

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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November 1, 2016

Feast of the Holy Unmercenaries

Saints Cosmas and Damian

*Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least
of these, you did it to me. Matthew 25:40*

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,

Each year we are led by our National Ladies Philoptochos Society in support of the philanthropic ministries of our beloved Ecumenical Patriarchate. These ministries are vital to the needs of many, and through programs for orphans and the poor, as well as the Baloukli Hospital and elder center, the love of Christ is being offered through compassionate healing and care. Following the example of our Lord, Christians down through the centuries have offered a witness of this love through service and philanthropy, and the Holy Unmercenaries we commemorate on November 1, Saints Cosmas and Damian, are examples of this sacred work.

Granted by grace the power to cast out unclean spirits and heal sickness, these holy men gave freely so that others could be free of their infirmities. In showing the love of God through their love of humankind, they led many to faith in Christ so that they could be healed in body and soul. In serving those in need, Cosmas and Damian were also serving Christ.

This is the focus of the philanthropic ministries of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. As help and healing are offered to many in need, the faithful clergy and laity of the communities are serving Christ. Our support of these ministries ensures that this care can be offered freely and that the witness of service reveals the grace and power of God to comfort, to heal, and to give abundant life both now and for eternity.

On this sacred occasion of the Feast of Saints Cosmas and Damian, I ask all of our parishes to offer special prayers for the philanthropic ministries of our Ecumenical Patriarchate and for the ongoing programs of our Ladies Philoptochos Society at the local, metropolis, and national levels. I also ask our parishes to take a special collection on Sunday, October 30 for the National Ladies Philoptochos Ecumenical Patriarchate Fund. This is an opportunity for all of us to participate in these ministries, as well as a time for renewed commitment to our sacred ministry to minister to *the least of these* (Matthew 25:40), to minister to Christ himself, as we serve all who have needs.

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS

Archbishop of America