



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE ^{OF} AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF PHILANTHROPY

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Report to the 39th Clergy-Laity Congress – July 2008

The Department of Philanthropy is staffed by His Grace Bishop Andonios and an Administrative Assistant, Ely Papadeas. In addition to his pastoral and liturgical responsibilities as an auxiliary bishop, His Grace also serves as Director of St. Michael's Home and is the spiritual advisor to both the National Board of Philoptochos and to the Executive Board of the Direct Archdiocesan District Philoptochos. Mr. Papadeas in addition to his duties in the department also assists in the Chancellery coordinating ordination files for men seeking ordination and working with the scholarships funds which the Archdiocese oversees. The Department also coordinates the response of the Office of the Archbishop and of the Archdiocese to the many requests received for assistance both at home and from abroad.

The Department of Philanthropy continues its efforts to promote the importance of philanthropic ministries within all our parishes and strives to heighten the sensitivity of the faithful to their sacred calling to not be simply *hearers* but also *doers* of the word of God and to stress to them that *faith without works is dead* (James 2:26). Since the last Clergy-Laity Congress, the Department of Philanthropy has been especially involved in a number of significant projects.

GREEK FIRE RELIEF FUND: In August of 2007, the world witnessed the catastrophic fires which ravaged large sections of Greece and caused the tragic loss of life and property, as well as impacting for years to come the livelihood of countless individuals and the environment which was negatively impacted by the fires. The Department was immediately involved in the Archdiocese's efforts to respond to this catastrophe and worked with key members of the Archdiocese to

raise the level of awareness within the community and to coordinate the collection of relief funds.

His Grace serves as the facilitator for the Greek Fire Relief Committee which was appointed in October 2007 to oversee the distribution of the Fund. Members of the Committee include: the Archbishop; Vice-Chair of the Archdiocesan Council Michael Jaharis; National President of Philoptochos Georgia Skeadas; the President of the Faith Endowment Fund Peter Kikis; Chairman of Leadership 100 George Behrakis; Commander of the Order of St. Andrew Anthony Limberakis; and Andrew Natsios, Special Advisor.

To date, \$4,081,174 has been collected by the Archdiocesan Greek Fire Relief Fund. These monies are in a segregated temporarily restricted account. In October 2007, a \$252,853 grant was awarded IOCC to offer assistance to those hardest hit by this disaster. This assistance provided animal feed to over 1,891 farmers who were deprived of grazing fields for their herds as well as seeds used to plant forage for livestock. Following the Bishop's investigative trip to Greece and his meetings with key officials and those affected by the fires, the Committee deemed it critical to continue and enhance this program and awarded a second grant of \$1,652,999 to IOCC to provide additional animal feed to 2,338 farmers with herds totaling 170,000 animals in the Prefectures of Ileia and Arkadia as well as more seed for pasturelands.

The Archbishop has met with key Greek governmental officials during their recent visits to the United States and was able to discuss with them the situation in Greece and request input from them on how best the Archdiocese can assist those affected by this disaster. At the present time, the Department is awaiting additional information from the American Embassy in Athens, IOCC and its Athens Office as well as the Governors and Metropolitans of Ileia and Arkadia so that the balance of funds can be distributed as expediently as possible. It is our hope to complete distribution of the remaining monies this summer.

RETIRED CLERGY/WIDOWED PRESVYTERES BENEVOLENCE FUND: Since January of 2006, the Department has been responsible for collecting and distributing benevolence to needy retired clergy and widowed presvyteres. Currently, there are 15 individuals (4 retired priests and 11 widowed presvyteres) receiving a monthly stipend from this Fund, which previously had been maintained by the RCA (Retired Clergy Association). In 2006, the Department collected and distributed approximately \$77,000 and in 2007 the amount was over \$78,000. Of the total distributed these past two years, over \$65,000 has come from the National Philoptochos Society which made the Fund one of its annual commitments in 2006. The balance has come from individual donors and foundations, and the Department has submitted a request to the Finance Committee of the Holy Archdiocese of America to include the Fund as a line-item in Her annual budget. The intent is to assure a steady source of income so that adjustments can be made in the level of assistance offered and include additional needy individuals in the program. It should be noted that as of June 2008 of the 15 current recipients, the monthly income (GOA pension, Social Security and Benevolence Fund subsidy) of 9 individuals was between \$1,197-\$1,758 for a

total annual income of \$14,365 - \$21,096. And another 4 recipients have annual incomes of between \$25,236 - \$28, 512. The Department is diligently working to augment their meager pensions and to assure an acceptable life-style which these individuals who so faithfully served the Church and community deserve.

