

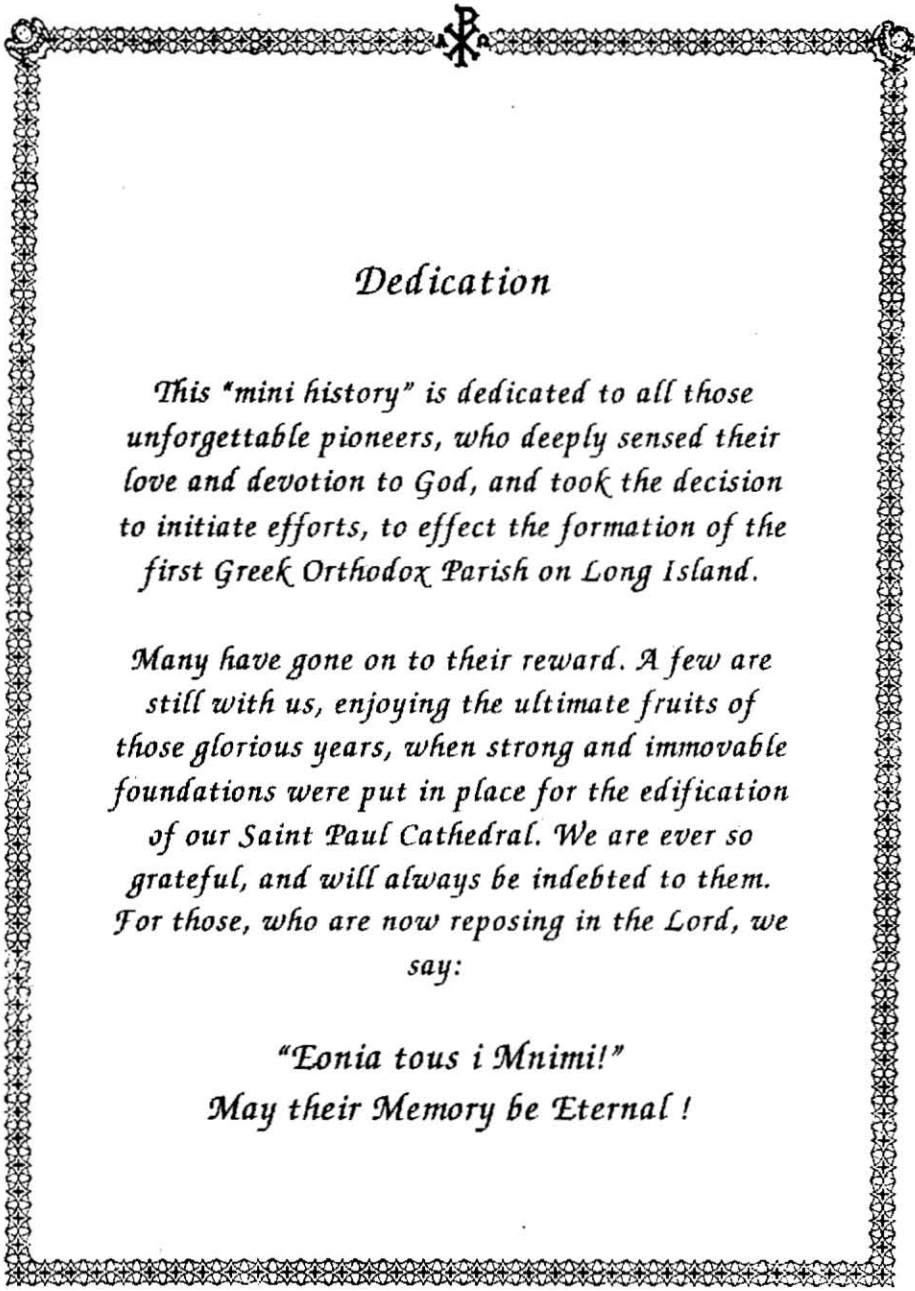
ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

HEMPSTEAD, NEW YORK



... Genesis

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA
1995



Dedication

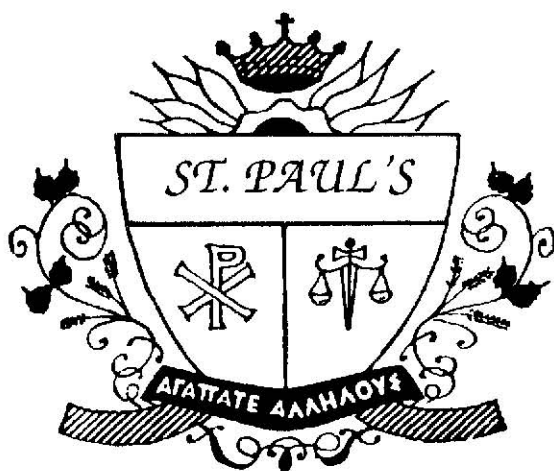
This "mini history" is dedicated to all those unforgettable pioneers, who deeply sensed their love and devotion to God, and took the decision to initiate efforts, to effect the formation of the first Greek Orthodox Parish on Long Island.

