12/01/2026

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “There is nothing more barren than a person closed in on themselves — the ‘self-enclosed ego’.”



On the afternoon of Sunday, 11 January, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew blessed the Vasilopita of the Association for the Support of the Greek Community Foundations, the Greek Orthodox Schools, the Communities, Associations, and Philanthropic Societies of Constantinople, as well as of Imbros, during a festive gathering jointly organised at the Marasleio School.

In his address, His All-Holiness expressed his joy at the opportunity for face-to-face communication, the spirit of concord, and the fruitful cooperation among the representatives of the Greek Orthodox community institutions, as well as at the presence of all those attending the celebration, especially the many young men and women, who, as he noted, represent and guarantee the future of the Greek Orthodox community.

“In the person of the President of the Association for the Support of Greek Community Foundations, the Honourable Mr Georgios Papaliaris, we express our heartfelt thanks to the organisers and to all those who contributed to the preparation of this fine communal event. We congratulate the parents, guardians, teachers, and professors of our children for all that they have offered them. We extend our warm congratulations to our graduates, of whom we are confident that they look to the future with optimism and self-confidence. We pray for you, our beloved children; you are in our hearts, we support you, and we hope that you will prove worthy successors, heirs, and continuators of the most precious values and traditions of our Nation, rooted here in the ancestral land where Romiosyne flourished and bore rich fruit. At the heart of this great tradition stands the philanthropic ethos, which our Philanthropic Societies embody and express consistently and in practice.”

Elsewhere in his address, His All-Holiness emphasised: “Here, in the cradle of Romiosyne, we faithfully preserve our traditions, yet we are not imprisoned in the past. We know how to make use of the experience of the centuries in the present,

while also looking to what lies ahead with optimism and hope. The future, however uncertain it may appear from a human perspective, rests for us Christians in the hands of the pre-eternal Word of God, who assumed our human nature and saved the human race, and who promised to be with us ‘always, unto the end of the age’ (Matt. 28:20). The philanthropic love of God for humanity ‘casts out fear’ (cf. 1 John 4:18).”



The Patriarch also referred to an interview he gave last May to the newspaper of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, stating: “In an interview last May, we said the following concerning the unprecedented conditions of life, culture, and communication created today by the new technocratic environment: ‘Life is not digital. Friends are not digitally processed faces waiting to give us a “like.” That is not reality… Today we live in the age of communication, yet we communicate with one another less and less, face to face… We forget what it means to “share with the other.” For this reason, I ask our young men and women not to imprison themselves in digital golden cages. I say: go out into the world, breathe the oxygen of communication with your fellow human beings. God created us to live together, in real communities, not in digital groups with virtual friends.’”

He continued: “Unfortunately, the contemporary communicative and technological landscape favours isolation and withdrawal into the ‘self.’ There is nothing more barren, more dried-up, more diminished, than a person closed in on themselves—the ‘self-enclosed ego.’ The future does not belong to the ‘non-

