



# Friends

NEWSLETTER

St. Augustine, FL ~ 2023

## 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dedication of St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine



His Eminence Archbishop  
Elpidophoros of America in the  
Chapel of St. Photios.

In the presence of Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, the trustees of the St. Photios Foundation wound up the 40th year since the dedication of the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine by recognizing the cornerstone talents of the Executive Director Emeritus Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos, Shrine Architect Archon Ted Pappas, Shrine Iconographer Archon George Filippakis and First Vice President Archon Manuel N. Tissura at the 2023 Pilgrimage Gala.

Archon Dr. Tom Papademetriou emceed the evening program of honors and surprised his godfather, Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos, with a 6-minute vignette clip of the 4-hour oral history interview he had filmed with His Eminence's son, David Mesfin, over the previous Thanksgiving holiday. Resounding applause with a standing ovation followed a clip of David and his family congratulating his father. His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, presented Metropolitan Dimitrios with a handwritten icon of St. Photios written by George Filippakis. George gifted icons of St. Photios the Great to His Grace and Manuel Tissura. Marble statues of the lions gracing the Bridge of Lions were presented to Archons Ted Pappas and George Filippakis. Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos presented Archbishop Elpidophoros with a Waterford cross.

The evening was about to conclude with prayer when, Archbishop Elpidophoros bestowed the Medal of St. Paul upon Executive Director, Pollexeni Maouris Hillier.

*All Photos are provided by Archon Dimitrios Panagos.  
Additional Photos on page 9.*



Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos accepting the  
Filippakis icon of St. Photios from  
Archbishop Elpidophoros of America  
with Pollexeni Maouris Hillier.



From Left to Right: Fr. Sebastian Mot,  
Fr. Martin Ritsi, V. Rev. Fr. Joseph Samaan,  
Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos,  
Archbishop Elpidophoros of America,  
Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos,  
V. Rev. Archimandrite Maximos Politis, and  
Rev. Dr. Nicholas G. Louh



Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

Dear Friends of St. Photios,

On January 7th, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America presided over the St. Photios Foundation annual meeting which was followed by the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala. This was an opportunity for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, through its St. Photios Foundation, to recognize the efforts of those who ‘opened the Shrine’ in 1982.

On January 10, 2023, His Grace Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan and, as such, the see of Xanthos to the rank of Metropolis. *AXIOS!*



Serving with His Eminence, Deacon Petros Gomez, and V. Rev. Fr. Joseph Samaan.

Father Joseph Samaan and I were interviewed by Pastor Matt Whitman for the podcast , the “Ten Minute Bible Study.” Authors Tim Gilmore and Mark Pappas signed their book, *Box Broken Open*, after the Shrine Chapel’s architecture was the subject of Archon Ted Pappas’ lecture. Later that month, a trip to Florida’s west coast afforded a visit to St. Sophia in Winter Haven, Sts. Nicholas, Raphael and Irene in Palm Harbor, St. Barbara in Sarasota and St. Mark’s in Ocala, where rack cards were dropped off, part of the Marketing Committee’s initiative to have a presence in every parish.

For many years, there is a Shrine booth at the City of New Smyrna Beach Annual Heritage Day. Held the first Saturday in April, it begins with a colonists’ memorial at the AHEPA Odyssey monument. In May, Shrine volunteers hosted the St. Augustine Heritage Festival reception, following Diane Jacoby’s portrayal of “Mrs. Antonia Averro.”

Sunday School students from Charlotte, NC, held their annual St. Augustine pilgrimage. The Shrine booth was set up at the Metropolis of Atlanta Clergy Laity Assembly in June. The Foundation sponsored the August 23 Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project (MPCPMP) St. Augustine event, a global commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Abolition of Transatlantic Slave Trade.

We celebrated the Indiction with Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos, Father Sebastian Mot and retreat leader Archon Hagiographos Elias Damianakis. Volunteers provided hospitality for the 3-day lecture series sponsored by oikou.org.

Shrine ecclesiastical and museum folk items are being catalogued into *Archiving the Textiles of St. Augustine*, a multi-year endeavor overseen by Prof. Laura Mongiovi. A collaborative effort is underway with the University of South Florida and the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine for the *La Florida* project, a virtual archive containing data from thousands of original Florida documents dating from 1594-1821.

My hope is that this newsletter reminds those who have visited, of their visits to the Shrine. If you have not made a visit yet this year, *consider planning a trip to the Shrine in the coming year.* For Orthodox Christians, it is the perfect opportunity to visit area Orthodox parishes, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, and America’s oldest city, while at the first National Shrine of our Archdiocese.