CLERGY ASSISTANCE: In June of 2006, the Department was charged with the task of reviewing the entire program of assistance being offered clergymen and their families in need and is working to coordinate the assistance offered to these individuals by working closely with representatives from the Benefits Office of the Archdiocese, the National Philoptochos, the Benevolent Fund of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council and National Sisterhood of Presvyteres as well as with Leadership 100.

NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS: Since Bishop Andonios is the Advisor to the National Philoptochos, the Department of Philanthropy has been able to better coordinate and enhance assistance being offered by the Archdiocese of America to the victims of various disasters as well as to various charities and needy causes. Moreover, this relationship with the National Office of Philoptochos has facilitated addressing the needs of numerous individuals who directly contact the Archbishop and the Archdiocese seeking assistance for specific problems. These cases run the gamut from arranging for housing while receiving medical treatment, to offering financial assistance from a number of Funds, to facilitating the identification of organ donors in at least two situations within the last year or so.

IOCC: The Department of Philanthropy continues to work very closely with IOCC in addressing the various needs of the Orthodox faithful throughout the world but also here at home. As a result of Bishop Andonios' participation in 2005 as part of a IOCC delegation to Ethiopia, the Department of Philanthropy was able to secure funding through individuals and the National Philoptochos for the building of a medical facility/school in the Woliso province of that country. As noted above, the Department is working very closely with IOCC to address the needs of the victims of the fires in Greece as well as offer council and direction regarding other projects here and abroad.

HURRICANE KATRINA FUND: While the effects of this catastrophe are still being felt close to three years later, the Archdiocese through the Department of Philanthropy did immediately respond to this natural disaster. A total of \$988,775 was collected and distributed by the Archdiocesan *Hurricane Katrina Fund* to at least 200 Greek Orthodox families in our Gulf Coast communities as well as others in the greater community who were adversely impacted by the storm. The Department worked closely with the National Philoptochos Society, the Metropolis of Atlanta Philoptochos and IOCC to respond to the tremendous needs of the area and assistance was offered in the form of monetary grants or to purchase appliances and other necessities for families impacted by the disaster.

In addition, the Department mobilized parishes across the nation to put together *Health Kits* (soap, toothbrushes, etc) and *School Kits* (pencils, crayons, etc) which were sent to IOCC for distribution to those most in need in the Gulf Coast. At the same time, our department assembled and maintained a database of offers that

poured into the Archdiocese to provide housing for those made homeless as a result of the hurricanes.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS:

Unfortunately, because of other commitments, the Department has not been able to progress with the implementation of this program. Hopefully, in the year ahead, the Department with the assistance of IOCC will be promoting a National Emergency Planning and Preparedness Program to better prepare the Archdiocese, the Metropolises, the parishes and most especially the faithful for disasters. The events of September 2001, the tremendous devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the wildfires in California, tornadoes and floods in the heartlands of our nation and other calamities make evident our “unpreparedness” to deal with the various crises associated with these disasters. It is the belief of the Department that all parishes of the Holy Archdiocese must take steps to prepare for any disaster which may arise, whether it be an earthquake on the West Coast, more hurricanes along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, additional tornadoes in the Midwest, terrorist attacks, etc. This preparedness will range from: establishing a contact system (one of the difficulties following Katrina was to locate the members of the parishes, especially of Holy Trinity in New Orleans, and which in addition to other concerns, resulted in a delay in offering them assistance); to what steps people should have taken beforehand (copies of all important documents such as insurance policies, licenses, deeds, etc); to coordinating with family members rendezvous points and so much more which will hopefully alleviate some of the impact of the disaster.