

## **Metropolitan of St. Francisco praises 2 teens from Phoenix Orthodox parish who helped rescue swimmers from possible drowning**



Two young teens from Phoenix, Arizona, who were vacationing exploring the cliffs off coastal San Diego, California, earlier this month, are credited with saving two people from drowning.

Sixteen-year old Zachary Haugen and 15-year old Jake Watson, both of whom are congregants of the Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Phoenix, looked into the water and saw two people struggling amidst the waves and rocks. Haugen, a certified lifeguard, realized the pair in the water was in distress and, without hesitation, jumped off a 15-foot cliff to offer assistance. Then, Haugen and Watson

assisted the other young woman to safety, all before other lifeguards arrived.

The two teens are also active in the parish's Sunday school, Greek dance troupe and participate in the Metropolis Folk Dance and Choral Festival.

Upon learning of the heroism of the two young men, the Metropolitan of St. Francisco, His Eminence Gerasimos, reached out to the teens to offer his personal congratulations to them.

During their 45-minute conversation via Zoom, which included their mothers Alexia Hotis Haugen and Paulina Pestrivas Watson, respectively, Metropolitan Gerasimos noted that, "What you did on those cliffs was amazing. The hand of God, through your actions, saved lives. You did what your parents and your family have taught you to do, to help someone in need. And this time it was a matter of life and death."