

**To be delivered in church by a teen on
Special Olympics Awareness Day
October 21, 2007**



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Today, throughout our archdiocese, the North American Council (NAC) of Teen SOYO is sponsoring the 28th Annual Special Olympics Awareness Day. For more than a quarter of a century, we, the teens of our Archdiocese, have hosted a week-long camp at the Antiochian Village for Pennsylvania Special Olympics athletes to continue their sports training. Our camp offers a unique experience for the athletes, their coaches and members of Teen SOYO to appreciate God's many blessings. Each year our Teen SOYO coaches arrive at camp expecting to impact the lives of these very special athletes, and ultimately, we are the ones who walk away changed and more enlightened.

Each year NAC Teen SOYO covers the cost of the camp, nearly \$50,000, through the generosity of you, our fellow parishioners. Through the years we have hosted more than 4,000 athletes and coaches. Approximately 500 of our teens have had the rare experience of participating as a coach or volunteer at the camp. This past year we had a little more than 200 participants at camp. The athletes trained in basketball, softball, soccer, track and field, volleyball, swimming, golf, tennis and lifetime sports (bocce, hiking, miniature golf). The evening programs included bowling, a talent show, scavenger hunt, campfire, hayride, movie night -- complete with popcorn and a farewell dance. It was a memorable week for everyone.

The youth of our Archdiocese through the Special Olympics Camp realize the Youth ministry platform of "Living the Orthodox Faith in Christ through Worship, Witness, Service and Fellowship." As volunteers, representing our entire Archdiocese, we offer ourselves in service to make this week an unforgettable one for the athletes. We are very blessed to have the opportunity to serve, pray and play with these special athletes.

Today, we ask for your prayers and your financial assistance to enable us to sponsor the 28th Annual Special Olympics Sports Camp next summer. Your generosity has enabled us to continue this very worthwhile ministry. Lives have been changed, both for the athletes and many of our teens. We, the teens of our Archdiocese, thank God for your ongoing support and the opportunity for us to serve others through the SOPA / SOYO Multi-Sports Training Camp, known better to us as the SOYO Special Olympics Camp. As an expression of our gratitude, we have an icon for you today.

Thank you for your support of the 28th Annual Special Olympics Camp. May God bless you and all of our participants of the Special Olympics Camp at the Antiochian Village.