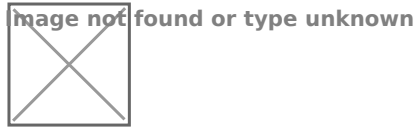


11/12/2023

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America speaks at Saint Basil Academy, Dec. 8, 2023



Konstantinos Konstantinou, Consul General of Greece in New York, reverend fathers and presbyteres, members of the Board of Trustees of Saint Basil Academy, beloved ladies of the Philoptochos Society, from all over the country. I am blessed to be here and so happy to be here with all of you to celebrate Christmas.

At Christmas we celebrate the birth, the Nativity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and what a better place to celebrate this than at Saint Basil's academy, with the children. Because Christmas without children makes no sense and the joy we have in celebrating Christmas for children and with children is really adding spirituality, joy, and happiness to our lives—and meaning.

Our Lord was born as a baby and we all know that Jesus—the baby Jesus—was an orphan, an orphan in the sense that he had no Father, he had only his Mother, our Panagia, the Virgin of Mary. St. Joseph was betrothed to Maria, [he was] the protector of our Lord. Our Lord had only enemies. Even the King, Herod, of chased after him to kill the baby.

Today we celebrate here in Saint Basil's Academy, a place where our fathers, forefathers founded this beautiful ministry: taking care of children, children who have eventually no father or no mother or come from difficult families, and they need protection.

Here at Saint Basil's we have this protection, we have our Panagia being the protector of all the children but who else is the Panagia for the children of Saint Basil's other than the beautiful ladies of the Philoptochos, the Philoptochos which from all over the country collected the money to purchase this property.

The Philoptochos, which since 1944 is supporting this ministry here at Saint Basil's.

A big thank you for all the ladies of the Philoptochos for this ministry: thank you ladies! I assume that all the ladies of the Philoptochos all these decades will be

rewarded by our Lord Jesus Christ the same way as the Panagia was rewarded, who was the mother who proved to be a good mother, the natural mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All the ladies of the Philoptochos, the mothers of all the children, who were protected in this beautiful, and Fr. Costa, you have been always St. Joseph the betrothed, the good father: merciful, kind, for all the children of Saint Basil's.

Gold, incense, and holy myrrh: it's so controversial. Why gold? Why incense? why holy myrrh? They don't have the same value. Why are these three Magi bringing these three gifts as if these were of equal importance, of value?

In the eyes of God, of our Lord, anything that we contribute for the children is of equal value. Is this gold? Is this the time we offer? Is this the service we offer? Is this any kind of volunteer work and support that we do for the children is the gift of the Magi and of equal importance and value for our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, I thank you all my dear of supporters and sponsors of this beautiful ministry. And what the Archdiocese is going to do is what we always have done: support this ministry, love this ministry, protect this ministry and of course offer it a vision, a vision for the future, for expansion, and an even stronger ministry in Saint Basil's.

We already have created an advisory Committee, an advisory committee that includes all parties: the Philoptochos Society, the board of Saint Basil's, Archdiocese members, and people outside our community that are professionals.

And the role of this committee is not offering ideas about how we delete, or stop, this ministry. On the contrary, how we can help this ministry to go into the future with a new vision and to expand to include more children, to include more ministries, to develop more ministries, more successful ministries like this one that we have here at some pages and of course, any sale of this property is absolutely out of the question.

These grounds, these grounds for us are sacred. We have an Archbishop lying on this grounds. Archbishop Michael, who really sanctifies even the soil of this property. How can we even think that we can sell, or we can do something that will desacralize this property? It's out of question, so I need you to trust the Church, trust the Archdiocese, trust the board of trustees of St. Basil's, trust the ladies of the Philoptochos society.

[And offer your] support, because you are the "Magi", you are St. Joseph, and you are the Panagia, you are the Virgin Mary supporting our children, [each one of]

who[m] is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ: every child is the image, is the icon of Jesus Christ. Helping and supporting and protecting the children, we offer this ministry to Lord Himself.

And with this I wish you all the best! I want to thank you for your support of Saint Basil's and its ministries, and I wish you all the best for the beautiful feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Χρόνια πολλά!

Photos: GOARCH/Brittainy Newman

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