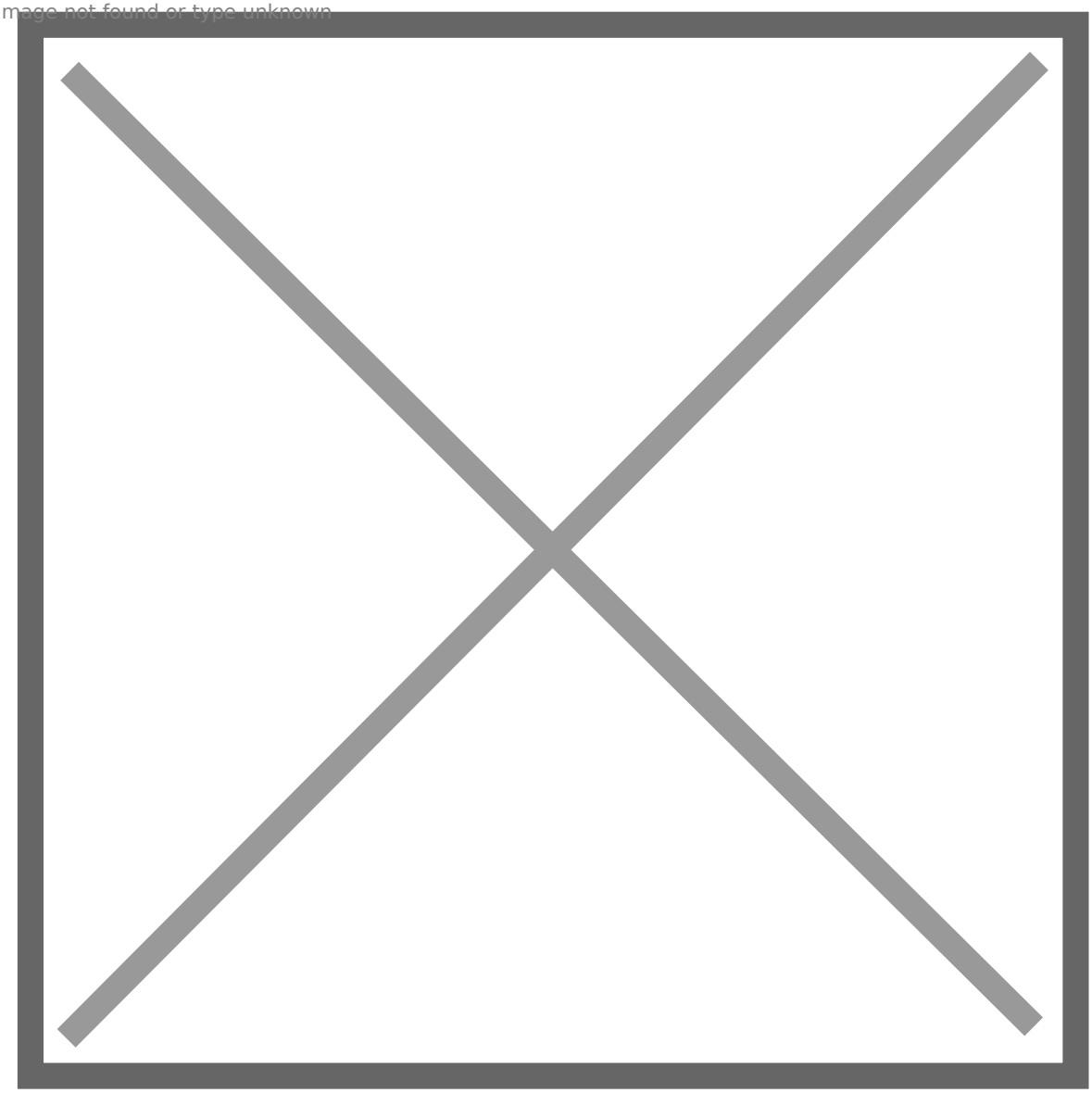
culture’ of individualism, as the late Professor Christos Yannaras used to say.

Our Orthodox Tradition is an inexhaustible source of vital truths for humanity, calling us to move from the individual to the person, from closure to openness, from the ‘own’ to the ‘common,’ from egocentrism to love. We live upon holy ground where our forebears lived and achieved greatness, those who created the miracle of our ‘glorious Byzantinism,’ who shaped our spiritual and cultural identity, who preserved our language, truly the ‘mother tongue of the spirit,’ who knew not only how to survive in difficult times, but also how to confirm the wise saying that ‘where danger increases, so too does that which saves,’ with trust in the Providence of God and in the strengths of the Nation, always with the firm hope that tomorrow ‘will be better.’

Bearing as your banner all that is ‘true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable’ (cf. Phil. 4:8), you too, beloved young men and women, are called to journey toward the future, with the Great Church, ruling yet suffering, as your central point of reference, of whose flesh you are flesh.”

Concluding, His All-Holiness wished that 2026 may be auspicious, healthy, peaceful, and filled with God’s blessings, invoking the intercessions of Saint Basil the Great and all the Saints.

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Earlier, an address was delivered by Mr Georgios Papaliaris, President of τηε Association for the Support of Greek Orthodox Community Foundations, who presented, on behalf of all Greek Orthodox organisations, a financial donation. His All-Holiness expressed his gratitude and announced that the funds would be allocated to the needs of the Patriarchate’s children’s camps.

