

## Metropolis of San Francisco Gala Raises Over \$485,000 In Support of Ministries



The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco joyfully celebrated a century of ministry on the West Coast at a glamorous black-tie Gala held on Saturday, October 28, 2023, at the Westin St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, CA. Attended by over 400 esteemed guests, the event showcased the rich history of the Metropolis, its diverse ministries, and paid tribute to the hierarchs who have faithfully served the western region for the past century. His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco was presented with the prestigious Theofanis Economidis Award, recognizing his exemplary leadership and commitment to the Metropolis for over 18 years. Over \$485,000 was raised in support of the Metropolis ministries and will provide for the expansion of the transformative work of the Metropolis.

It was a distinct honor and blessing to have the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, as well as other esteemed guests including His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, His Eminence Metropolitan Tarasios of Rhodopolis, His Grace Bishop Spyridon of Amastris, and His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea. Also in attendance were California Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis, and Consul General of Greece in San Francisco Socrates Sourvinos.

The Hierarchs that served the western region of our Archdiocese were recognized

for the extraordinary leadership they provided through the 100 year history of what was originally a District, later a Diocese, and eventually a Metropolis. His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony, of blessed memory, was especially featured for the vision he brought to his ministry, focusing on programs for youth, as well as planting new parishes almost every year during his 26-year tenure until his passing on Christmas Day in 2004.

The Gala highlighted the 14 innovative ministries of the Metropolis that have been at the forefront of community service, spiritual growth, education, and cultural enrichment. These ministries include: Philoptochos, Christian Education, Family Wellness, Missions and Evangelism, Youth and Young Adults, Stewardship, Greek Language and Culture, Clergy Continuing Education, Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center, Folk Dance and Choral Festival, Orthodox Parish Leadership, Greek Village Camp, Young Adult League Conferences, and Church Music.

Actor, producer, director and dedicated Greek Orthodox Christian Robert Krantz skillfully served as the Master of Ceremonies, guiding the program throughout the evening and sharing his own personal journey of faith and how the clergy and ministries of the Metropolis of San Francisco have impacted his life and family.

In his Archpastoral greeting, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America remarked, "We assemble this evening not to simply praise His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, but to be inspired by his example - an example of dutiful faithfulness to Christ and His Holy Church." He continued to share, "Your service - not only here in the West, but throughout the Archdiocese has been more than profitable - spiritually and in every way! You have done much more than you were duty-bound to do, and you always did so with humility, patience, faithfulness, and above all - love."

Congratulatory letters were also offered by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Leadership 100, and the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The evening featured captivating musical performances by soprano Theodosia Roussos and pianist Mathias Coppens, a Byzantine Chant Choir of area clergy under the direction of Nektarios Antoniou, and pianist Nicholas Fettis, adding a touch of elegance to the celebratory atmosphere.

The Theofanis Economidis award was presented to Metropolitan Gerasimos by Metropolis Council Vice-President Isidoros Garifalakis. The gift was a custom family icon, prayerfully written by the sisters of the Monastery of the Theotokos the Lifegiving Spring in Dunlap, CA - which depicts the Saints and Feasts representing the family of Metropolitan Gerasimos. Several members of the Metropolitan's

family were also in attendance to celebrate this special evening with him, traveling from Boston, New York and Los Angeles.

Upon receiving the award, Metropolitan Gerasimos commented, "You gave me a gift, an icon depicting all the saints of my family. It is indeed a gift that I will cherish the rest of my life, remembering all these events from Christ's life and the Saints, remembering my mother and my father, and how they gave me what I have today. The honor and glory of this award belongs to the Lord Himself, not to me. We are here tonight to celebrate what we have done together in the name of the Lord and his Holy Orthodox Church. Anything that has been accomplished in this Metropolis has been because of the collective effort of the people."

In speaking about the ministries of the Metropolis, Metropolitan Gerasimos commented, "This beautiful evening I give thanks to God for this outpouring of love and support. The ministries of our Metropolis are many and varied, but they all have the same mission: to draw our faithful deeper into the life of the Church and their relationship to Jesus Christ. As we celebrate our ministries this evening, and while we remember our history, we must also look forward to the future. One lesson from our history as a Metropolis is that over the years, the methods and means of the ministries have changed, but their mission has not. As we dream about our future, the next hundred years, we must continually re-dedicate ourselves to the mission, so that we may grow the current ministries, and indeed, create new ones that may 'build up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' (Ephesians 4: 12-13)."

The Gala was under the leadership of Co-chairs Archon George and Mrs. Christine Psefteas, faithful stewards from the Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church in Castro Valley, CA. They led a committee of over 30 people who meticulously planned every aspect of the Gala. George is a member of the Metropolis Council, Chair of the Metropolis Finance Committee, member of the Archdiocesan Council, and recently invested as an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Christine is currently serving as President of the Parish Council in Castro Valley, she is a past President and current Advisor to her local Philoptochos Chapter, she serves as Treasurer of the Metropolis Philoptochos, and is a member of the National Philoptochos Board.

Leading to the success of the Gala were the many supporters including: Legacy Sponsors - The Valaskantjis Families - Nikiforos and Georgia Valaskantjis and George and Georgia Valaskantjis; Illustrious Sponsors - Isidoros and Maria Garifalakis and Family; and Gerry and Jeannie Ranglas; Signature Sponsors: Hugo

and Irene Aviles; Kokkari Estiatorio – George and Judy Marcus and Dr. Kenneth and Angie Frangadakis; Dr. Michael J. Patzakis, In memory of his loving wife Susan Giokaris Patzakis; and George and Christine Psefteas.

The Theofanis Economidis Award was established in 2013, with Archon Theofanis Economidis as the inaugural recipient. Since that time, it has been given to distinguished stewards in honor of their leadership, inspirational vision, hard work, and humble service to Jesus Christ and His Holy Church. Other recipients of the award are: George and Judy Marcus (2014), Gerry and Jeannie Ranglas (2016), and Dr. James and Virginia Kallins (2018).

The Westin St. Francis Hotel's ballroom was transformed into a stunning setting, reflecting the grandeur of the occasion. Guests each received a custom icon of Christ or the Theotokos, commemorating this event and as a remembrance of the blessings the Metropolis has received from God over the past 100 years.

After the conclusion of the program, guests enjoyed dancing to music from the Greek band Kymata and the beats of DJ Chris Perris, creating a lively and celebratory atmosphere.

On Friday, October 27, Gala sponsors and dignitaries enjoyed a sumptuous reception at Kokkari Estiatorio, generously hosted by George and Judy Marcus, and Dr. Kenneth and Angie Frangadakis.

The Metropolis of San Francisco Gala was a testament to a century of faith, service, and community building. It was a night of reflection, gratitude, and anticipation for the continued growth and impact of the Metropolis for the next century and beyond!

For photos and feature videos from the Gala, please visit:  
[www.sanfran.goarch.org/resources/](http://www.sanfran.goarch.org/resources/)

Photo credit: Kostas Petrakos Photography

[goarch.org](http://goarch.org)