

# Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17**

**15th Sunday after Pentecost**

**Sunday After the Exaltation of the Cross**

**Afterfeast of the Exaltation of the Cross**

**Martyr Sophia, and her three daughters: Faith, Hope, and Love**

**Tone 6  
Troparion  
(Resurrection)**

*The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb;  
the guards became as dead men.  
Mary stood by Thy grave,  
seeking Thy most pure body.  
Thou didst capture hell not  
being tempted by it.  
Thou didst come to the Virgin,  
granting life.  
O Lord, Who didst rise from the  
dead,  
glory to Thee.*

**Tone 1  
Troparion  
(Cross)**

*O Lord, save Thy people,  
and bless Thine inheritance!  
Grant victories to the Orthodox  
Christians  
over their adversaries;  
and by virtue of Thy Cross,  
preserve Thy habitation!*

**Tone 5  
Troparion  
(Martyrs)**

*Thou didst blossom in the  
courts of the Lord  
as a fruitful olive tree,  
O holy martyr Sophia;  
in thy contest thou didst offer to  
Christ the sweet fruit of thy  
womb,  
thy daughters Faith, Hope, and  
Love.  
Together with them intercede  
for us all!*

**Tone 6  
Kontakion  
(Resurrection)**

*When Christ God, the Giver of  
Life,  
raised all of the dead from the  
valleys of misery with His  
mighty hand,  
He bestowed resurrection on the  
human race.  
He is the Savior of all, the  
Resurrection, the Life, and the God  
of all.*

**Tone 1  
Kontakion  
(Martyrs)**

*The holy branches of noble  
Sophia,  
Faith, Hope, and Love,  
confounded Greek sophistry  
through Grace.  
They struggled and won the  
victory  
and have been granted an  
incorruptible crown by Christ  
the Master of all.*

**Tone 4  
Kontakion  
(Cross)**

*As Thou wast voluntarily raised  
upon the Cross for our sake,  
grant mercy to those who are  
called by Thy Name, O Christ  
God;  
make all Orthodox Christians  
glad by Thy power,  
granting them victories over  
their adversaries  
by bestowing on them the  
invincible trophy, Thy weapon of  
peace!*

**Tone 7 (Sunday After)**

Extol the Lord our God: / worship at His footstool for He is holy! (Ps. 98:5)

V. The Lord reigns, let the people tremble! (Ps. 98:1a)

## The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

The pagan Roman Emperors tried to obliterate the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and rose from the dead, so that they would be forgotten. Emperor Hadrian (117-138) ordered that Golgotha and the Lord's Sepulchre be buried, and that a temple in honor of the pagan "goddess" Venus and a statue of Jupiter be placed there.

Pagans gathered at this place and offered sacrifice to idols. Eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the Christian holy places, the Sepulchre of the Lord, and the Life-giving Cross, were discovered and opened for

veneration. This took place under Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) after his victory over Maxentius (in 312), who ruled the Western part of the Roman Empire, and over Licinius, the ruler of its Eastern part. In the year 323 Constantine became the sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire.



Although Licinius had signed the Edict of Milan in order to oblige Constantine, he continued his cruel persecutions against Christians. Only after his conclusive defeat did the Edict of Milan extend also to the Eastern part of the Empire. The Holy Equal of the Apostles Emperor Constantine, triumphing over his enemies in three wars, with God's assistance, had seen the Sign of the Cross in the heavens. Written beneath were the words: "By this you shall conquer."

Ardently desiring to find the Cross upon which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, Saint Constantine sent his mother, the pious Empress Helen (May 21), to Jerusalem, providing her with a letter to Saint Makarios, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Saint Helen journeyed to the holy places connected with the earthly life of the Savior, building more than 80 churches, at Bethlehem the birthplace of Christ, and on the Mount of Olives where the Lord ascended to Heaven, and at Gethsemane where the Savior prayed before His sufferings, and where the Mother of God was buried after her Dormition.

Although the holy Empress Helen was no longer young, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. In her search for the Life-giving Cross, she questioned both Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful. Finally, she was directed to a certain elderly Jew named Jude who stated that the Cross was buried beneath the temple of Venus. They demolished the pagan temple and, after praying, they began to excavate the ground. Soon the Lord's Tomb was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses, and a board with the inscription ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body (March 6).