Love, Polly

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## HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN DIMITRIOS OF XANTHOS

On January 10, 2023, Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos was elevated by His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the rank of Metropolitan with the title Metropolitan **Dimitrios of Xanthos and Exarch of Lykia**. Upon the news of this, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America called Metropolitan Dimitrios to congratulate him on his elevation. Archbishop Elpidophoros expressed his wholehearted congratulations for this great honor and wished the newly elevated Metropolitan much health, success, and strength from above in the year ahead. In response, His Eminence Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos said, "I am deeply humbled and grateful to His All-Holiness and to the Members of the Holy and Sacred Synod for this elevation. It is an honor that I pray to be found worthy of."



**Dr. Timothy Johnson and  
Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos  
at Flagler College, St. Augustine, FL**



**V. Rev. Fr. Maximos Politis, Dn. Athanasios  
Kartsonis and Metropolitan Dimitrios of  
Xanthos in the Chapel of St. Photios**

In 1981, Archbishop Iakovos appointed James G. Couchell as the Executive Director of the St. Photios National Shrine in St. Augustine, FL. In 1983, he was ordained to the Diaconate and to the Priesthood. Fr. Dimitrios was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite in 1985. While serving the Shrine, he was asked to assume, also, responsibility for the Foreign Mission efforts of the Archdiocese. Two years later this became the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, an inter-Orthodox ministry under the umbrella of SCOBA.

In May 1987, Father Dimitri adopted 13-year-old Nikita David Mesfin, a Greek Ethiopian child from Addis Ababa. A college graduate, Nikita is now a Creative Art Director in Long Beach, CA. He and his wife, Dr. Hawani Negussie, have two children.

In 1998, Fr. Dimitrios was elected Bishop of Xanthos by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Following his ordination to the episcopacy at the St. George Cathedral in Philadelphia, PA, Bishop Dimitrios was called to return to the Archdiocese in New York City, where he served as an auxiliary bishop to Archbishop Spyridon and then to Archbishop Demetrios. He was appointed Ecumenical Officer, responsible for the Inter-Orthodox, Inter-Christian, and Interfaith relations of the Archdiocese. At the same time, he served as General Secretary of SCOBA while also serving on the Executive Committee of the NCCC, on various committees of the WCC, and on the Board of the New York City Council of Churches.

In his 60 years of ministry to the Church, he has played a major role in the founding and nurturing of several Archdiocesan and inter-Orthodox ministries still active today including, but not limited to, being a founder of the OCF (Orthodox Christian Fellowship), founding editor of the Orthodox Observer, founding Executive Director of the St. Photios National Shrine, and founding Director of the OCMC (Orthodox Christian Mission Center). After 43 years of a diverse ministry within the holy Archdiocese, His Eminence, who retired in December 2007 to his home in St. Augustine, FL, remains active in his home parish of Holy Trinity and the Board of Trustees of the St. Photios Foundation, Inc.

## Thank You Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos

Archbishop Elpidophoros appointed Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos to the position of Hierarchal Proistamenos of St. Photios National Shrine on August 29, 2019. During his first week, he represented the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese at the funeral of Ret. Bishop Snyder, the Catholic bishop of St. Augustine diocese who officiated at the opening of St. Photios National Shrine with Archbishop Iakovos of blessed memory in 1982.

His Grace streamed regular monthly and special services throughout the year, working with various chanters, clergy and the Shrine chaplain, Father Maximos Politis. He launched the annual Christmas Open House and Vasilopita.

His Grace optimized the physical layout of the sacristy, saw to every detail required, and personally transported most of the ecclesiastical items to Greece for refurbishment.

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos presided over the unveiling of the Ioannis Giannopoulos statue in the Garden of Educators at the Oldest Wooden Schoolhouse and with the beneficence of Stella Kokolis, president of the Pan Greek Federation of Teachers, instituted a Greek language essay contest in blessed memory of Metropolitan Iakovos of Chicago



**Memorial service/procession to the Tolomato Cemetery where wreaths were placed at the tomb of Mary Giannopoulos Darling.**



**The Kalanta with the Children of Holy Trinity parish in St. Augustine.**



**Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, receives on behalf of the trustees of St. Photios Foundation, a gift for the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegial Monastery of the Holy Trinity in honor of its founder, St. Photios the Great from St. Photios Shrine Hierarchal Proistamenos, Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos.**



**Filming on location with the crew from Spectrum Films.**

His Grace launched a children's drawing contest in conjunction with the annual commemoration of the Fall of Constantinople.

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos served on the Interfaith Council of St. Augustine locally and worked closely with the Catholic Diocese. He initiated educational opportunities with professors at Flagler College, Fordham University and Stockton College (the Greek Bicentennial exhibit).