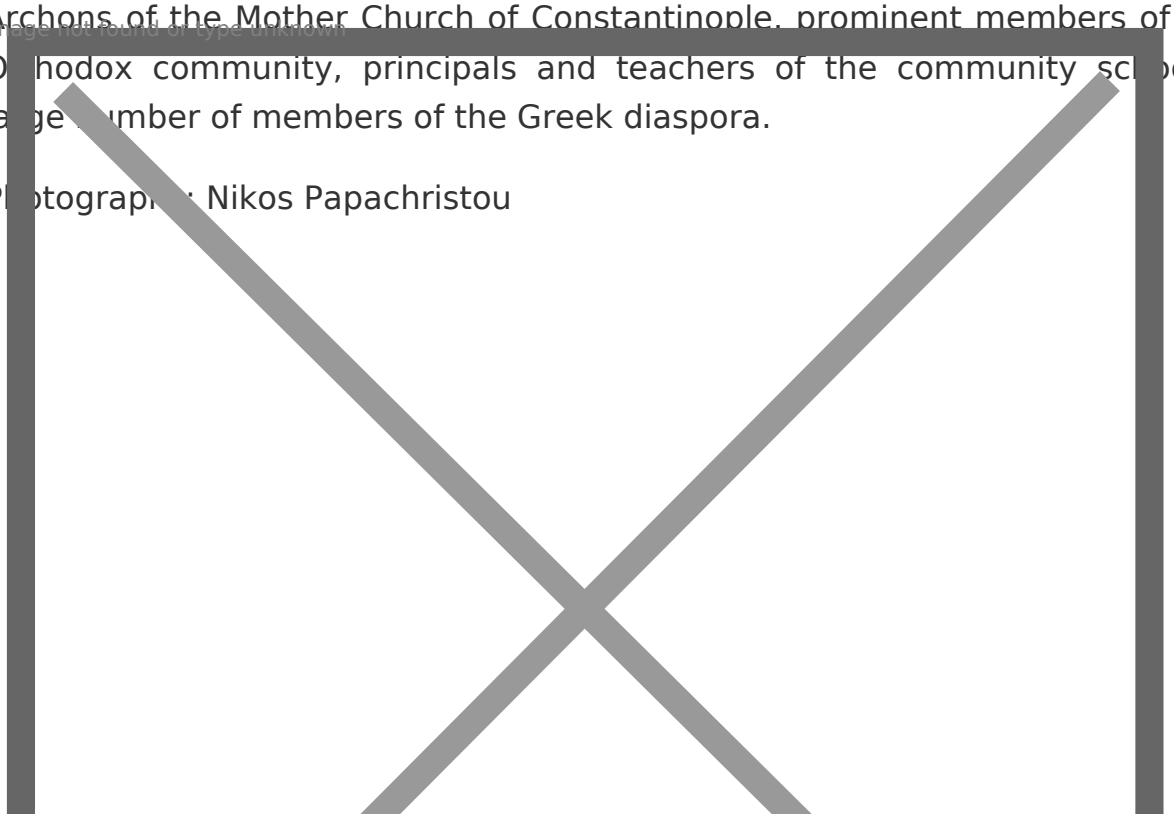
The opening address was delivered by Ms Agni Nikolaidou, President of the Association of Ioakeimeion Alumni and of the Philanthropic Society of Prinkipo “The Ministry of Love,” followed by greetings from Mr Savvas Panagiotidis, President of the Alumni Association of the Patriarchal Great School of the Nation, and Mr Dimitrios Georgiou, President of the Educational and Cultural Association of Imbros. Graduating students of the Greek Orthodox schools also welcomed His All-Holiness with warm words, while members of the Friends of Music Association of Pera chanted traditional carols.