In order to discover on which of the three crosses the Savior had been crucified, Patriarch Makarios alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord touched the dead man, he was restored to life. After witnessing the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-giving Cross had been found. Christians came in a huge crowds to venerate the Holy Cross, beseeching Saint Makarios to lift the Cross, so that those far off could see it. Then the Patriarch and other spiritual leaders lifted the Holy Cross, and the people prostrated themselves before the Honorable Wood, saying "Lord have mercy." This solemn event occurred in the year 326.

During the discovery of the Life-giving Cross another miracle took place: a woman who was close to death was healed by the shadow of the Holy Cross. The elderly Jude (October 28) and other Jews believed in Christ and were baptized. Jude was given the name Kyriakos, and later he was consecrated as the Bishop of Jerusalem. He suffered a martyr's death for Christ during the reign of Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363).

Saint Helen took part of the Life-giving Wood and nails with her to Constantinople. Saint Constantine ordered a majestic and spacious church to be built at Jerusalem in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, also including under its roof the Life-giving Tomb of the Lord and Golgotha. The church was built in ten years. Saint Helen did not survive until the dedication of the church, she reposed in the year 327. The church was consecrated on September 13, 335.

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## ✠ The Epistle Reading ✠

### **Galatians 2:16-20**

knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

### **Galatianeve 2:16-20**

duke ditur se nuk drejtësohet njeriu prej veprash ligji, veçse me anë të besimit të Jisu Krishtit, edhe ne i besuam Krishtit Jisu, që të drejtësohemi prej besimit të Krishtit, dhe jo prej veprave të ligjit; sepse asnjë mish nuk do të drejtësohet prej veprave të ligjit. Po në qoftë se duke kërkuar të drejtësohemi në Krishtin, u gjetëm edhe ne mëkatarë, atëherë Krishti qenka shërbëtor i mëkatit? Larg qoftë! Sepse nëse ndërtoj përsëri ato që prisha, bëj veten time shkelës. Sepse unë me anë të ligjit vdiqa në ligj, që të rroj në Perëndinë. Bashkë me Krishtin u kryqëzova; edhe s'rroj më unë, po Krishti rron tek unë; edhe ajo që rroj unë tani në mish, rroj në besimin e Birit të Perëndisë, i cili më deshi edhe dha veten e tij për mua.

### **К Галатам 2:16-20**

однако же, узнав, что человек оправдывается не делами закона, а только верою в Иисуса Христа, и мы уверовали во Христа Иисуса, чтобы оправдаться верою во Христа, а не делами закона; ибо делами закона не оправдается никакая плоть. Если же, ища оправдания во Христе, мы и сами оказались грешниками, то неужели Христос есть служитель греха? Никак. Ибо если я снова созидаю, что разрушил, то сам себя делаю преступником. Законом я умер для закона, чтобы жить для Бога. Я сораспялся Христу, и уже не я живу, но живет во мне Христос. А что ныне живу во плоти, то живу верою в Сына Божия, возлюбившего меня и предавшего Себя за меня.

### **Tone 1**

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. Remember Thy congregation, which Thou hast gotten of old! (*Ps. 73:2*)

V. God is our King before the ages; He has worked salvation in the midst of the earth! (*Ps. 73:13*)

*Continued from page 2*

On the following day, September 14, the festal celebration of the Exaltation of the Honorable and Life-giving Cross was established.

Another event connected to the Cross of the Lord is remembered also on this day: its return to Jerusalem from Persia after a fourteen year captivity. During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Phokas (602-610) the Persian king Khozrôēs II attacked Constantinople defeated the Greek army, plundered Jerusalem, capturing both the Life-giving Cross of the Lord and the Holy Patriarch Zachariah (609-633).

The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years, and only under Emperor Herakleios (610-641), who defeated Khozrôēs and concluded peace with his successor and son Syroes, was the Lord's Cross returned to the Christians.

With great solemnity the Life-giving Cross was transferred to Jerusalem. Emperor Herakleios, wearing a crown and his royal purple garments carried the Cross of Christ. The Emperor was accompanied by Patriarch Zachariah. At the gates by which they ascended Golgotha, the Emperor stopped suddenly and was unable to proceed. The holy Patriarch explained to the Emperor that an Angel of the Lord was blocking his way. Herakleios was told to remove his royal trappings and to walk barefoot, since He Who bore the Cross for the salvation of the world had made His way to Golgotha in all humility. Then Herakleios donned plain clothes, and without further hindrance, carried the Cross of Christ into the church.

