

Philanthropy as a Meeting Point: Philoptochos, L100 Receive Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa



His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria met with two of the Omogeneia's champions of philanthropy: the Greek Orthodox Ladies' Philoptochos Society and the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Fund.

Philoptochos is one of the largest women's auxiliaries in the United States— or, as National President Arlene Siavelis Kehl put it, an “army of women”— tackling social and economic issues like hunger, homelessness, poverty, human trafficking, and the opioid crisis, to name a few. Its reach is as local as it is global, and at the onset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine last March, Philoptochos built on its existing relationships with IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America at-large to offer significant financial support to those affected by the war abroad.

“How beautiful that the name of your organization is Philoptochos,” remarked His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros at the Society's welcome breakfast in his honor. “A beautiful Greek word, meaning friends of the poor. Who else was a true friend of the poor but Jesus Christ?”

Hailing from Crete, His Beatitude has served as Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa for eighteen years, leading a ministry characterized by its “distinction, innovation, and restoration,” according to Archbishop Elpidophoros; Siavelis Kehl also noted that the Patriarch's ministry activity, “including the building of churches, schools, and hospitals,” is an inspiration to Philoptochos. In addition to his philanthropic commitment to his direct flock, His Beatitude has also been a “staunch ally” of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, “lending the κύρος of His Apostolic Throne to the canonically righteous causes of the First Throne of Orthodoxy.” In fact, he was among the first to formally recognize the autocephaly granted to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in 2019.

“I know our dear Sisters in Christ are eager to hear directly from You,” said His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, who introduced His Beatitude at the breakfast. “I believe that the example that Your Beatitude has set throughout Africa is one that inspires all Orthodox around the world.”

His Beatitude spoke without notes, but with a nearly tenable sincerity and humility. He thanked the Society “from the bottom of my heart” for its welcome and affirmed their shared mission: “...[Know] that I am always with you—the Patriarch of the poorest region in the world, Africa. As I make my journey, I will always live my ministry, which is indeed to be a philanthropist, a friend of the poor.”

President Siavelis Kehl and Vice-President Anita Kartalopoulos presented His Beatitude with a gift commemorating Philoptochos’s 90th anniversary.

Later that afternoon, His Beatitude was welcomed by the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Fund, the endowment program established in 1984 by the late Archbishop to support the national ministries of the Archdiocese of America and to promote Orthodoxy and Hellenism.

In her remarks, Executive Director Paulette Poulos said, “Your Beatitude, your challenge to help those in need in Africa and other areas is a monumental one and with God’s help you have succeeded. We want to assure you of our deep respect, admiration and love for Your Beatitude, and we pray for your good health as you continue in your worthy ministry. Axios!”

Poulos, along with Vice President James Pantelidis, presented His Beatitude with a special monetary gift to support his ministries at the Patriarchate.

