



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

GREEK ORTHODOX LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY, Inc.

2018 NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS BIENNIAL CONVENTION: ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN CHRIST (MARK 9:23)

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Boston, MA- With the theme, “All things are possible to the one who believes in Christ” (Mark 9:23), the 2018 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention was held in Boston, MA, the Athens of America, from July 1 to 5, 2018 in conjunction with the 44th Clergy-Laity Congress. Nearly 400 registered delegates gathered representing Philoptochos chapters from across the United States. The Metropolis of Boston Philoptochos hosted the event under the spiritual leadership of Metropolitan Methodios.

Under the direction of National Philoptochos President Maria Logus and Convention Co-Chairs Barbara Pasalis and Elaine Zetes, the 2018 convention focused on service: service to our communities, service to our members, and service to humanity. The program featured engaging and thought-provoking speakers, presentations of new educational initiatives emphasizing critical issues facing our communities, inspiring Chapter Challenges, and the 2018 AGAPE Awards in which 9 women were honored for their dedication and service to Philoptochos. The entire convention program was a “Celebration of Sisterhood,” exhibiting that Philoptochos women are faithful, dynamic, strong, compassionate, and kind.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Geron of America, opened the convention with the invocation, which was followed by a video greeting presented by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Apostolos, Geron of Derkon, said that the women of Philoptochos are “continuing the work of the Myrrh-bearing women; they tirelessly and willingly sacrifice their time and treasure; they complement the work of the Hierarchs and Clergy; they run to lovingly comfort and support the sick and those in need... and all of this is as angels of God!”

On Tuesday, a special excursion to Hellenic College Holy Cross Seminary allowed delegates to hear from speakers, participate in sessions, and tour the campus followed by a picnic lunch. The visit inspired the ladies, who were honored to visit this essential institution of the Archdiocese.

The convention program presented a new, expanded vision for Philoptochos, as expressed by Archbishop Demetrios. “Philoptochos stewards are no longer only friends of the needy,” he said in 2015, “but also friends of God, friends of neighbors, friends of humanity and friends of strangers.” The convention included the many programs and educational initiatives Philoptochos has developed to fulfill this new mission. Key speakers included:

- Denise Garlick, MA State Representative, who addressed the Opioid Epidemic.
- JoNell Efantis-Potter, PhD., Program Director, THRIVE Clinic, Miami, FL, which treats the health care needs of survivors of human trafficking.
- Tim Tassopoulos, President and COO of Chic-fil-A, who presented an interactive talk on servant leadership, encouraging delegates to think about what skills are needed to grow as a leader themselves and to grow other leaders within Philoptochos.
- Despina Kartson, author of *Last Night's Soup Run: Feeding the Hungry and Homeless*, who offered personal reflections of her experiences feeding the needy and congratulated Philoptochos for its Feed the Hungry program.
- Amy Sarma, MD, Corrigan Women's Heart Health Program, Massachusetts General Hospital. As part of

the National Philoptochos Women's Health Initiative, she educated delegates on the causes, symptoms and treatment of heart disease, as well as the differences between heart disease in women vs. men.

With each successive year, Philoptochos stewards across the nation demonstrate that no goal is unattainable. Over the last two years, the Feed the Hungry Program served 1,343,734 meals, with the one-millionth meal provided by the Annunciation Philoptochos of Akron, OH. On the final day of the convention, delegates eagerly donned hairnets and gloves to package meals with RISE Against Hunger, working to nourish lives, but also nourishing their own hearts. The "hero" of the 2018 convention, 4 year-old Austin Perine, *zoomed* into the convention later in the day. His mission in life is to feed the homeless, always reminding us not to forget to #showlove.

In her report, President Logus announced that the National Philoptochos disbursed \$3.8 million in donations during 2016 and 2017, and \$800,000 thus far in 2018. In addition, \$100,000 was collected for the victims of Hurricane Harvey and over \$326,127.00 has been disbursed from the proceeds of the 2017 Children's Medical Fund Luncheon.

Continuing education to arm our members has become a number one priority for the Public Relations/Communications Committee. Education is power. Presentations on bullying, cyber safety, inclusion ministries, women's health, and Alzheimer's Disease support and care were given to educate, inform and empower our members.

The All Generations Accomplishing Philanthropic Endeavors (AGAPE) award honored nine phenomenal women of Philoptochos, one from each metropolis, who are no strangers to answering the call to service. Cassandra Rinaldi, Bessie Papigiotis, Klea Kappos, Assimo Kitsos, Cynthia Hackett, Evangeline Bozikis, Kathy Batas, Stella Wacker, and Andrea Despina George Tiggas received the awards for their philanthropia in their communities.

"As we return home, the women of Philoptochos will look back at this week as a profound affirmation that indeed all things are possible to those who believe in Christ," said President Logus in her remarks on the final evening, at the Clergy-Laity Grand Banquet. "We will reflect back on our accomplishments, on the progress we've made, and on the friendships we have forged. We will carry the spirit of Boston with us as we continue to serve the needy, the infirm, and the hungry, and as we rededicate ourselves to service to our church, our community, and our world."

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The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society is the philanthropic arm of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Website: Philoptochos.org

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