## ✠ The Gospel Reading ✠

### **Mark 8:34-9:1**

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

### **Markut 8:34-9:1**

Edhe si thirri pranë turmën bashkë me nxënësit e tij, u tha atyre: Kush të dojë të vijë pas meje, le të mohojë veten e tij, edhe le të ngrejë kryqin e tij, edhe le të më vijë pas. Sepse kush të dojë të shpëtojë jetën e tij, do ta humbasë; po kush të humbasë jetën e tij për hirin tim dhe të ungjillit, ky do ta shpëtojë. Sepse ç'dobi do të ketë njeriu, në fitoftë gjithë botën, edhe të dëmtojë shpirtin e tij? Apo ç'do të japë njeriu në këmbim të shpirtit të tij? Sepse cilitdo që t'i vijë turp për mua dhe për fjalët e mia në këtë brez kurorëshkelës e mëkatar, edhe Birit të njeriut do t'i vijë turp për atë, kur të vijë në lavdinë e Atit të tij bashkë me engjëjt e shenjtë. Edhe u thoshte atyre: Me të vërtetë po ju them juve, se janë disa prej këtyre që rrinë këtu, që nuk do të ngjërojnë vdekje, deri sa të shohin mbretërinë e Perëndisë të ardhur me fuqi.

### **От Марка 8:34-9:1**

И, подозвав народ с учениками Своими, сказал им: кто хочет идти за Мною, отвергнись себя, и возьми крест свой, и следуй за Мною. Ибо кто хочет душу свою сберечь, тот потеряет ее, а кто потеряет душу свою ради Меня и Евангелия, тот сбережет ее. Ибо какая польза человеку, если он приобретет весь мир, а душе своей повредит? Или какой выкуп даст человек за душу свою? Ибо кто постыдится Меня и Моих слов в роде сем прелюбодейном и грешном, того постыдится и Сын Человеческий, когда придет в славе Отца Своего со святыми Ангелами. И сказал им: истинно говорю вам: есть некоторые из стоящих здесь, которые не вкусят смерти, как уже увидят Царствие Божие, пришедшее в силе.

*(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing:)*

### **Tone 8**

*Magnify, O my soul, the most precious Cross of the Lord!*

*Thou art a mystical Paradise, O Theotokos,  
who, though untilled, hast brought forth Christ;  
through Him the life-bearing wood of the Cross was planted on earth.  
Now at its Exaltation,  
as we bow in worship before it, we magnify thee.*

### **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! *(Ps. 148:1)*  
The light of Thy countenance has been signed upon us, O Lord. *(Ps. 4:7)*  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i></p>		
<p>Newly Departed Alex, Newly Departed James, Newly Departed Alqiviadhi, Martha</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the departed]</i> Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the war in Ukraine: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.</p>	<p>September 17 - 23 Jordyn Schaeffer (B)</p> <p><b><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u></b></p> <p>Llukan Dylgjeri – health Michael Mogilevich - health Niko &amp; Kristin Chochelli – Travel</p>	<p><b><u>Church Lectionary</u></b></p> <p><i>Today</i> Galatians 2:16-20 Mark 8:34-9:1 2 Corinthians 4:6-15 Matthew 22:35-46</p> <p><i>Monday</i> Galatians 4:28-5:10 Luke 3:19-22</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i></p>		
<p>Virginia, Denise, Olvian, Marie, James, Alexandra, Andrew, Christina, Louise, Porter, Alvin, Tracy, Kathy, Andrew, Maria, Helen, John, Nina, Sophia, Jim, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angjeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Naomi, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Lester Jr., Natalia, Otari, Lasha, Fr. Nikolas, Llukan, Marina, Sophia, Fr. Maxwell,</p>	<p>Seven-Day Vigil Candles are used for the Eternal Light that hangs above the Royal Doors and are often placed in front of the icons of Christ or the Birth-giver of God. If you would like to donate a Seven-Day Vigil Candle, Please include the name or names of those for whom the candle is donated, and we will place them in this section for special prayers.</p>	<p><i>Tuesday</i> Galatians 5:11-21 Luke 3:23-4:1</p> <p><i>Wednesday</i> Galatians 6:2-10 Luke 4:1-15</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Prayers In General</i></p>		
<p>The community of Ss. Peter &amp; Paul Miami, Fr. Dennis and his family, Fr. Ioan, Christian, Michael, Erica, Kaida, DuDash family, Michael, Robert, Ally, Steve, Jake and Amanda and their children, Katherine, Ron, Anthony, Volodymyr, Nick, Sophia, Michael, Rafael, Bob, Barbara, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe, Alma-Anastasia, Marianthi, Marsha, Ann,</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the living]</i> Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the war in Ukraine.</p> <p><i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i> Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COFFEE HOUR</b></p> <p><b><u>September</u></b> 17 Douris Memorial 24 Tish Deslogese</p> <p><b><u>October</u></b> 01 – 08 – 15 – Tina Tsiadis 22 – Letitia Desloges 29 - Bacon</p> <p>Coffee Hour is a wonderful chance for us to get together to break bread and spend time with each other, to celebrate those whom we have held memorials for, and to come together as the family of God outside of worship. To sign up, to host a coffee hour, contact Fr. Nicholas or Donna Bacon.</p>	<p><i>Thursday</i> Ephesians 1:1-9 Luke 4:16-22</p> <p><i>Friday</i> Ephesians 1:7-17 Luke 4:22-30</p> <p><i>Saturday</i> Galatians 4:22-31 Luke 1:5-25 1 Corinthians 10:23-28 Luke 4:31-36</p> <p><b><u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u></b></p> <p>Sept 17: Wis Sir 49-51 Sept 18: Baruch Sept 19: Ep Jer; Sus; Hymn 3 Men; Bel Sept 20: 1 Macc 1-4 Sept 21: 1 Macc 5-8 Sept 22: 1 Macc 9-12 Sept 23: 1 Macc 13-16</p>