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos produced several films during his three years here. His cooking shows were popular and his collaborations with Spectrum Films were award winning. Media savvy, His Grace interviewed and was interviewed many times with Gregory Pappas (Pappas Post) and the V. Rev. Father Eugene Pappas, ("Matters of Conscience," on WNYE COSMOS FM Hellenic Public Radio).

This is a sampling of the ministry of His Grace during his assignment. Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos communicated with us on March 15, 2023, that his service as Shrine Hierarchal Proistamenos concluded as his request for retirement from active ministry was accepted by the Holy Eparchial Synod. *We thank His Grace for all his contributions to the Shrine and we wish him all the best in all his endeavors. God grant him many years.*



## Happy Birthday Helen Tsintolas!

With the Grace of God, Helen Kalavritinos Tsintolas will be celebrating her 101<sup>st</sup> Birthday on October 29, 2023. Born in Washington, D.C., from prominent Greek immigrant parents from Sparta, Greece, Helen was celebrated at her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party hosted by her children, Cassandra and Efstratios “Stratis” and her three grandchildren who joined with over 100 of her closest family and friends to honor this Matriarch of a large and distinguished Greek-American family.



Her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party celebration included taped video well wishes from His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros and a presentation by Helen’s parish priest, Father Steven Zorzos, from Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Washington, D.C., who described Helen’s many philanthropic and financial contributions to Saint Sophia and the other seven surrounding parishes in the Washington, D.C. area. Of her many accomplishments for Saint Sophia, her most significant contribution is her in-depth research and reconstruction of the priests’ lineage who had served Saint Sophia since its founding in 1904, which led to her discovery of Saint Sophia’s first full-time priest, Father Joachim Alexopoulos who was later elevated to Metropolitan Archbishop of Volos, Greece. Credited with having saved over 800 of Volos’s Jewish population from the Nazis, he is honored in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and as Righteous Among the Nations in Jerusalem’s World Holocaust Remembrance Center of Yad Vashem. Helen insured that Father Alexopoulos was added to the pioneering priests’ archives of St. Photios National Shrine and became a friend of the Shrine in honor of him.

Helen’s amazing business career began in 1942, she was the first woman licensed real estate broker in Washington, D.C. She held that license for 74 years, and she held her Maryland real estate broker license for 65 years. Married in 1950, she and her late husband Demetrios “Mimis” established what became the successful Tsintolas Realty Company that continues to this day under the leadership of their son Stratis.

Helen and Mimis had a deep commitment and dedication to the Greek Orthodox faith and the promotion of Hellenism. They supported many philanthropic works that contributed to the foundation of our Greek Orthodox Church in America of today on the local, national, and international levels, notably as original members of Leadership 100 and contributors to the Archbishop Iakovos Memorial Library.

### *Lighting a Candle for You on Behalf of Your Loved Ones*

The candle represents the Light of Christ, a flame that is a witness to our faith in salvation through Christ. St. Symeon of Thessalonica says that the candle we light represents the purity of our soul because it is made of pure beeswax; the light signifies our prayer, entering into the light of God as it is offered in faith. The light shows reverence and our desire to remain present in prayer even as we continue our day.

At St. Photios National Shrine, many visitors light candles in prayer, some hoping for a miracle, others for understanding, many for both. Prayer requests are answered as quickly as possible and when directed, acknowledgements are sent for it is when we pray, we are together physically, mentally, and spiritually with God. As darkness is overtaken by the light, our thoughts light upon Him. Every name offered up in memory of or in honor for is recorded onto the monthly prayer lists and included on the appropriate lists.

May the Light A Candle program continue to be a resource of peace and comfort; may the lights renew souls as we recall the hymn chanted at the end of each Divine Liturgy: "We have seen the True Light! We have received the Heavenly Spirit! We have found the True Faith! Worshiping the Undivided Trinity, Who has saved us." Participate in this program by visiting <https://stphotios.org/light-a-candle/>.

## Archbishop Athenagoras Exhibit Opening February 3, 2024



**Archbishop Athenagoras  
War Relief**

Special museum exhibitions are prepared over the course of time with meticulous attention to detail, involving many people in the process. Many Shrine pilgrims plan their annual visit year to year expecting to see the new exhibit, knowing it is up for a full calendar year.

Subjects for exhibits are planned every five years. The final exhibit topic of the 2018-2023 schedule is *Archbishop Athenagoras of America, 1931-1949*. It was due to open February 28, 2022, the 90th anniversary of the Enthronement of His Eminence as primate of North and South America. There was great disappointment and a sense of failure when the decision was made not to meet the second deadline of February 28, 2023. Finally, the installation of the Archbishop Athenagoras of America exhibit is here.

