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Greek Orthodox women's charity joins Constantinople pilgrimage



With deep reverence and gratitude, the National Philoptochos Society joined clergy, faithful, and pilgrims from around the world at the Ecumenical Patriarchate to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the enthronement of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Representing National Philoptochos were National President Debbie George and First Vice President Anita Kartalopoulos, who took part in the historic commemoration at the Mother Church of Orthodoxy.



From left: His Eminence Metropolitan-elect Athenagoras of New Jersey, Philoptochos spiritual advisor; His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew; Debbie George, Philoptochos National President; and Anita Kartolopoulos, Philoptochos National First Vice President. Photo by John Mindala

The celebration coincided with the anniversary pilgrimage led by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, held October 19-23, 2026. For the National Philoptochos delegation, being present in the Queen of Cities, Constantinople, was both a profound honor and a deeply spiritual moment. His All-Holiness granted a private audience to the Philoptochos delegation and the Archon Delegation from the United States and shared in his remarks:

“Throughout these years, you have stood faithfully beside us. Our predecessor Patriarch Athenagoras came to this Venerable See from your Archdiocese, and two of the institutions (National Philoptochos and The Order of Saint Andrew) so worthily represented here bear his imprint. As Archbishop of North and South America, he founded the Philoptochos—“friends of the poor”—a title that is itself a rule of life....To the National Philoptochos, in the persons of your National President and First Vice President, we owe particular gratitude. The strength of a community is revealed in the care it extends to its most vulnerable members; your sisterhood has made that principle visible in countless towns and cities from coast to coast, and in your generous support of the Mother Church.”

In recognition of this milestone, National Philoptochos presented His All-Holiness

with a gift of \$35,000; one thousand dollars for each year of his ministry as Ecumenical Patriarch. The offering reflects the Society's enduring love for the Mother Church and its gratitude for His All-Holiness's steadfast shepherding of the Orthodox faithful throughout the world.

"On behalf of the Greek Orthodox National Philoptochos Executive Board and our entire membership across the United States, we extend our most sincere wishes as you celebrate the 35th Anniversary of your Election and Enthronement," said National President Debbie George. "We are profoundly honored and humbled to participate in this momentous and historical occasion. We hold both you and His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America in the deepest reverence. Though the Phanar, our Mother Church, has always been in our hearts, with Archbishop Elpidophoros' leadership and guidance, it is always a top priority for National Philoptochos."

Since his enthronement on November 2, 1991, His All-Holiness has become the longest-serving Ecumenical Patriarch in the history of the Church. Throughout his ministry, he has been a tireless voice for Christian unity, religious freedom, and the care of God's creation. For the women of Philoptochos, whose ministry is rooted in love and service to those in need, his example continues to inspire our work in parishes and communities across the country.

The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc. is the philanthropic arm of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. With over 90 years of experience, Philoptochos has served communities in need through fundraising and charitable programs. The Society includes more than 400 active chapters nationwide. Learn more at www.philoptochos.org.

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