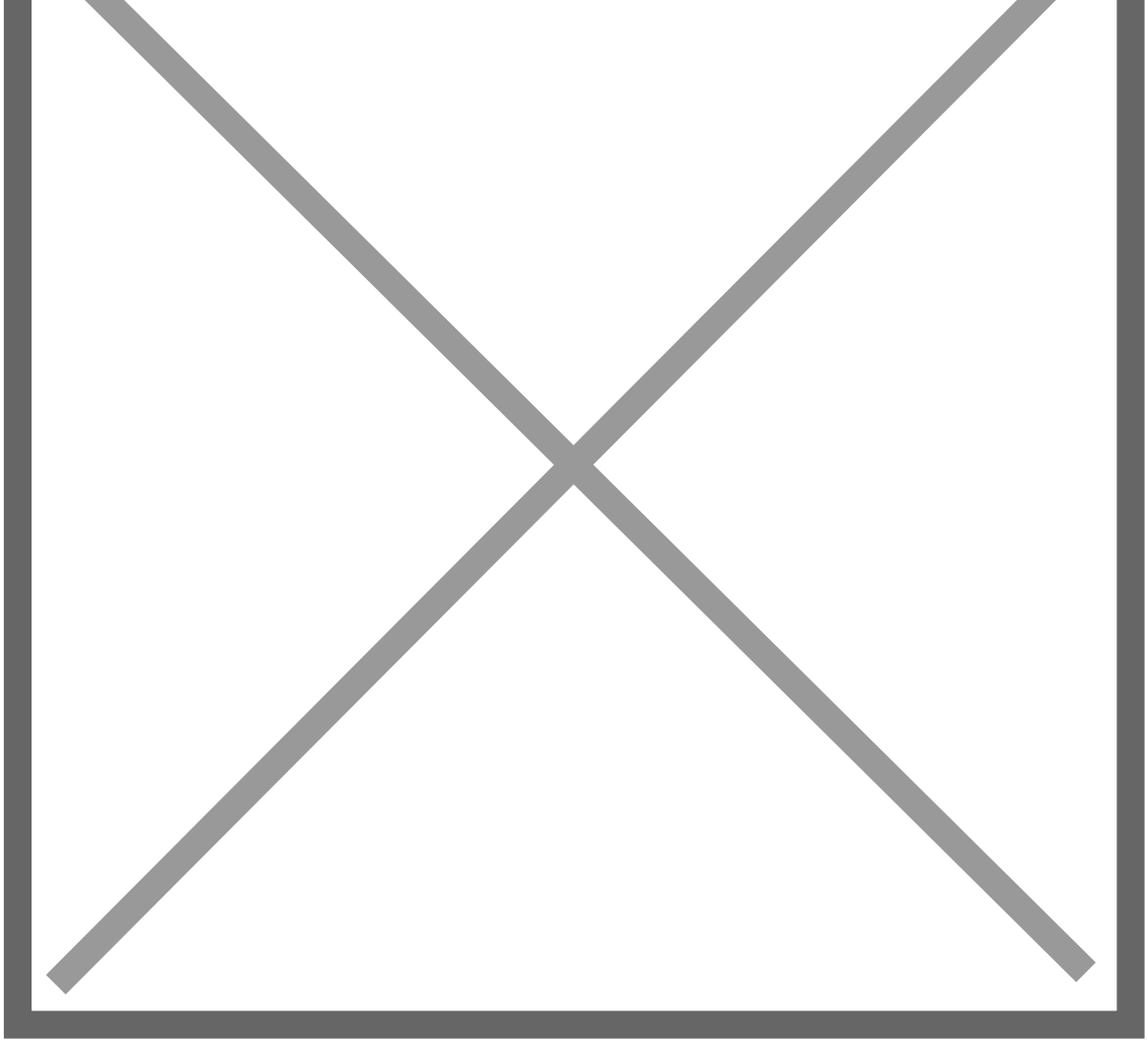
At the Patriarch’s invitation, words of spiritual edification were also offered by the Synodal Metropolitan of Arkalochori, Kastelli and Viannos, His Eminence Metropolitan Andreas, Emeritus Professor of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

At the festive event, which, despite a power outage that occurred, proceeded without interruption, participation included the Association for the Support of Greek Community Foundations; the Alumni Associations of the Patriarchal Great School of the Nation, the Zappeion, the Zographeion, and the Ioakeimeion Schools; the Pera Association of the Friends of Music; the Cultural Association of Modion; and the Cultural and Artistic Association of Feriköy. Also participating, among others, were the Associations of the Prinkipo Island Children’s Camp, the Association for the Relief of the Poor, the Sick, and the Elderly of the Baloukli Hospitals, the Cultural Association of Hypsomatheia, the Ladies’ Philoptochos Society of Feriköy, the Pera Athletic Club, the Ladies’ Philoptochos Society of Chalcedon, as well as the Educational and Cultural Association of Imbros.

