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Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Distributes \$620,775 to Applicants Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic in the USA

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

COVID-19 RELIEF FUND

“What you are doing is the work of God!” These words come from Matt of Long Island City, NY the beneficiary of a grant from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Covid-19 Relief Fund. Matt is one of 358 grant recipients who received much needed assistance after being financial impacted by the global pandemic. The grant he received helped pay some of the bills that had accumulated after his commission-only income disappeared. When he received notice of his grant he exclaimed, “I am so grateful to the Archdiocese for helping me. This grant was God sent!”

The Archdiocese Covid-19 Relief Fund began with a generous donation and grew with donations large and small, from all over the country to \$620,000. From its inception through the closing of applications, the Fund has been fully distributed to Orthodox Christian and non-Orthodox Christians alike. Recipients come from 25 states, with the majority of assistance to the most hard-hit areas across the nation, such as New York City.

The Fund, which was established in March 2020 under the direction of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, was an important part of the Archdiocese’s efforts to support those around the country impacted by the coronavirus and who faced hardship. The maximum assistance was \$2,500 per applicant, and payments were made on behalf of applicants directly to vendors to whom they owed money for critical items such as mortgage, rent, medical, gas, electric, food, childcare, and funerals.

Applicants ranged from single parents, trying to keep up with bills after losing their personal businesses to families where all members lost their jobs. One thing the recipients have in common is their thankfulness for help when they needed it most. Keisha from Brooklyn, NY is an independent contractor who lost her job when Covid-19 hit the New York area. She feared that she would become homeless. Help came just in time. Keisha commented, "It was through the Grace of God that I learned about the Covid-19 Relief Fund from the local church community in Brooklyn. I went from crying each day about the dire situation I was facing, to crying happy tears after receiving a grant from the Fund. I can't thank you enough for your help at my deepest time of need. I am relieved, ecstatic and grateful. It is a miracle that you are here to help."

Another grateful grant recipient, Katherine, a widow for many years with two college-aged children, had planned ahead financially and, as difficult as it was, was able to maintain a balanced lifestyle. However, she said, "This pandemic was not planned for. The bills are still due. We are three adults in this home and we are trying to survive now. I had no other choice but to apply for a grant from the Archdiocese Relief Fund." When Katherine received word that she did indeed qualify she cried, then she felt blessed and said a prayer, thanking God for the opportunity to receive comfort at this time. "Just when you think there is no way out of a difficult situation, God comes through."

Patience from FL says the grant relieved stress and has helped her look forward to better days. "I am overwhelmed with gratitude. Just thinking about receiving this help makes me cry. I am widowed and have been out of a job since March 19th because of the coronavirus and the elimination of my position. There is so much stress and all at the same time." With a new job and some financial relief, Patience is optimistic about the future saying, "I felt like it was taken away all at once but is being given back in the same manner. Please tell everyone how grateful I am."

The Archdiocese responded immediately to the effects of the pandemic and continues to receive words of deep appreciation from grant recipients across the country for its nationwide support of those who most affected. "The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, through the support of many generous donors, spared no effort in a time of desperate need. We are committed to you, the faithful, and to anyone in the USA who needs financial assistance."

*grant recipient names used with permission

[TESTIMONIALS]

Matt, Long Island City, NY

"What you are doing is the work of God!" These words are from Matt from Long Island City, NY who has received a grant from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Covid-19 Relief Fund. A commission-only financial salesman whose income

fell by 90% when the pandemic shut down the country, Matt was not able to receive unemployment because technically he is still employed. However, while his income has dried-up, his bills and his financial support to his children cannot stop. He is one of those who was falling through the cracks and said that we caught him 'with our net'.

Matt is thankful to have learned about the Relief Fund from a 'friend of a friend.' Having no expectations but 3 months behind on his bills, he applied and has received a grant that will go directly to pay his rent.