It was through reading firsthand accounts of the effect of this charismatic leader that photos and excerpts could begin to highlight the dynamic ministry of His All Holiness during his tenure as Archbishop of America. Archbishop Athenagoras of America brought the Orthodox Christian church from obscurity into mainstream America. Though I personally never met this unforgettable cleric, literally hundreds of people have shared stories with me about their personal encounter. From my Sunday School teacher Christos Larios who met him at his parents' home in Kingston, NY at the impressionable age of ten, to Shrine Foundation Trustee Vannette Carousis whose family became His All-Holiness' family, hosting him in Asbury Park, NJ while Archbishop, to sharing holidays with him in Constantinople when Patriarch.

The exhibit will formally open on February 3, 2024. I thank Shrine historian, Dr. William Samonides, His Grace Bishop Ioachim of Amissos, Rev. Dr. Anton Vrame, Dr. Menios Papadimitriou, Vannette Carousis, Vasiliki Rousakis, Cliff and Theo Argue and the NYTimes archives for their time and assistance.

The books read and/or referred to in my quest for more information about this charismatic leader included: *From Mars Hill to Manhattan* and *The Odyssey of Hellenism in America*, both by the Rev. Dr. George Papaioannou; *A Man Sent By God* by Demetrios Tsakonas; *Dialogues with Patriarch Athenagoras* by Olivier Clement, translated by Jeremy N. Ingpen; *Athenagoras I, Our Great Patriarch* by Xenophon Diamond; *Patriarch Athenagoras I, From Death to Life and From Earth to Heaven* by Father George Dimopoulos; and *Pomfret, the Golden Decade* by George Poulos.

“Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras is one of those rare hierarchs who has shaped profoundly and permanently the destiny of world Orthodoxy. Fifty years after his blessed repose, Orthodox Christianity still lives into his vision.” *Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, excerpt from the foreword of Dialogues with Patriarch Athenagoras by Olivier Clement, translation by Jeremy N. Ingpen.*



**Parish Visit to Newport News, VA**



**1938 Pastoral visit to Hollywood, CA**

## St. Photios Friends Program

The St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine's annual membership drive officially begins every year on October 1st. The chair and spiritual advisor to this Foundation Committee are the Metropolis of Chicago representatives, Joanne Stavrakas of St. Demetrios, Chicago, and Father Panteleimon Dalianis of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church in Wauwatosa, WI.

"Membership support is essential to the viability of St. Photios National Shrine," executive director Polixeni Maouris Hillier said. "It is part of the revenue income depended upon throughout the year. Membership monies provided essential unrestricted funding for special programs in 2023 including the monthly Saturday meal offering to the local homeless shelter, the Archons' Lecture Weekend with iconographer Archon Elias Damianakis and an evening presentation reflecting the work of Shrine architect Archon Ted Pappas and author Dr. Tim Gilmore. Gilmore, who with Mark Pappas wrote the book, *Box Broken Open, the Architecture of Ted Pappas*.

Mrs. Stavrakas who has been involved with the Friends Committee since 1990 said, "The Shrine reaches beyond St. Augustine and NE Florida and will continue to do so for generations to come with membership support."

Friends of St. Photios include individuals, families, organizations, and parishes. All members may book the Shrine for a personal event. All Friends receive the annual newsletter and updates via email. To become a member of the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine, call 904-829-8205 for a membership brochure or visit [www.stphotios.com](http://www.stphotios.com). *It is also the perfect gift for the person who has everything.*

The St. Photios National Shrine is open to the public with no admission fee from 10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday through Saturday. It is located at 41 St. George Street in the Colonial Quarter of St. Augustine, FL.

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### Fr. Panteleimon Dalianis – Metropolis of Chicago

Fr. Panteleimon grew up in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, attending St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Des Plaines, IL. He received his bachelor's degree from Purdue University and his Master's degree from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

He began his full-time pastoral work in 2003, working as the youth director/lay assistant at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Town & Country, Missouri. In the fall of 2006, he was ordained to the holy priesthood. Fr. Panteleimon was transferred in January of 2007, to serve as associate pastor at Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Palos Hills, IL.

His associate pastorship ended in August of 2010 when the Metropolis called him to serve the parish of St. Basil Greek Orthodox Church in Chicago, IL. Father served there for just short of 7-1/2 years, leading the parish through a devastating fire which occurred in March of 2013. Father also helped the parish begin what has turned into a highly successful and innovative prison ministry.



Fr. Panteleimon Dalianis

Fr. Panteleimon has been serving at Sts. Constantine and Helen Church in Wauwatosa since November of 2018.

He and his Presvytera (Konstantina) have been married since 2003 and the Lord has blessed them with five beautiful children: Eleni, Elias, Blaise, Xenia and Trifon. Father was appointed to the St. Photios Foundation by His Eminence, Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago in 2021.