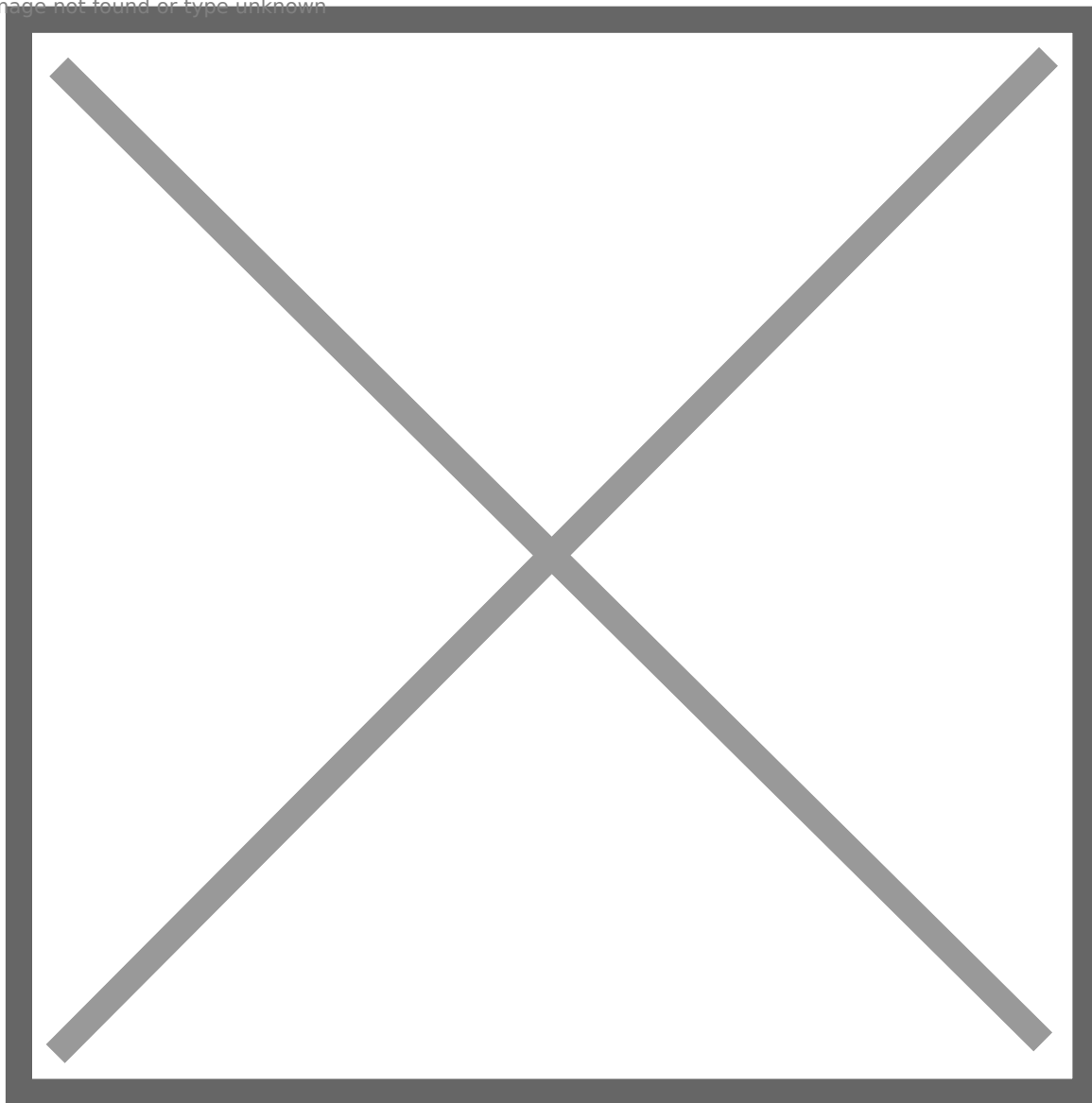
“The two characteristics of the Greeks are Philotimo and Philoxenia,” His Beatitude said, and he expressed his deep gratitude to Leadership 100 for their hospitality, as well as to Archbishop Elpidophoros, who accompanied him throughout the entire visit. He also thanked them for continuing to remember and honor all those who pioneered and “struggled” for the Archdiocese before them, including the late Archbishop Iakovos.

“I was a young bishop when I had the blessing to be among Patriarch Parthenios and Archbishop Iakovos,” His Beatitude recalled. “Suddenly, as a plate of pasta was served to our table, Archbishop Iakovos himself grabbed the plate to serve all of us. And I was so touched, because such a great figure wanted to serve us.” He described the late Archbishop as a “giant” for the Archdiocese of America.

On Saturday, October 8, His Beatitude will receive the Athenagoras Human Rights Award from the Order of Saint Andrew, Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, at their annual awards ceremony and banquet.

Further details regarding His Beatitude's schedule during the US Apostolic Visit will be updated here: <https://www.goarch.org/news/archbishop/schedule>

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