Present were Hierarchs of the Throne, clergy of the Patriarchal Court, His Excellency Mr. Konstantinos Koutras, Consul General of Greece in Constantinople, Archons of the Mother Church of Constantinople, prominent members of the Greek Orthodox community, principals and teachers of the community schools, and a large number of members of the Greek diaspora.

Photographs: Nikos Papachristou





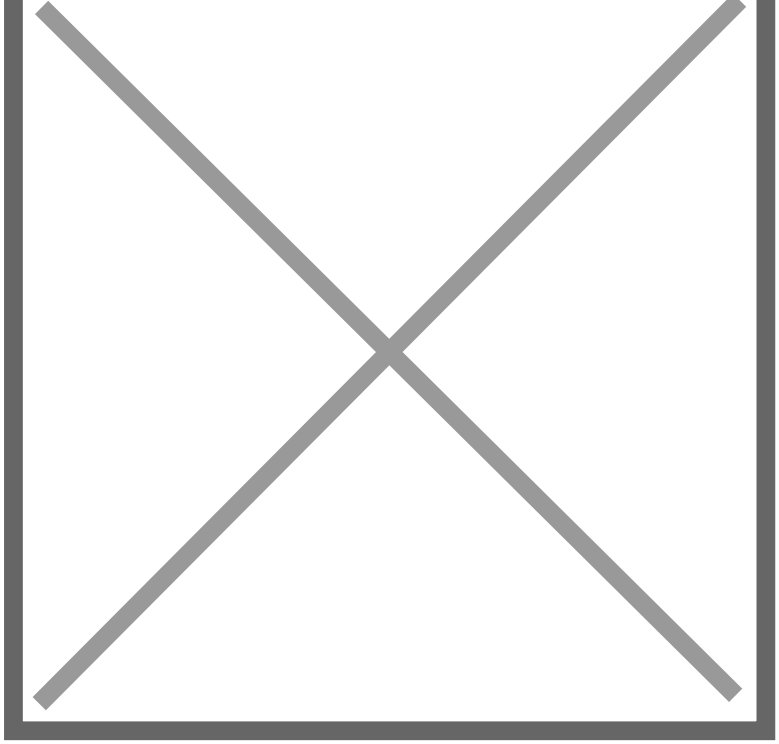
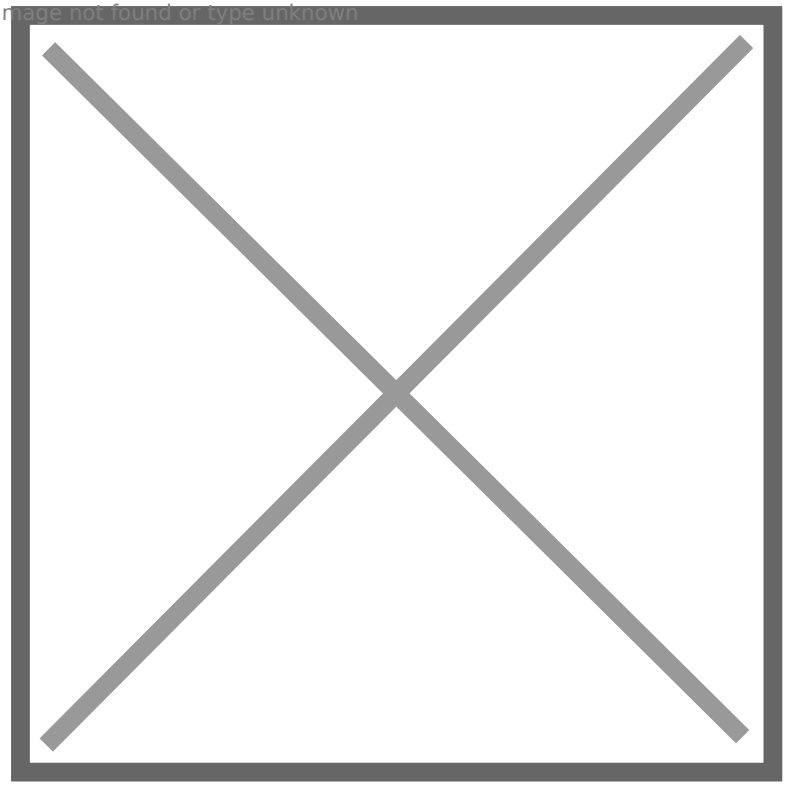
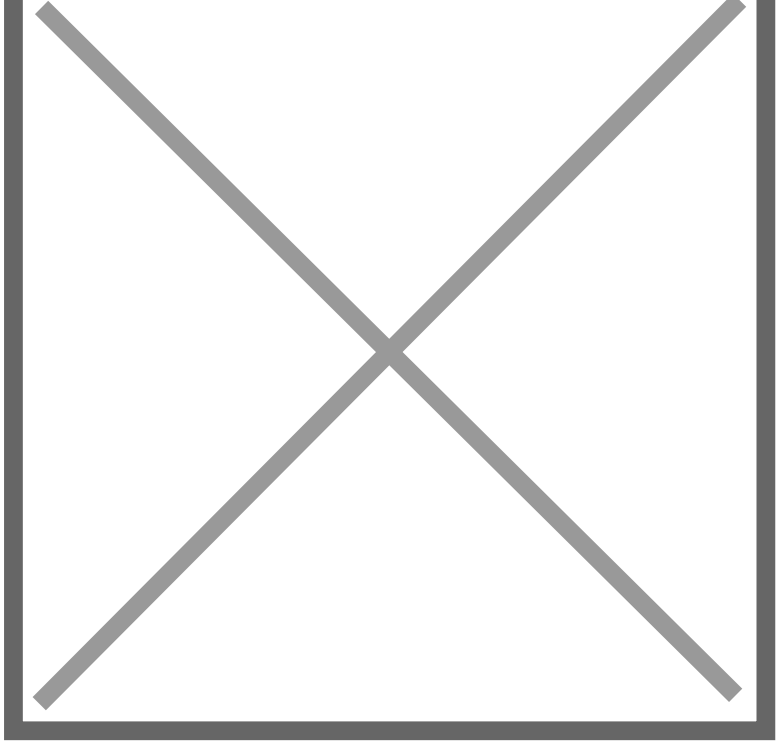