## Greek Landing Day 2023

V. Rev. Maximos Politis, V. Rev. Joseph Samaan and Rev. Fr. Sebastian Mot chanted the Doxology celebrating Greek Landing Day. Mayor of St. Augustine, the Honorable Nancy Sykes-Kline, read the City Proclamation declaring June 26, 2023 a day in which all citizens of St. Augustine were Greek for the day. Greetings were read on behalf of Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, Leadership 100, the AHEPA Supreme President Jimmy Kokotas, and National Philoptochos Ladies President Mrs. Arlene Siavelis-Kehl. A check for \$25,000, the individual Philoptochos chapters' commitment contribution, was presented with the letter from Mrs. Siavelis-Kehl. Recognition was given to the Metropolis chapters of Atlanta, Chicago and Detroit who contributed in the month of June in honor of Greek Landing Day.

As the civic ceremony ended, members of the Browning, Masters, Pellicer and Mickler families remembered with the toll of the bell their family members, original colonists of 1768. Traditional Greek music was provided in the Courtyard by Takis Andriotis, and the dancing began with historic reenactor Mark Lasoff dressed in the traditional Evzone uniform.



**Denise Brown of St. Barbara  
Philoptochos, Daytona Beach, FL.**



**Greek Landing Day 2023 DJ Takis Andriotis**



**Greek Landing Day 2023  
Effie and Evzone Mark Lasoff**



**Greek Landing Day 2023 Vanna Andrioti  
leading the Kalamatiano.**



**GLD Hospitality Team  
Penelope Cruz, Denise Brown and  
Christy Xynidis**



**St. Photios Foundation, Inc 2nd Vice President,  
Archon Anthony Megas and Denise Brown of  
Daytona Beach hosting the  
2023 Greek Landing Day Reverse Raffle.**



# 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dedication of St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine



Archbishop Elpidophoros of America officiating at Great Vespers marking the 40th Anniversary of the St. Photios Shrine.



Traveling to the Shrine for Great Vespers Archbishop Elpidophoros with Archon Anthony Megas.



Archon Lou Politis, Polly Hillier, President of the Metropolis of Atlanta Philoptochos Irene Politis, Allan Hillier, Joanne, Dean, Dino & Symeon Stavrakas.



AHEPA Supreme President Archon Demetri Kokotas, Hon. Loukas Tsokos, Consul General of Hellenic Republic, Tampa and AHEPA Executive Director, Basil Mossaidis.



Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos.



St. Photios Shrine Executive Director Polexeni Maouris Hillier receiving the Medal of St. Paul from His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America.



Archon Dimitrios Panagos with Archon George & Mary Filippakis.



Christina Paspalakis, Denise Brown, Ron Hilliard and Helen A. Carlos.



Executive Director Polexeni Maouris Hillier, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos.



Archon Ted Pappas, Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos and Archon George Filippakis.



His Grace Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos with Michael, Anna, Angeliki and Andrew Lekos.



## Congratulations to our Youth

2023 Metropolitan Iakovos Memorial Greek Language Scholarship Essay contest awards were won by Ava Savvis of Westfield, NJ, Yiannis Mendes of Dunlap, CA, and Christos Argyropoulos of Hoover, AL.

In the 2022 Kathie D'Anna Memorial English Essay Contest, Vasilia Boukis of La Grange, KY won in the senior division and Emily Gougousis of Wayne, NJ won in the junior division.

Sophia Koutsoupas of Holy Trinity Cathedral, Charlotte, NC won the juried 2023 Shrine Drawing Contest. Open to those of 9-12 years of age, children were asked to draw the Walls of Constantinople, an architectural marvel, the line of defense begun by Constantine the Great. It was the largest and strongest barricade built in either the ancient or medieval worlds, an effective defense line for 800 years.



2023 Drawing Contest winner Sophia Koutsoupas

The Trustees are grateful to the benefactors of these three opportunities. The drawing contest has been underwritten by William, Pamela, and Michael Toundas of Jacksonville, FL; the 2023 Greek essay contest was underwritten by Stella Kokolis of Brooklyn, NY and the Kathie D'Anna Charitable Foundation continues to support many Shrine programs including the English Essay Contest.

## St. Photios Gift Shop and Book Store



This is the place to find unique gift items, jewelry, icons, music, crosses and books on Orthodox Christianity and Greek American history. Open daily from 10-5:00, this gift shop has been the template for parish book stores. Many know that the St. Photios Chapel is referred to as the Jewel of St. George Street but much research goes into building an inventory that reaches out to seekers, catechumens, and cradle Orthodox. Vendors include a number of Orthodox publishing houses including Holy Cross Press, Ancient Faith and St. Vladimir's Seminary. The popular children's books include titles from Potamitis Publishing. Come to the shop for the full experience. A sampling of the inventory can be found on line on the Shrine website, [www.stphotios.org](http://www.stphotios.org).

