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2024 National YAL Conference Concludes, Celebrating Unity in Christ



New York, NY – The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries (Y2AM) is overjoyed to announce the triumphant conclusion of the 2024 National Young Adult League (YAL) Conference, held July 3-7, 2024 at The Westin Gaslamp Quarter in beautiful San Diego, California. With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and the gracious hosting by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and the Metropolis of San Francisco, the Conference successfully united young adults from across the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America under the inspiring theme “UNIFY.” This year’s Conference, coinciding with the 47th Biennial Clergy Laity Congress and National Philoptochos Biennial Convention, embraced the theme “In Christ, We Are One” (Romans 12:4-5). The event aimed to fortify young adults’ connections with the Church and with each other as unified members of the Body of Christ through worship, witness, fellowship, and service. Over 300 attendees from across the U.S. and Canada gathered in San Diego for a truly memorable weekend.

In addition to the attendance of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, the Conference was blessed with the presence of several hierarchs, including Host Hierarch His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, Ministry Spiritual Advisor and National Chancellor His Grace Bishop Nektarios of Diokleia, His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea, and

His Grace Bishop Athenagoras of Nazianzos.

The Conference was supported by several private donors whose generosity ensured a transformative experience for all attendees and laid a strong foundation for future National YAL initiatives as an essential ministry of the Archdiocese. This year's National YAL Conference established key partnerships vital to the Conference's impact and success. Leadership 100 – The National YAL Conference was blessed with significant financial support of Leadership 100, a continued advocate and supporter of the National YAL movement. This support ensures not only the accessibility and affordability of this Conference, but also continues to assist in the cultivation of these emerging Orthodox Christian young adult leaders. The National YAL Conference is excited to continue its partnership with Leadership 100, working together to foster and nurture engaged Orthodox Christian leadership. Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society – In an historic "syndiakonia" of two major national ministries, the National YAL Conference was blessed to partner with the National Philoptochos Society to assemble 1,500 care packages for Your Safe Place and San Diego Rescue Mission – two extraordinary programs in San Diego that support survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, abuse, and individuals experiencing homelessness. The National YAL is eager to continue collaboration with the remarkable "Army of Agape," bringing together generations in a spirit of love and philanthropy. Hellenic College Holy Cross School of Theology – The National YAL Conference established another historic partnership at this year's Conference with Hellenic College Holy Cross School of Theology, who generously hosted and led a Meet and Greet Social Hour for the Conference participants. The Meet and Greet was led by Fr. Patrick O'Rourke, the Dean of Students, Dr. Bruce Beck, the Director of Enrollment Management, and Nick Moutsioulis. The National YAL Conference looks forward to this continuing partnership with HCHC to support the school and to provide support and mentorship to young adults across the U.S.

The Conference was honored to have several organizations present as Ministry Pavilion sponsors, including Premium Sponsors Hellenic College Holy Cross and the PanHellenic Scholarship Foundation, as well as the National Y2AM Department, Ionian Village, and Orthodox Christian Network (OCN).

George T. Anagnostopoulos, appointed by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros as the 2024 National YAL Conference Chair, led a dynamic Planning Committee comprised of Vice Chairs Joseph Dumont and Eva-Marie Kailas, and phenomenal group of young adult representatives from the various Metropolises of the Archdiocese: Aaron Papagalos, Caroline Basdakis, Cassiani Kateyiannis, Christine

Scolinos, Christos Schwarz, Elena Guillen, George G. Papadeas, Grace Paris, Jenna Cardaras, Julia Pappas, Past Conference Chair Kostas Ouranitsas, Kostas Prevas, Lenie Tsakonas, Lucas Postolos, Stephania Veziris, and Yianna Papadeas.

Archbishop Elpidophoros enthusiastically stated that: “In the realm of this year’s YAL conference, the exceptional leadership of the chairman, George Anagnostopoulos, and the two co-chairs, Eva-Marie Kailas, and Joseph Dumont, has been nothing short of transformative. Their tireless dedication, strategic vision, and unwavering commitment to engaging their peers in our Faith have set the stage for a conference that not only met but exceeded all expectations. Through their collaborative efforts and innovative planning, they created an environment that fostered vibrant discussions, meaningful connections, a renewed commitment to our Orthodox Faith, and true sense of purpose among all the young adults who attended. Their exemplary service is a testament to what can be achieved when young leaders who are guided by a genuine passion for community and growth are given the space to thrive and shine. The future of the Young Adult movement throughout our Sacred Archdiocese is certainly brighter because of faithful individuals like George, Eva-Marie, and Joseph, I extend to them my paternal gratitude and blessing!”

