through significant reductions in air leakage.

Thank you to the Philoptochos Ladies for taking the time to visit the Healing House and for your generosity in helping us in such a practical way! We look forward to continuing this partnership for many years to come.



In front of the apartments that will receive new windows: Bobbi Jo Reed, director of Healing House and Marian Catechis Second row: Vicki Dimas, Staci Elliott, Stacie Kamberis, Christi Paschang, Joanne Leeper president of the chapter in Kansas City.

2016 Chapter Challenges

How can Philoptochos Chapters inspire each other with their good works?

The Chapter Challenge initiative invites one Chapter from each Metropolis to research and implement a project at the parish and community level. With \$100 in seed money from National Philoptochos, the nine Chapters work for two years on a project to be presented at the next National Philoptochos Convention. Examples of projects presented in 2014 include distributing new shoes to needy schoolchildren,

making lap blankets for the homebound, facilitating letters between incarcerated parents and their children, and deploying volunteers to a Christ-centered recovery facility. Could your Chapter adopt any of these efforts?

The following list of Chapters will present their project at the 2016 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention.

Direct Archdiocesan District

Saint Sophia Cathedral
Washington, DC

Metropolis of Chicago

Ascension of our Lord
Lincolnshire, IL

Metropolis of Boston

Saint Nicholas
Lexington, MA

Metropolis of Denver

Annunciation Cathedral
Houston, TX

Metropolis of Atlanta

Saint Mark
Boca Raton, FL

Metropolis of Detroit

Annunciation Cathedral
Buffalo, NY

Metropolis of Pittsburgh

Saint Nicholas Cathedral
Pittsburgh, PA

Metropolis of San Francisco

Saint Spyridon
San Diego, CA

Metropolis of New Jersey

Saint Demetrios Cathedral
Baltimore, MD

National Philoptochos Social Media

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