## New Books and a Book Discussion Group

Hours of intimate conversation between a strong ecumenical leader and a brilliant theologian become public in the book, *Dialogues with Patriarch Athenagoras* by Olivier Clement, translated by Jeremy N. Ingpen. The Foundation will host a Zoom book discussion group on Thursday, January 18, 2024. The invitation will be on the Shrine website and Facebook page January 5.

The third printing off the English edition of *The New Smyrna Colony: An 18<sup>th</sup> Century Odyssey* by Dr. Panagopoulos and the second printing of the Greek edition are now available.

*Search and Find*, children's and junior editions, along with many other items including children's prayer cubes and prayer ropes can be easily shipped to your home in time for Christmas! Call 904-829-8205 to place your order.



The Greek edition of the *New Smyrna Colony*



## The Chapel Ministry at St. Photios by the V. Rev. Father Maximos Politis



St. Photios Chapel

Paraklesis, in ecclesiastical language, means supplication. But it also means consolation. The Church holds the Paraklesis, where the faithful convey their requests to the Virgin Mary, but at the same time, they seek consolation from the Mother of God.

On July 28<sup>th</sup>, near the close of the monthly Paraklesis service held in St. Photios National Shrine I noticed a lady seated next to the chanter stand, carefully watching. At the close of service, I asked where she was from, her place of origin, how she found the service. Smiling, the lady gave me all the answers:

"I am originally from Iran, and I came to America 40 years ago. I'm in town for a few days. But every time I had decided to make a pilgrimage to the Shrine, something happened to me, and I postponed the visit. Today I postponed all my work so that I could finally come. And that's how I happened to find myself at the Paraklesis. You don't know how much I loved it. I will try to come more often."

She took the contact information of our local parish, Holy Trinity, and left happy.

I was ready to leave, as a couple entered the chapel. I welcomed them, and they soon put the question to me, the reason I moved from Greece to America. Cancer, I told them. I had a difficult oncological problem. The healing, and everything else that followed, was God's plan for me to stay in this country.

On hearing this answer, the gentleman appeared to be moved. "Recently," he said, "I was diagnosed with esophageal cancer." He was not Orthodox but came to pray for his illness. "How glad I am to talk to a priest who went through what I'm going through now and is now healthy." And he continued: "It's different to read about cancer, than to have the opportunity to speak directly with someone who has gone through these situations yourself." We talked a lot, laughed, I patted him on the back and said goodbye.



Fr. Maximos with  
Protopsaltis Nick & Sophia Pappadis.

The Paraklesis-Supplication-Consolation was not over. I just crossed the street and was about to cross the park to get the car. On the sidewalk, I see a young lady on a bicycle. She was followed by her two children, each one on his bicycle. They stopped me.

"Is there a way to go to the fort by bike?" the lady asked. I showed them the way, and the conversation began. "I know about the Orthodox Church," the lady said. "We have Easter on different dates, you dye red eggs and have specific Easter customs." I replied that I was glad to hear she knew all this. Pleased, she promised to visit our church's Facebook page to keep up to date with our activities.

I arrived at the parking lot. What a day that was! A Paraklesis full of meaning. *Supplication* but also *Consolation*. For the *faithful* as well as for the *priest*.

## Are You Included on the Wall of Tribute?

The Wall of Tribute is a visual acknowledgement of special donations received at St. Photios National Shrine. Appointed by Archbishop Elpidophoros to the St. Photios Foundation as a Direct Archdiocesan District Trustee in 2019, Archon Nicholas J. Furriss, serves as the chair to the Wall of Tribute committee.

At the beginning of each year, contributors offering gifts of more than \$2,000 over the past year, are inscribed on the museum wall. Archon Theodore and Filitsa Vlahos, Archon Jimmy Kokotas, Nick and Gigi Nichols, Dennis and Joyce Kekas, George Diamantis, George and Vasilia Antonaklas are 2023 subscribers so far. To be included in the 2023 class of inscriptions, an intent to be included must be received by December 31, 2023.



The Wall of Tribute was designed by Shrine architect Archon Ted Pappas who said, "This wall is meant for all generations as it is representative of a timeless and lasting legacy. All Hellenes and Philhellenes have a place here as do all immigrants and children of immigrants." More information and the subscription form can be found at <https://stphotios.org/wall-of-tribute/>.