## How Can Suffering Make You Perfect?

September 6, 2023 · Fr. Barnabas Powell

The word “asceticism” is something of a mystery to our modern way of life. We have lived with such plenty and such amazing comfort and ease for so long that now we assume that all of life is meant to be pain (and even effort) free. Just consider our attitudes towards marriage. We assume that marriage is meant to “fulfill us” or “complete us” as if the Hollywood version of romantic love is actually a reality.

An article on the Christian view of marriage is titled “Marriage is a Lifetime of Suffering.” You won’t see



that on any Hallmark card for wedding anniversaries anytime soon. And yet, the idea of salvific suffering is so foreign to us as to be actually offensive to many. But the Christian understanding of life and salvation can be summed up in this quote from Elder Sophrony of Sussex “...in this world, there is nothing more difficult than to be saved.”

What makes it so difficult is our own inattentiveness to our inner life. We don’t know ourselves well enough to see the broken and weak places inside us so we find ourselves slaves to our desires and our passions. That slavery leads us to an addiction to temporary ease and

comfort, and that keeps us weak and childish so that all we do is complain when times are tough. And, for the immature, it seems all times are tough! Have you ever noticed how quickly and easily we descend into complaining and despondency when things aren’t “pleasant” or easy? That is a sure sign we are captured by our passions. The “pain” of our discomfort becomes our greatest gift IF we get up from that weak place and ask God for mercy and grace to strengthen ourselves and grow up in Christ.

Look at our lesson today in Hebrews 2:2-10:

*BRETHREN, if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will. For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, “What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou carest for him? Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

St. Paul here tells us that Jesus Christ was made “perfect” THROUGH suffering (emphasis mine). Now, first, we have to deal with the word “perfect.” It isn’t that Jesus somehow lacked anything because He is God in the flesh so Paul isn’t saying Jesus needed to be made better. No, the word “perfect” here means “complete” or finished work.” The perfection comes in Him completing His task, His mission and He completed His mission THROUGH His suffering. And if we are going to complete our task, our mission

to be made like Him it is going to be THROUGH suffering.

This word “perfect” also gives us the impression of “full” or “well rounded.” It is meant to say to us “Your suffering is giving you an opportunity to grow and mature and to finish your life as a well-lived true and mature person.” Seriously, my precious ones, isn’t that what you want your life to be?

Ask any athlete who has won an Olympic Gold Medal. Ask any person who has achieved some great goal or reached the top of their field and they will tell you it has been through hard work, dedication, and effort. It has been won through suffering. Suffering the dismissal of other choices. Suffering the focused practice until your muscles ache and your face pours with sweat. Suffering hours of practice time, study, or exhaustive repetition until you get it “perfect.” All achievement comes through suffering.

But our so-called “modern” world insists that suffering is “bad.” Of course, this is the siren song of the evil one desperate to keep you from ever seeing your pain as a gift! Because once this attitude shift occurs, all his labors to enslave you and keep you spiritually sick come to nothing and you rise above the weakness of your passions, having disciplined them to become your servants!