Keisha, Brooklyn, NY

Keisha is a single mother from Brooklyn NY. She is an independent contractor and when COVID-19 hit New York City, her work came to a standstill. She was living paycheck to paycheck and actively looking for avenues of funding from grants or donations to pay her mortgage and some of her mounting bills. Keisha feared that she would become homeless. Help came just in time. "It was through the Grace of God that I learned about the Covid-19 Relief Fund from the church community of Ss. Constantine & Helen Church in Brooklyn. I went from crying each day about the dire situation I was facing, to crying happy tears after receiving a grant from the Fund. I can't thank you enough for your help at my deepest time of need. I am relieved, ecstatic and grateful. It is a miracle that you are here to help." Things are now looking up for Keisha and her family. She has received additional pandemic assistance and is looking forward to working again as the pandemic slowly subsides.

Patience from FL

"I am overwhelmed with gratitude. Just thinking about receiving this help makes me cry. I am widowed and have been out of a job since March 19 because of the coronavirus and the elimination of my position. There is so much stress and all at the same time. " These words from Patience in Florida give insight into how the Archdiocese Covid-19 Relief Fund has helped people from all over the country. Patience learned of the Fund from her priest who knows about her situation and her great need and she has always considered the members of her church to be her family, receiving kindness often. However, this grant will directly help with her bills and has taken a lot of pressure off of her. With a new job and some financial relief Patience is optimistic about the future saying, "I felt like it was taken away all at once but is being given back in the same manner .Please tell everyone how grateful I am."

Lindita, New York City

"I was so happy to know that someone would help us. You feel great when you get some help - especially when it comes from the Church, at the time you need it. It's

like God knows that you need help. “ Lindita and her husband, from New York City, found themselves in a very difficult situation when her husband’s job ended abruptly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Rent, car and insurance payments were all due and there was no income. That’s when a Greek Orthodox friend told her about the Relief Fund of the Archdiocese. She encourages others to apply, saying, “You don’t have to be embarrassed to ask for help. I know that if I could I would help others. That is why others want to help you.”

Elizabeth, Palm Harbor, FL

Elizabeth from Palm Harbor, FL and her family were struggling. While her husband was still working, his pay was cut dramatically. Elizabeth’s small business withered to nothing. The level of stress in the home was escalating when she was told about the Covid-19 Relief Fund. Elizabeth’s first thought was that there were others who needed it more, but that’s when someone said, “You need it too.” The Relief Fund grant will pay a month of mortgage and some utility bills, easing stress and pressure in the home. Elizabeth says she has always been diligent and mindful of paying the mortgage but with this help she and her husband feel relief and can take a break from the worry of bills and how to pay them. She said, “We are blessed in a lot of ways but Covid-19 hit us hard. People can lose faith during these times but this Fund is a huge blessing.”

Angela, Mocksville, NC

Angela, from Mocksville, NC, a single parent, is self-employed but in an instant, the Covid-19 pandemic forced all of her events to be cancelled. With no money coming in, no options and many bills to pay, she searched online for organizations that could help her. That’s when she found out about the GOA Covid-19 Relief Fund. “I’m not one to ask for help but something led me to the YouTube video of Archbishop Elpidophoros announcing the Relief Fund. I really liked his spirit and energy. He seemed kind and genuine. At first, I thought, they’re in NY and I’m in North Carolina. Will they help me? Will they hear me?” When Angela received an email informing her that her application was approved and checks were being sent to pay her mortgage and a few utility bills she said, “I felt a huge weight lift off of me. I felt that for the first times in months that I could take a break. I can’t put into words how grateful I am. You came at the right time. You will always be one of my heroes!”