## Visit the *Ways to Give Page* on the St. Photios National Shrine Website

The St. Photios Foundation, Inc. manages the Archbishop Iakovos Endowment Fund which has grown to over \$3M dollars in 20 years. A percentage of the income and capital gains realized generated from the corpus provides operational revenues toward sustaining our National Shrine.

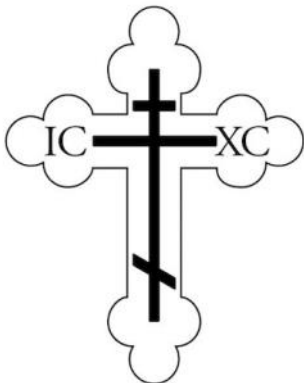
With your assistance, this endowment will know no bounds. Your beneficence contributes to the steadfast financial stability of this sacred and historic site. Visit <https://stphotios.org/ways-to-give/> when considering a Shrine donation or legacy gift.



Every legacy gift that has been received at St. Photios National Shrine has had an impact on the financial wellbeing of the Shrine and has reflected that individual and family's desire to leave a lasting contribution on the Shrine. For further discussion, please call St. Photios National Shrine at 904.829.8205 and ask for Polly Hillier.

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### Memory Eternal Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, 2022-23 + Friends



Helen Yeatropoulos  
Konstantina Kamps  
Dr. William J. Cakmis  
Bethany Gregory  
Nick Gregory

Spero James Saxon  
Chresanthe Lemieux  
John Hadjilogiou  
Mary Georgia Roman  
Constantinos "Gus" Kopelousas



## Shrine Facts and Notes about its Avero House

Named for Ecumenical Patriarch Photios the Great, a patriarch has never visited the Shrine.

The Avero House went through reconstruction after the original domicile was burned by South Carolina's Governor James Moore during the Siege of 1702. After 58 days, the British retreated, but as they left, they burned the entire city to the ground.

The Avero Family identified as criollo (a person born in Spanish America but of European, usually Spanish, ancestry).

Five different archaeological teams excavated the property between 1971 and 1977. Over 1,000 artifacts were catalogued with the majority stored at the University of Florida and 30 on exhibit in the Shrine museum.



Artifacts found during the 1977 excavation on display at the St. Photios National Shrine and Museum

The property has a backyard fenced by a coquina and stockade fence.

The trees as you enter the Constantine Sisters Courtyard are East Palatka hollies, indigenous to NE Florida.

The Shrine is an institution of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and a National Commitment of the National Ladies' Philoptochos Society. Over the past 14 years, Philoptochos chapters have contributed over \$275,000 to St. Photios National Shrine.

The clergy, parish councils and members of Philoptochos of the three area Greek Orthodox parishes rotate chairing the yearlong activities of the Shrine and have done so for the past 42 years!

Every trustee of St. Photios Foundation, Inc. is also a member of one or more of the following organizations: Order of St. Andrew Archons, an AHEPA family or Philoptochos.

The Shrine is open 7 days a week from 10-5:00 p.m. with a few exceptions during the year including Christmas Day and Orthodox Easter Sunday.

### St. Photios National Shrine Church Supplies

**National Shrine Church Supplies (NSCS)** was established to help the St. Photios National Shrine become a self-sustaining institution of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America by accessing high quality ecclesiastical products for churches throughout America, at competitive prices.

NSCS offers a diverse selection of candle sizes and types at the best price available. All proceeds from purchases aid in maintaining this sacred and historic National Shrine. Visit our online store at: <https://stphotios.org/shop/> or place an order with Shrine Manager, Gina Bingman, Monday through Friday, 8:00 – 4:00 at 904-829-8205 or by emailing her at [churchsupplies@stphotios.com](mailto:churchsupplies@stphotios.com).

The increase in cost of petroleum products as well as other inflation factors have had an impact on inventory prices. We continue to provide the best price possible and thank you for your understanding and continued support of this Shrine ministry.



## Indiction 2023 Lecture Series by Archon Elias Damianakis



Archon Elias Damianakis, Fr. Sebastian Mot, Metropolitan Dimitrios of Xanthos, and Polly Hillier with lecture attendees

In the heart of St. Augustine, Florida, a historic gathering took place that celebrated faith, history, and the indomitable spirit of the St Photios Shrine. The *Inaugural Indiction Lecture Series* weekend, hosted by the St. Photios National Greek Orthodox Shrine, was a monumental occasion that brought together the devout, the curious, and the seekers of knowledge in Christ.

The weekend began on Friday, September 1st, in the presence of: His Eminence Metropolitan Dimitrios (Couchell) of Xanthos and Father Sebastian Mot with the resonant echoes of the Indiction service, a sacred New Year prayer service that marks the beginning of the Orthodox ecclesiastical year. The service was followed by the reading of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch's Encyclical for the environment, setting the stage for a thought-provoking exploration of *Orthodoxy and the environment*. "Every act of war is also a war against Creation, as it poses a grave threat to the natural environment." The message refers explicitly to the

Russian invasion of Ukraine, "which is associated with horrific ecological devastation."

