

Archons from the Metropolis of San Francisco Welcome Archbishop Elpidophoros to Phoenix for 46th Folk Dance and Choral Festival



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The Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco welcomed with great joy His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America to Phoenix, Arizona during the 46th Annual Folk Dance and Choral Festival. On Saturday, February 18, 2023, the Archons hosted a dinner in his honor as has become the tradition each time the Archbishop visits the Metropolis of San Francisco.

Special guests included His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea, Consul General of Greece in Los Angeles Ioannis Stamatekos, Hellenic College Holy Cross President Archon George Cantonis, Metropolis Vice-President Archon Isidoros Garifalakis and wife Maria, and Metropolis Philoptochos President Jeannie Ranglas and husband Archon Gerry Ranglas.

The dinner celebration began with a welcome and remarks by Archon Regional Commander Hon. Steven Counelis (Southern California & Arizona) who served as Master of Ceremonies. He thanked the Archons from across the Metropolis of San Francisco for their generosity in support of the evening's celebration, and recognized his fellow Regional Commanders for their contributions. He shared with all present the ever-expanding initiatives of the Order of Saint Andrew. Specifically, four recent and important efforts were identified: 1) the establishment of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Foundation: For the Sacred See of Saint Andrew; 2) the establishment of Engagement Committees, whose mission is to provide meaningful opportunities for all Archons to participate in the active and ongoing defense of the Ecumenical Patriarchate across a wide range of fields; 3) the creation of the 2023 "Pilgrimage of Discovery" which is a once-in-a-lifetime, all-expense paid, 7-day trip to Constantinople to connect Young Adults with their Orthodox faith, and will include a private audience with His All Holiness Ecumenical

Patriarch Bartholomew; and 4) the planning for 4th International Archon Conference on Religious Freedom emphasizing democracy and human rights in the sovereign governance of nations, to be held in Athens, Spring of 2024, which will bring Archons from around the world together for the first time ever. Regional Commander Counelis ended by stating “With 752 Archons in the United States, under the spiritual leadership of His All Holiness and our Archbishop, as well as with the energetic and creative leadership of our National Commander, Dr. Anthony Limberakis, I am confident that we will all be able to observe the Order of Saint Andrew carry out its mission with ever greater vigor, purpose and success in the future.”

Regional Commander Paul Sogotis (San Francisco – Bay Area) offered a toast to Archbishop Elpidophoros, “to convey our gratitude, respect, and love for his Archpastoral ministry, and offer the unwavering support of the Archons in the Metropolis of San Francisco as defenders of the faith and our Mother Church.”

At the conclusion of dinner, Regional Commander Isidoros Garifalakis (Pacific Northwest) presented to the Archbishop a donation of \$15,000 from the Archons within the Metropolis of San Francisco, stating, “You have been serving as our Archbishop now for almost four years. During that time, you have brought a fresh approach to leadership, you have engaged with the faithful, and you are creating opportunities for outreach to grow our faith. It is our sacred duty and honor to carry the responsibility of Archon, knowing that we are preserving and protecting our Orthodox faith for the generations that will come after us.”

Archbishop Elpidophoros expressed his profound appreciation and committed to providing those funds to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to support a summer camp program for Christian youth in Turkey.

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos expressed his brotherly love and respect for the Archbishop, welcoming him to the Metropolis of San Francisco. In his remarks, Metropolitan Gerasimos shared, “As one church, when we come together, we can accomplish so much, and I am both proud and grateful of the efforts of the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate as Defenders of the Faith, to raise greater awareness of the challenges facing our Mother Church and engaging our faithful in this most noble cause. It is an honor to have the Archbishop in our midst, for our Metropolis to support his Archpastoral ministry, and to share the vibrancy of the Orthodox faith in the west coast. Through the revitalized efforts of our Archons through the leadership of our Regional Commanders, we look forward to their continued efforts on behalf of the Order of Saint Andrew.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS (Photo Credit: GOARCH/Brittainy Newman)

1. Archon Check Presentation 1: L-R Regional Commanders Archons Paul Sogotis, Steve Counelis and Isidoros Garifalakis with Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco.
2. Front Row - Consul General of Greece Ioannis Stamatekos, Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea.. Second Row - Archons George Demos, George Cantonis, Gig Kyriacou, Steve Counelis, Paul Sogotis, Isidoros Garifalakis, Gerry Ranglas, John Gumas, Constantine Boukidis, Andrew Eliopulos.

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