



THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

ARCHIEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

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Feast of the Holy Unmercenaries, Saints Cosmas and Damian

November 1, 2020

Πορευόμενοι δὲ κηρύσσετε λέγοντες ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Ἀσθενοῦντας θεραπεύετε, λεπρῶν καθαρίζετε, νεκρῶν ἐγείρετε, δαιμόνια ἐκβάλλετε· δωρεὰν ἐλάβετε, δωρεὰν δότε.

And as you go, proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand! Cure the infirm, cleanse and restore the lepers, raise up the dead, cast out demons. Generously you have received, generously give. (Matthew 10:7-8)

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we commemorate the Holy Unmercenaries, Cosmas and Damian – patrons of our National Philoptochos. These physician Saints are called Ἀνάργυροι – “renouncers of silver,” because they applied their healing arts without ever accepting payment of any kind. Theirs was a health care system that treated the whole person: body, mind, heart, and spirit. Their ministry was based above all in love, and love was always their motivation. How appropriate it is that these brothers are the Heavenly Patrons of our National Philoptochos, for the Philoptochos is above all else a sisterhood of love – love for the poor, whether that poverty is economic, emotional, or spiritual.



Therefore, on this Sunday when we celebrate these wondrous Saints, our National Philoptochos has dedicated their collections that are being taken across the Archdiocese for the needs and the support of the benevolent and philanthropic ministries of our Mother Church of Constantinople. The Ecumenical Patriarchate provides concrete services to orphans and the poor at the Baloukli Hospital and Senior Center. When you offer generously, I pray that each of you offer as to your own mother, with an intention to be of the most help possible. We depend on our National Ladies Philoptochos Society and local Philoptochos chapters for this special offering, and they deserve all our gratitude. Especially in the time of the pandemic, the needs are great and conditions are challenging.

Your generosity is a proclamation that the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived, has come unto the world. For the Lord said that the ministries of healing recognize the gift of God that we have all received, and thus we can give to others. Thank you for your love for our Holy Mother Church, and on behalf of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, I express the deep gratitude of the Great Church of Christ for the ongoing support of the Ladies Philoptochos Society and the faithful of our Holy Archdiocese for these precious ministries.

With paternal love in our Lord Jesus Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America