Attendees delved into the vital role that nature plays in the liturgical life of the church, considering the place of man from conception to death and the sacramental ecology encompassing the church building, grounds, arts (iconography, marble, woodcarving...), holy water, baptism, Chrism, the Eucharist (bread, wine, water...), koliva, and much more.

Saturday, September 2nd, was a day of enlightenment as Archon Elias Damianakis took center stage. With his captivating lecture, "*From Archon to Ecumenical Patriarch*," Archon Elias unveiled the fascinating journey of Saint Photios the Great, showcasing his various Archon titles and his remarkable yet tumultuous tenure on the First Throne of Orthodoxy Constantinople, New-Rome.

Archon Elias shared the story of his path into the world of Orthodox Art, a journey that commenced in 1983 and culminated in a remarkable 13-year apprenticeship under the tutelage of the esteemed master iconographer from Crete, George Filippakis. Archon Elias also paid a heartfelt tribute to master Iconographer Archon George Filippakis, recognizing the monumental masterpiece that is St. Photios Chapel, an embodiment of faith, artistry, and history. His words resonated deeply, emphasizing that Byzantine Art is not merely an art form but a universal Christian inheritance, reminding us of the cultural and spiritual treasures within our grasp.

The final day of the lecture series witnessed Archon Elias Damianakis in a lively conversation and Q & A session with attendees. Hours passed in engaging dialogue, as he generously shared his wisdom and insights with groups of tourists, pilgrims, and individuals seeking to quench their thirst for knowledge about St. Photios National Shrine, Orthodoxy, and the historic exhibits on display.

Archon Elias Damianakis humbly reflected on the experience, stating, "For me, it was a weekend of growth and a much-needed dose of optimism. There is such a thirst for knowledge of Christ's church." He recounted the myriad of questions he fielded, ranging from the intricacies of iconography to inquiries about what it means to be an Archon, the tenets of Orthodox Christianity, the significance of Saint Photios, and the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

In conclusion, executive director of the shrine Polixeni Maouris Hillier expressed her gratitude, saying, "Thank you, Elias, for the hours you spent sharing your wisdom." Archon Elias Damianakis' words echoed a profound appreciation for the opportunity to shed light on the rich tapestry of faith and history that is woven into the St. Photios National Greek Orthodox Shrine.



Archon Elias Damianakis lecture in the Chapel of St. Photios.



## August 23, 2023 St. Augustine Day of Remembrance

The night of 22 to 23 August 1791, in Saint Domingue, today the Republic of Haiti, saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. From 1501-1866 it is estimated that over 20 million Africans were taken into slavery and over 2 million died enroute, lining the Middle Passage. The Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Project Markers committee added a brick at the New Smyrna AHEPA Memorial in 2014, remembering in their numbers the 150 people of Mediterranean descent who died in 1768 enroute to the New Smyrna Colony.

Executive Director Ann Chinn and I have planned every commemoration to date in the City of St. Augustine. This year, a dynamic committee has emerged including City Commissioner Cynthia Garriss and St. Johns County Cultural Council executive director, Christina Parrish-Stone. We wish them success in all future commemorations.

**Top Right: Day of Remembrance Ceremony at The Gazebo**

**Bottom Right: Remembrance Day Proclamation**



The Flagler College professors within departments such as the Arts & Humanities, History, Philosophy & Religion provide settings outside the classroom for their students each semester.

We look forward to hosting these classes at St. Photios and welcome the upper classmen who include the Shrine in St. Augustine activities planned for first year students.

Each semester a new set of students become friends of the Shrine and Orthodox students find a natural way to engage with parishioners at the local parishes. Some are seekers, many have become catechumen over the years.



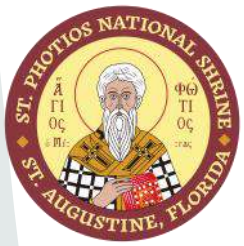
**Shrine Greeter and longtime  
volunteer Connie Gaitanis**

### Staff Changes

We wish Shrine Docent Donna Bechard all the best in her move to South Carolina and Shrine Greeter Connie Gaitanis many more years as she steps back into volunteer status. After three years, Shrine Greeter Michael Lekos has stepped away to fully enjoy his senior year of high school and work in the public sector. With gratitude and love, we wish them well as we welcome Noah Chelednik and Roger Clevenger who began their service to the Shrine in September.



**Shrine Docent Donna Bechard**



## ***St. Photios Foundation Inc.***

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