Maria from Long Island, NY

Maria from Long Island, NY was not aware of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Covid-19 Relief Fund until aunt told her about it. She watched Archbishop Elpidophoros’ video announcement about the Relief Fund on Facebook and realized

that the Fund could help get her family through this difficult time after her husband was laid-off by his company. Since she applied, the parish has sent an email to all parishioners letting them know that the Relief Fund is here to help those who need it and encourages those going through a difficult time to apply. Maria said, "I am extremely grateful to receive this grant from the Relief Fund to pay a car payment, car insurance, utilities and a phone bill that have built up. It's amazing that the help came at the right time." Maria and her husband are still nervous about the future and prospects of work but are praying that things get back to normal soon.

D.K., Texas

"My company was in a position where they had to either lay-workers or ask them to be patient with payroll until they acquired a new investor. So I decided to work and wait to be paid in the future." D.K. (TX) and her family found themselves with only one income, and that was not enough to pay the house and car notes. "I never ask for anything. I just try to figure it out, move the money around and make sure bills are getting paid on time. But the bills and interest were accumulating so when I received the Archdiocese email about the Covid-19 Relief Fund I decided to apply to help our family." When D.K. was informed that she would receive a grant to pay a month of her mortgage she felt tremendous relief. It would be one less payment she would have to worry about. She told us that she is so grateful to have some weight taken off her shoulders and she encourages anyone in need to see help. She is hopeful that the work situation will come through and she will receive her salary very soon.

C.C., New York City

"I am caregiver. I was taking care of an elderly man in a hospital when the Covid-19 pandemic forced the hospital to close its doors to outsiders, even the families and the caregivers. So, I lost my work and my ability to pay my rent." C.C. tells us that she explained to her landlord that she couldn't go to work; it's illegal. When a friend informed her of the Archdiocese Relief Fund, she completed the form immediately and prayed for a solution. Soon after C.C. received word that her application was approved and that her rent would be paid directly from the Relief Fund. Her landlord told her that she is lucky that she believes in God and that God answered her prayers. C.C. says that when other people see what the Church is doing they will appreciate Orthodoxy more.

V., New York City

V. from New York City received a grant from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Covid-19 Relief Fund to help pay rent for the month of June. As a freelance filmmaker, her industry completely shut down on March 5 and has yet to start up. V.'s parents in

Greece heard about the Fund on Greek television and urged her to apply. As someone who has never asked for help before, it was difficult to realize that at this time she needed assistance. "I am a diligent professional but I had to accept that there is a global crisis and everyone needs some help at some point in their lives. People are afraid to ask for help – it's the mentality of a 'handout'. But if we are willing to give we should be willing to receive. We all need to help and support each other, especially during times of global crisis." The grant from the Relief Fund relieved some of the anxiety and stress she was feeling after she exhausted all her financial resources." She tells us that she is very grateful for the help she has received especially while she navigates how and when work in her field will begin.

Katherine, VA

Katherine and her two college-aged children all lost their jobs due to Covid-19 - Katherine her part time school job and her children lost their summer jobs. A widow for many years, Katherine had planned ahead financially and, as difficult as it was, she was able to maintain a balanced lifestyle. However, she says, "This pandemic was not planned for. The bills are still due. We are 3 adults in this home and we are trying to survive now. I had no other choice but to apply for a grant from the Archdiocese Relief Fund." When Katherine received word that she did indeed qualify she cried, then she felt blessed and said a prayer, thanking God for the opportunity to receive this comfort at this time. She wants to help get the word out about this program, saying "Just when you think there is no way out of a difficult situation, God comes through."

J. , Chicago

In March, J. and his wife both found themselves laid-off with absolutely no income coming in. While they applied for unemployment, the system was completely overloaded and months passed without confirmation or approval. In the meantime, they were able to negotiate deferred payments for mortgage and credit cards, but their rent had to be paid. J. learned of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Covid-19 Relief Fund through Facebook and quickly applied online. He said, "If they can give us something, anything, that would be great." After submitting the requested information and a few phone calls, J. received approval on the grant and told us, "My wife started crying when we found out. We were so happy... elated... so thankful! A massive weight is off our shoulders. If you are hesitating on applying for a grant and are in legitimate need, just do it!"

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