

Archbishop Elpidophoros and Greek minister Domna Michailidou discuss elder care, disability and inclusion



NEW YORK — His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America welcomed Greece's Minister of Social Cohesion and Family, Domna Michailidou, to the Archdiocese headquarters in Manhattan on Monday, Sept. 21. Their conversation ranged from the life of the Church and the Greek-American community to elder care, disability and inclusion, and to what institutions in Greece and the United States can learn from one another.

Minister Michailidou is in New York as heads of state, ministers and diplomats gather for the high-level week of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly. Their previous meeting took place at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens on Dec. 4, 2025, during a public symposium on For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church, a volume examining contemporary social questions through the theological and ethical tradition of the Orthodox Church.



The meeting between minister Michailidou and His Eminence occurs as world leaders arrive in New York City for the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly. (Photo by Orthodox Observer/Dimitrios Panagos).

During Monday's meeting, Archbishop Elpidophoros shared impressions from his recent visit to Anchorage, Alaska, where on Saturday, Sept. 19, he consecrated Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church. Holy Transfiguration is the northernmost parish of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the only Greek Orthodox parish in Alaska, home to a remarkably diverse Orthodox community.

The Archbishop and Minister Michailidou then turned to challenges increasingly shared by Greece and the Greek-American community, above all, how a society cares for a growing elderly population. They discussed the Archdiocese's experience in elder care, including through St. Michael's Home in Yonkers, N.Y., an Archdiocesan elder-care facility whose mission is to preserve the independence and dignity of older adults.

Their conversation also addressed the inclusion of people with physical disabilities and autistic people in the life of the Church and of society, as well as the pressures faced by families caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. They discussed accessibility, participation and the ability of communities to support the caregivers, most often family members, who bear so much of the burden on their

own. The Archbishop and the Minister agreed that the Archdiocese and Greece's public institutions have much to learn from each other's experience and innovations, and they committed to a regular exchange of information and practices.

His Eminence congratulated the Minister on her work and presented her with an icon of Christ the True Vine, an image he often invokes to speak of the unity of the Church. Before leaving, Minister Michailidou invited him to make an official visit to the ministry on his next trip to Greece.

Later Monday, Minister Michailidou was scheduled to visit the A. Fantis School, the parochial school of the Cathedral of Saints Constantine and Helen in Brooklyn Heights. Founded in 1963, the Greek Orthodox school serves students from preschool through eighth grade, pairing a rigorous academic program with Greek language, Hellenic studies and formation in the Orthodox faith. In 2024, A. Fantis was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, becoming the first Greek Orthodox parochial school to receive the distinction.

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