Under the guidance of the Ministry Spiritual Advisor His Grace Bishop Nektarios of Diokleia, Archdiocese Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries (Y2AM) Eva Konstantakos, and Conference Advisors Archon Hon. Steven and Stacia Counelis, the Conference offered numerous opportunities for attendees to forge lasting and meaningful connections.

The Archbishop noted that “There is so much that one can say about Archon Steven and Stacia Counelis, they and their beautiful family are products of the YAL movement, and it is largely through them that I have come to understand the importance of making this ministry a priority

for our Archdiocese once again. In their persons we see the embodiment of servant leadership, a model for others to follow. Their contributions to YAL and the Archdiocese at large cannot be overstated. Through their efforts, we are reminded of the power of dedicated, compassionate service and the profound impact it can have on the lives of others. Their passion and love for this ministry are inspiring, making them guiding lights for the young adults who have assumed leadership positions in YAL.”

Announced at this year’s National YAL Conference was the establishment of the newly-formed National YAL Board. This Board, comprised of two young adults

appointed by their respective Metropolitans, will serve for a two-year term to assist the National Y2AM Department with improving communication and support amongst existing Metropolis YAL Ministry efforts, the planning an execution of the National YAL Conference every two years, and the creation of new National YAL initiatives. This Board will be under the guidance of the National Y2AM Director, Eva Konstantakos.

Archbishop Elpidophoros commented that “Since taking on the directorship of the National Youth and Young Adult Office, Eva has worked tirelessly to expand the YAL ministry. I offer her my deepest gratitude, paternal blessing, and ongoing support. Under her leadership, and that of the newly established National YAL Board, comprised of members from throughout our Sacred Archdiocese, this ministry on an upward trajectory to reach new horizons for the glory of God and His Holy Church!”

The event was packed with highlights, including an inspiring keynote address and Q&A session with His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros. Also, the Conference was further enriched by captivating speakers who led workshops covering a variety of relevant topics. The National YAL Conference is grateful to the following Clergy and Lay Convo Leaders for their significant contributions, as well as leading the participants in prayer and worship: Fr. Theodore & Presv. Stacey Dorrance, Fr. Photios & Presv. Katherine Dumont, Fr. Vasileios Flegas, Fr. Nicholas & Presv. Anysia Metrakos, George & Chloe Miller, Fr. Athanasios and Presv. Nicole Minetos, Fr. Patrick O’Rourke, George Papageorge and Fr. Tom & Presv. Pat Tsagalakis.

Participants also attended select segments of the Clergy Laity Congress, the breathtaking San Diego Big Bay Boom July 4th Fireworks Show, an exciting YAL Jungle-themed Dinner Cruise, and a joyful “Christmas in July” themed Grand Banquet and Glendi. The Conference concluded with a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy celebrated by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros who stated as he departed the conference said “As we leave such an uplifting conference, it is clear that this ministry is abundantly blessed by our Lord and will continue to thrive. Engaging with our young adults during this conference has been a breath of fresh air for me personally, reassuring me that the future of our Church in America is bright!”

The 2024 National YAL Conference has indeed set a new benchmark for future events, showcasing the resilience and vibrancy of young adult ministries within the Greek Orthodox

Archdiocese of America. The Archdiocese looks forward to building on this momentum and continuing to support the spiritual growth and unity of young

adults across the nation.

About the National YAL Conference:

The National Young Adult League (YAL) Conference is a biennial event of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and is under the guidance of the National Y2AM Department. The National YAL Conference is dedicated to the spiritual and personal development of young Orthodox Christians. Founded on four pillars of ministry – worship, witness, fellowship, and service – the conference seeks to strengthen the faith and unity of its participants through a combination of worship services, educational sessions, and social events.

To explore YAL sponsorship opportunities, contribute to the National YAL Ministry efforts, and provide scholarships for young adults to participate in future conference, kindly visit the Archdiocese Donate Page and designate your support for the YAL Ministry today. Your contribution will play a crucial role in empowering and impacting young adults within the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Stay connected with us on social media for news and updates: @yalnationalconference.

Photos: Allen Altchech.

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