And yet, the Lord’s suffering, just as our suffering, is temporary. But that which is won THROUGH suffering lasts forever. The rest of the world mindlessly and vigorously attempts to avoid and escape any appearance of suffering, but we are challenged to embrace it as a dear friend, knowing the endurance of suffering brings perfection and salvation.

Many years ago there was a certain wealthy Greek pagan in the city of Laodikeia whose only daughter suffered from speechlessness, She had been this way since birth. One day, in a dream, he saw a man telling him to go to the holy waters of the Archangel Michael. The man in the dream promised his daughter would be healed and he and his household would find salvation. The man obeyed this vision and his daughter was healed and his family came to Christ. In gratitude, the wealthy man built a church at the site of this miraculous spring and dedicated it to the great Saint Archangel Michael, the Captain of the Lord’s Hosts. This and many other miracles started to convert the pagan population to the Lord’s Church and this greatly angered the pagan priests. This continued for 90 years and the church continued to grow. During this time, a great and faithful man named Archippos became the caretaker of the church there and preached to the populace the Good News, converting more of the people to the Faith. Over and over again, the pagan population fought against the church attempting to destroy the church and Archippos. Finally, they devised a plan to divert the two great rivers that flowed in the area to flood the church and destroy the miraculous spring of water there. St. Archippos prayed and asked St. Michael to guard the church and the spring, and there was a great earthquake that opened up the earth near the church and swallowed the flood coming to destroy the church. So the church was preserved and the people witnessed the power of God. The suffering of the moment produced a greater witness to the faith than if the suffering had not occurred!

Today, are you suffering? Know it isn’t God’s will to make you unhappy or to be in pain, but it is God’s will, since we all face hardship and pain in our lives, to press you THROUGH this suffering moment to the spiritual health and perfect salvation on the other side of your suffering. We who attempt to live a Normal Orthodox life participate in the active choice of an ascetic Christian life precisely because we know “weeping endures for a moment, but joy comes in the morning!”

### **Prayer for the Week**

**O Commanders of the Heavenly Host, we the unworthy beseech you, that through your entreaties you will fortify us, guarding us in the shelter of the wings of your ethereal glory, even as we fervently bow before you crying: “Deliver us from all danger, as Commanders of the Powers on high! “**

## September/October Events

### September

17 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
20 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets  
23 – 6:00pm **Vespers with Bishop Nikodhim**  
24 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy (Education Sunday)  
27 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

### October

01 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
04 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets  
06 – 6:00pm Fun Night  
08 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
11 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets  
15 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
18 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

**Can't join us in person?**

We stream our services on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulorthodoxchurch01810>



## Local Volunteers in Greater Philadelphia Plan 12th Annual Benefit for International Orthodox Christian Charities

Philly Tradition of Banquet and Silent Auction Supports Humanitarian Programs in Ethiopia, Turkey, Ukraine, US, Elsewhere

In what has become an annual tradition spanning more than a decade, Philadelphia-area volunteers are hosting their 12th Annual Banquet to Benefit IOCC at **Adelphia Restaurant in Deptford, New Jersey, on October 29, 2023**, supporting the worldwide humanitarian and development work of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). The Greater Philadelphia Committee is pleased to announce that this year's guest of honor is His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, head of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. His Eminence will address the audience with a special message during the evening's events. The keynote speaker will be IOCC Executive Director and CEO Constantine M. Triantafilou, who will present the latest updates on IOCC's worldwide programs.

This gala event is organized by more than 30 local volunteers who make up the Greater Philadelphia Committee of IOCC. The group represents various Orthodox Christian jurisdictions and reflects the wide support IOCC's humanitarian mission enjoys across the area. Chaired by Mr. Tony Pantazopoulos, the committee has organized numerous successful pan-Orthodox annual benefits supporting IOCC's emergency relief and development programs both in the US and around the world.

**Tickets and sponsorships for this year's banquet are available at:** [iocc.org/philadelphia](http://iocc.org/philadelphia).

Nationwide, individual volunteers and groups like the Philadelphia-area committee raise over \$700,000 annually in support of IOCC's global work.

International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is the humanitarian relief and development agency of the Assembly of Canonical Bishops of the United States of America. Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has provided more than \$800 million in humanitarian relief and sustainable development programs in over 60 countries worldwide. Today, IOCC applies its expertise in humanitarian response to natural and manmade crises in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States, offering assistance based solely on need