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Metropolis of San Francisco Giving Tree Raises Over \$13,000 for the Orthodox Diocese of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya



Christmas is a season known for giving. This tradition started with the Magi who brought their gifts to the Newborn Christ Child. Every year during the Christmas Open House for the Greek Metropolis of San Francisco, people place gift cards on the tree, which the Metropolis Philoptochos has distributed to those in need – the homeless, fire victims, and children’s charities, to name a few. The annual “Giving Tree” coordinated by the Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos has become a way to help those less fortunate and share love and compassion during the Christmas season. Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos President and Master of Ceremonies Jeannie Ranglas spoke about the spirit of Christmas and the importance of remembering people near and far who are struggling and that we can help make a significant difference in their lives.

The pandemic may have limited the opportunity to gather in person, but it did not stop this festive event from happening in a virtual forum and providing assistance for a special Orthodox community. On the evening of Sunday, December 20, 2020, His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos hosted a virtual Christmas Open House which welcomed His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya as a special guest. His Grace shared with the nearly 150 guests that his Diocese has suffered

greatly due to the pandemic, and resources are very limited. In addition to the 54 priests and 56 parishes which comprise his Diocese, he also oversees six orphanages and educational centers which provide food, shelter and care for over 600 children and young adults.

In his opening remarks, Metropolitan Gerasimos commented on the ongoing challenges of the pandemic on our world and on parish life. He referenced the hope that is coming through the advancements in medical technology with the COVID-19 vaccine, but more importantly he shared the real hope which is “the incarnation of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is the hope that He brings through His miraculous birth, through His lifetime of teaching and preaching, and the hope of salvation through His Crucifixion and Resurrection” that will sustain us during difficult times. Metropolitan Gerasimos also shared the importance of providing for others, and specifically the needs of the Orthodox Diocese of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, being nearly 10,000 miles apart yet “connected through God’s love, through the Eucharist, and through our Orthodox Christian faith.”

His Grace Bishop Neofitos joined this event in the early hours of the morning from Kenya, after having baptized 115 children and adults on Sunday. He remarked, “Indeed I want to say that this is a great honor, not only for me, but it is a great honor for the Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa and the Diocese of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya. I really want to say it has been a very difficult journey since 2015 when I became the Bishop of this Diocese. It is something that words cannot describe the kind of situation that we are in. The ways our Dioceses are created, being the first bishop in this Diocese and here in Kenya, it is something that even the local people don’t understand, how to engage and work together as their Bishop because they completely rely on me to help them with their challenges – spiritually and financially.” As His Grace Bishop Neofitos conveyed his gratitude to Metropolitan Gerasimos and all the faithful, he emphasized the importance of this support “so that the mission of the church does not stop.”

Entertainment for the Virtual Open House was provided by Theodosia Roussos, a talented soprano, accompanied by Christopher Yokas, performing from Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Los Angeles, CA. Musical selections included the Kalanta, O Holy Night, Silent Night and Joy to the World.

Through online donations and a generous gift of \$2,500 from the Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos, over \$13,000 has been raised thus far for the God-pleasing ministry of His Grace Bishop Neofitos. Donations are still be accepted securely online, or you may send your donations to: Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco – ATTN: Kenya, 245 Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

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