

Elayna Arbes Pappas

Mother of the Year 2025

It is a joy and a true privilege to speak with you today as we honor a woman who represents the very heart of our church and our Philoptochos Society—our beloved Elayna Pappas, this year's Mother of the Year.

Many of us know Elayna as a quiet, steady presence—always there, always dependable, always serving. But let me take a moment to share just how deeply her roots run in this community.

Elayna was born at Fitken Hospital right here in New Jersey. She is the youngest child of John and Athanasia Arbes and has two older brothers Peter and Spiros. She was baptized in this church and later married here, surrounded by the same faith and community that shaped her upbringing. From the beginning, she was taught that the church wasn't just a place to visit on Sundays—it was the very center of life and family. That value was passed down to her from her parents, who were early and devoted supporters of this parish. Their legacy lives on in her every act of service.

She met her husband, Spiro in 1961, and in 1983, they were married—marking the beginning of a life together built on love, faith, and deep commitment to family and community. Together, they raised two wonderful children, Dean and Alexandra, and just last year her daughter married her wonderful husband Keith right here at our church—a proud and joyful moment for all of us who know and love her.

But what makes Elayna such an integral part of our lives is not just her history, but the way she shows up—day after day, year after year.

She is the face of our Philoptochos Society—not because she seeks recognition, but because she has become the one we turn to. Whether it's planning an event, preparing meals for a fundraiser, supporting a family in need, or simply offering a warm smile and a thoughtful word, Elayna leads with grace, strength, and a heart full of love.

She is kind, generous and always willing to work. She has done it all . She thinks of others before herself and is tireless. She really doesn't stop. She is working the ovens when we are baking from 8am until the last koulouri, paximadi or whatever pastry we are baking is finished. Then she whips out the swifter and begins cleaning.

She is the person we all look to when we're not sure how something is going to get done—because if Elayna is involved, you know it will not only get done, it will be done beautifully and with care.

Her loyalty, compassion, and faith shine through everything she does. She is truly a servant in the most Christ-like sense: not loud, not showy, but deeply, sincerely committed to loving others through action. She has taught us all, by example, what it means to be a Christian woman in service of her church, her family, and her community.

Elayna, on behalf of your sisters in Philoptochos, and everyone who has been lucky enough to serve alongside you: thank you. You inspire us, you lift us, and you remind us what it means to live a life of purpose and grace.

We are so proud to honor you today as Mother of the Year—a title that reflects not just the love you give your family, but the love you've given this entire church family.

Congratulations, my dear friend Elayna this is your day to shine. You make everyone else shine and are always in the background. I am honored to call you my friend and sister.

You are cherished more than you know.