



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Fifty Five Years Passed

The calendar was saying August 31, 1957, the feast of the Honorable Sash of the Theotokos, and now it just said August 31, 2012. Fifty five years have passed since my ordination to the first degree. It took place at the most respectable Patriarchal Church of Saint George at the Phanar in Constantinople. I still looked like a bridegroom because only thirty three days passed since my marriage on July 28, 1957. And now my ordination is under the light yoke of Christ. I was in school for seven years preparing for the most excellent day. My sweet mother came from Greece because there was a demand from the Patriarch Athenagoras who was her first cousin.

I was shaking like a fish outside of water. Of course, I studied everything letter by letter many times, but the Sacrament of Ordination is miraculous. The most memorable Patriarch Athenagoras would be inside the Holy Altar following everything. The archpriest who initiated the sacrament was a holy and very respectable person, the ever-memorable Metropolitan Iakovos of Iconium. He was the dean of the school (“scholarchis”). Nobody who studied under his time can forget him. He fell asleep in the Lord in Athens by a sickness of blood. He died when was 49 years old.

We arrived to the cathedral and said our prayers. I kissed my wife, and I entered the altar. I kissed the crucified Christ behind the Holy Altar and shook hands with the person in the altar. The Archdeacon of the Patriarchate Evangelos Galanis, a sweet personality, the best Byzantine musician known from the school, undertook the duty to teach me what we shall do in the Orthros and the following Divine Liturgy. One thing I remember very dearly was the water that he poured in the silver pitcher. It was on my hands first in front of the Icon of Jesus Christ and after before the Theotokos, both of which are on the Iconostasio.

The great moment of my ordination arrived. Two deacons took me to the Holy Altar in front of the Holy Table. I had to go around the Holy Table, and all of the people were singing the Dance of the Prophet Isaiah, three very melodic hymns. I knelt in the middle of the Holy Table and felt the hands of the Metropolitan who was doing the ordination upon my head. The moment cannot be explained with words and expressions. I was transferred to another world of angels. The words of the service are superb; the Metropolitan was begging the Holy Spirit to come down from heaven and make me a deacon. After the Metropolitan and the other priests and deacons lifted me up, saying, “Axios,” worthy. I heard the voice of my mother louder than the others saying, “Axios paedi,” to be worthy my child. A new world was before my spiritual eyes. The front of my eyes paraded the wise teachers who gave all of us such affection during those seven years. I saw the people of God outside waiting for us. Christ said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Matthew 9:37).

In the end, the Archdeacon Evangelos told me, “Deacon, according to the orders of Ordination, you should consume the rest of the Holy Communion. When he uncovered the chalice, I saw there was too much for my empty stomach because for three days and nights I kept

a very strict fast. After, at one of the halls, there was a humble reception. There the late Patriarch Athenagoras spoke a few wise words, and after the Metropolitan. His All Holiness called me to say a few words. The Holy Communion gave me the courage and the power to verbalize a few words. I remember I said that I will serve the Church wherever she wants to send me, and I started to cry. This promise that I gave this awesome day was kept very faithfully for fifty five years: first in the Holy Trinity of Peran in Constantinople, second in the Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki, third in St. George in Toronto, Canada and after the Annunciation in the same city. Next, I went to St. Eleftherios Church in Manhattan, fifth in Scranton, PA, the Annunciation of the Theotokos, sixth to St. Demetrios in Upper Darby, PA, and seventh at the Annunciation of the Theotokos Church in Wilkes-Barre, where I still am. And now is the time to say the prayer of Simeon which he said when he saw Christ and held Him in his arms, "Now I am ready to stop..." It would be a great omission if I did not mention the 38 years I taught Orthodox theology in two seminaries, St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary and Savonarola Seminary of the Polish National Church in Scranton, PA. When I had to move, I always followed the preference of the Church.

Your Holiness, "I will serve the Church of Christ wherever the Church will send me." Please pray for me.