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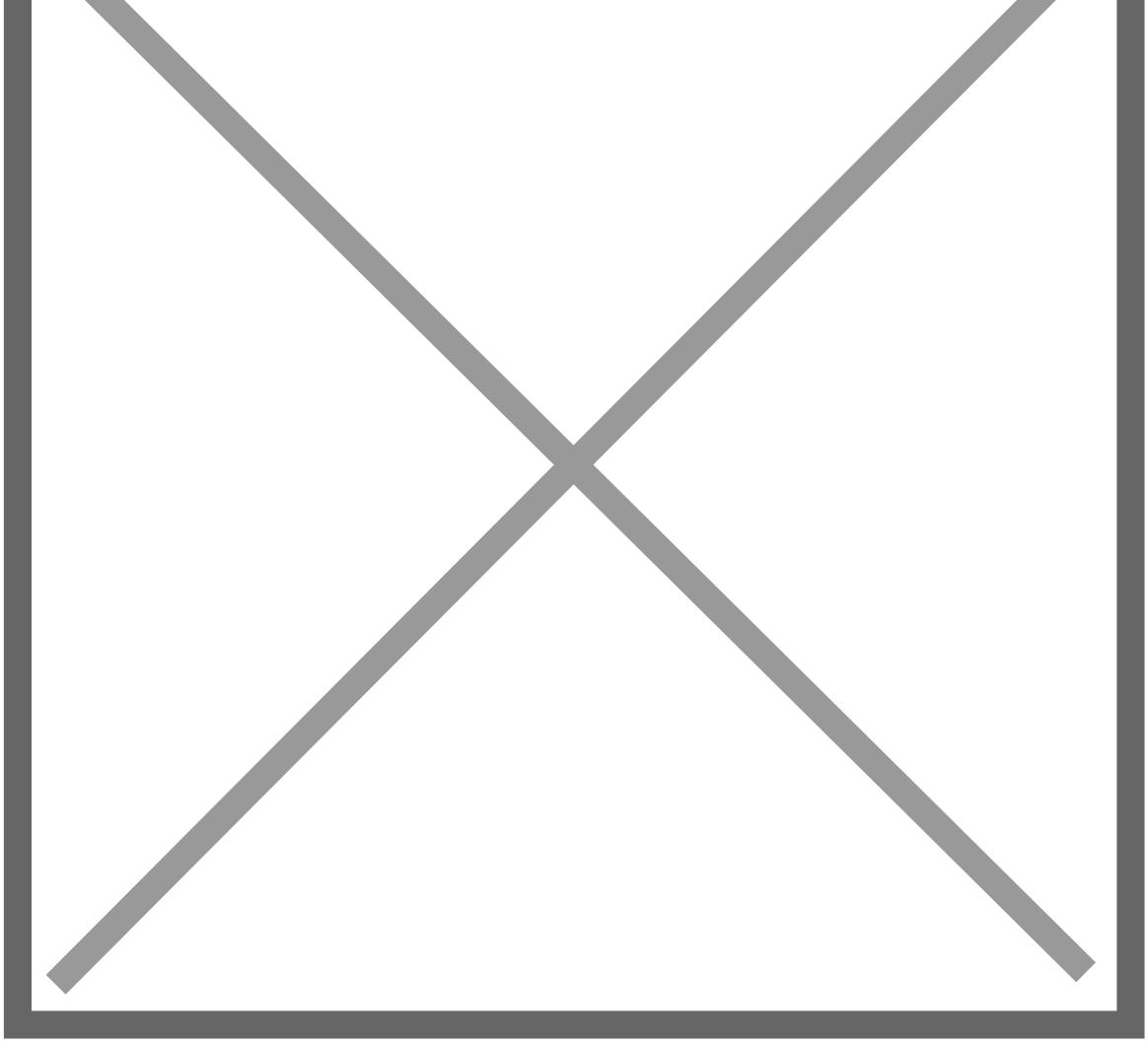
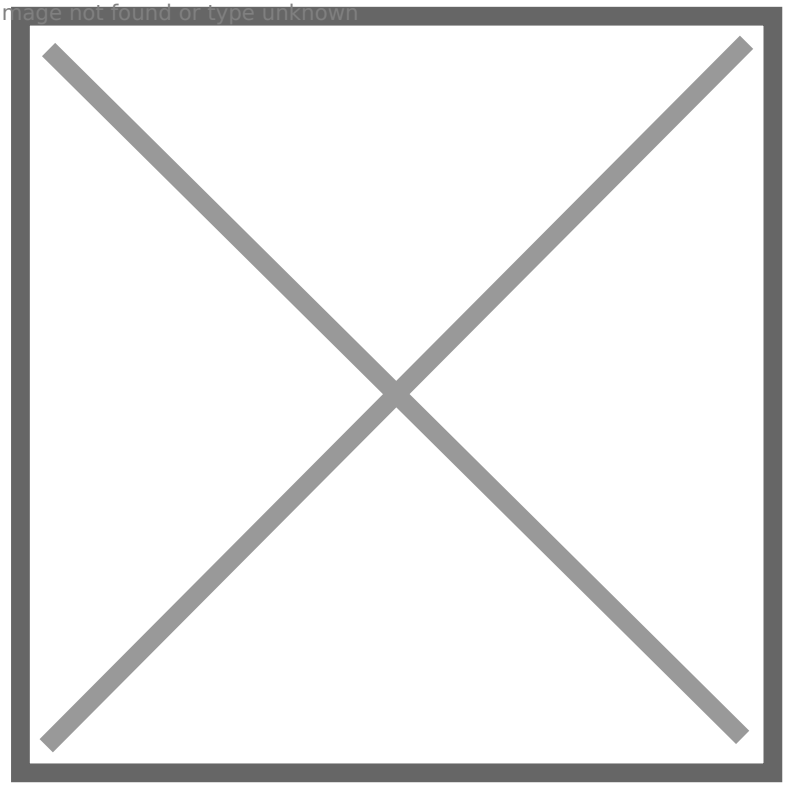


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