

Olympic leadership calls Greek Americans a source of strength for Team Hellas



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America welcomed Hellenic Olympic Committee President Isidoros Kouvelos and former Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis to the Archdiocese headquarters on October 14 for a luncheon held in their honor, as Greece's Olympic leadership looks ahead to the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles.

"For us, meeting the Greek American community is always deeply meaningful. You have built lives, institutions and communities here, while keeping a strong bond with Greece," Kouvelos said. "And this bond was kept alive through faith, through our Church."



Hellenic Olympic Committee President Isidoros Kouvelos addresses guests at a luncheon in his honor at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America headquarters in New York on Oct. 14, 2026. Photo by Orthodox Observer/Yannis Malevitis

He credited that relationship to faith, citing “the strength of God and the protection of Christ and the Panagia.” “In every corner of the world where Greeks travelled, struggled and created, the Church became a home, a refuge and a point of unity. It kept the Diaspora together, gave courage in difficult times, and helped Hellenism rise and prosper in distant lands, remaining faithful to its roots.”

That connection, he said, can now become a source of strength for Team Hellas on the road to Los Angeles. “When our athletes arrive in California, they will carry with them the history of Greece, the pride of a nation, and the hopes of a new generation,” Kouvelos said. “And here, on American soil, they will meet another part of Greece.”

He noted that the Olympic flame, lit at ancient Olympia, will again travel to the United States to open the Games. “This light comes from our homeland but belongs to the whole of humanity,” Kouvelos said. “Every Olympic journey, wherever it takes place, is connected forever with Greece.”

Support Long Before the Applause

During their meeting, Kouvelos briefed His Eminence on the Committee’s

preparations for the road to LA 2028 and on the projects the Hellenic Olympic Committee has undertaken under his presidency. These include the restoration of the Olympic Rowing Centre in Schinias and the historic swimming facility in Athens, as well as the restoration of the Panathenaic Stadium, the “Kallimarmaro,” for the first time in 130 years. The Committee is also working toward a new Athletes’ Residence, a true home for the athletes preparing to represent Greece at the Olympic Games. The projects share one vision, Kouvelos said: to turn Olympic heritage into living support for the next generation.

“Behind every Olympic appearance, there are years of work and sacrifice,” he said. “Our responsibility is to support them long before the applause begins.”

Kouvelos recalled that Greek Americans supported the Greek team when the Games came to the United States, in St. Louis in 1904 and Los Angeles in 1932, at times even competing as part of it. To carry that support forward, the Committee has established a 501(c)(3) structure in the United States so that friends and supporters of Team Hellas can contribute with confidence, clarity and trust.

Closing his remarks, Kouvelos turned to the Archbishop: “Your Eminence, your name carries a beautiful meaning: hope,” he said, a reference to the name Elpidophoros, “bearer of hope.” “And hope is also at the heart of Team Hellas.”



***His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America offers a closing prayer after a luncheon honoring Greek Olympic leadership at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America headquarters in New York on Oct. 14, 2026.
Photo by Orthodox Observer/Yannis Malevitis***

His Grace Bishop Nektarios of Diokleia, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, opened the luncheon, which brought together members of the Archdiocesan Council and leaders of the Greek-American community. Among them were John Catsimatidis, Vice Chairman of the Archdiocesan Council; Dr. Anthony J. Limberakis, National Commander of the Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; philanthropist C. Dean Metropoulos; the Hon. B. Theodore Bozonelis, National Vice Commander of the Order; and Anita Kartalopoulos, First Vice President of the National Ladies Philoptochos Society. Also in attendance was Fr. Alexander Karloutsos, Grand Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Spiritual Advisor to the Archons.

In his remarks, Archbishop Elpidophoros began by acknowledging minister Bakoyannis and thanking her for standing with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Archdiocese in difficult times.

He credited her with an initiative, pursued during her tenure as Greek Foreign Minister, that allowed hierarchs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate serving outside Türkiye to apply for Turkish citizenship. The Turkish government extended that offer in 2010, enabling those hierarchs to serve on the Holy and Sacred Synod, whose members Türkiye has required to be Turkish citizens.

"She had the idea, not only the idea, but she implemented it. She's a doer," Archbishop Elpidophoros said. "We owe this to you, Your Excellency, and we thank you for that."

The Archbishop said the approach of 2028 is raising interest in "all things Greek" across the country. "Greece will never go out of style, or out of relevance," Archbishop Elpidophoros said.

He noted that the Ecumenical Patriarch, now in his 35th year on the Ecumenical Throne, has called on the world to observe the Olympic truce, the Εκεχειρία. "Violence is diametrically opposed to the contest and the spirit of the Olympics," Archbishop Elpidophoros said.

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