

## **Archbishop Elpidophoros' Keynote Address at the National Philoptochos 17th Biennial Children's Medical Fund Luncheon**



Your Eminence, Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago; Your Grace, Bishop Apostolos of Medeia; Reverend clergy; Ms. Maria Logus, National President of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society; Ms. Pamela Argyris, Chairperson and President of the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos; Beloved members of the Sisterhood of Philoptochos; Esteemed representatives of our recipient organizations;

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

These are words of Helen Keller. They express the spirit of the Philoptochos Society, and the spirit of the Children's Medical Fund Luncheon.

Perhaps you have heard of the “Butterfly Effect.” Scientists use this term for the idea that many small actions can add up to a giant outcome. A butterfly in Africa, flapping its wings at just the right moment, can help make a hurricane in Florida.

Today we witness a related phenomenon. Perhaps we should call it the “Koulouraki Effect.” This occurs when a member of Philoptochos makes cookies for a bake sale. It can be in Portland, Maine; or Troy, Michigan; or Bakersfield, California. One plate of koulourakia, by itself, does not amount to much. But each small plate, together with all the others, adds up to a great banquet of love. This is the “Koulouraki Effect”: when a small cookie makes a big difference—in a child receiving treatment; in a family keeping their home; in research that saves young lives.

My beloved ladies of the Philoptochos Society:

Nothing you do is small or insignificant. Each fashion show, each festival of tables, each coffee hour that you host, has great value. Each member of Philoptochos has great value. This is because you work together, in every parish, in every Metropolis, and across our Archdiocese. You are an “army of ἀγάπη” that conquers pain and anguish through generosity and kindness. You are a model of cooperation and collaboration for our Church. You prove that, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

It makes me proud, as your Archbishop, to see the record of the gifts from the Children’s Medical Fund over the last thirty years. This year alone, the list of programs runs to several pages—all truly worthy of support. Children in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin will benefit from the love and the labors of our ladies from all across the nation.

We are grateful also for representatives of the grant recipients at our Luncheon today. We appreciate the wonderful work that your medical teams accomplish for the children. A sick child often feels small and alone. Your care gives comfort, courage, and strength. The Lord said, “As you do unto the least of these my brethren, you do unto me” (Matthew 25:40). May God bless you for the mercy—and the miracles—that you work, day after day, for the little ones of our land.

As we began with words of Helen Keller, so we conclude. She also said: “The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched – they must be felt with the heart.” Today we feel those precious things: joy and mercy, respect and unity. We have some words in Greek: φιλοτιμία (philotimia) and φιλανθρωπία (philanthropia), personal dignity and love for humanity. With these feelings, our hearts are full today, as we give thanks to God for the beauty of this hour.

It also has come to my attention that a desire was expressed yesterday at your meetings—that idea being to dedicate a specific Sunday of the year for the support of the National Philoptochos Society. Today, it is my pleasure and honor to

announce that I have decided to dedicate the Sunday of the Good Samaritan (8th Sunday of Luke) each year for this purpose.

May the Lord bless and keep you all! And may He grant you many more years of life and service together, in peace and in love!

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