Many have gone on to their reward. A few are still with us, enjoying the ultimate fruits of those glorious years, when strong and immovable foundations were put in place for the edification of our Saint Paul Cathedral. We are ever so grateful, and will always be indebted to them. For those, who are now reposing in the Lord, we say:

*"Eonia tous i Mnimi!"
May their Memory be Eternal !*

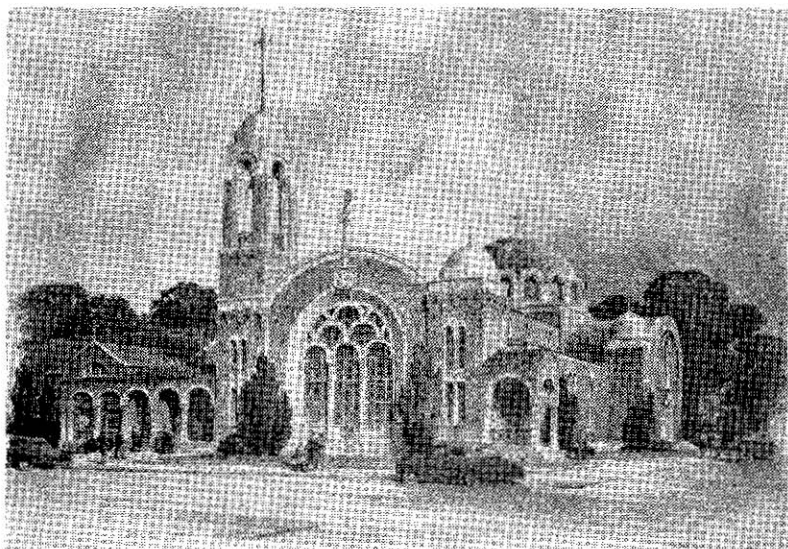
ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

HEMPSTEAD, NEW YORK

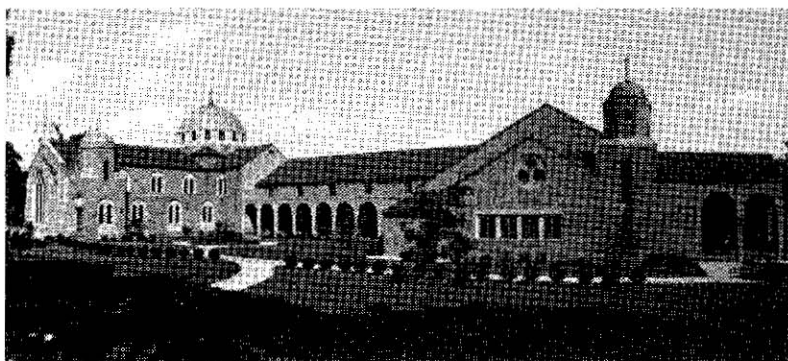


... Genesis

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA
1995



The rendering prepared by Mr. Julian a little over a year, after we occupied our new Building on Greenwich Street.
(Story, page 41)



A photo of our Cathedral, shortly after it was constructed.

Preface

"Leadership oftentimes demands creativity under pressure. This creativity may also be construed as unorthodox".

The history of St. Paul's is yet to be written. However, I thought it fitting on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of St. Paul's to record in this pamphlet the little known, but important facts and events, without which St. Paul's probably would never have attained the enviable position, which it enjoys.

The contents herein *are* factual, and all the events and happenings are recorded as they *did* happen, though not necessarily in strict chronological order.

St. Paul's history has proven that, when the love of God prevails, all things are possible. Love did prevail, from the very first moment. I was privileged to have been assigned to found this Parish, and also had the good fortune to have the full cooperation of all those unforgettable, gallant and loving Pioneers!

We started on the proverbial shoestring, but in seven short years, we gave an example to our Church in America, that all things are possible for those who believe.

We never received huge contributions; yet the many hundreds of our Families contributed with love to build our "*Million Dollar Edifice*," completed in 1958.

It wasn't easy. This achievement represented "blood, sweat and tears"; these immersed in faith, love and dedication from all.

In all humility, I paraphrase the 24th verse of St. John's Gospel, Chapter 21. "*This is the Priest, who is bearing witness to these things, and I know that this testimony is true!*"



+ Fr. George Papadeas

Glory and thanks be to God for all things!

The Strong Yearning

The few Greek Orthodox families, scattered all over Long Island in the early 40's, were no different from the small groups all over America, who had migrated to the U.S., and discovered that their original plan of returning to Greece was altered.

It was these groups of dedicated and selfless individuals, who were responsible for instituting of our Parishes in America. These people worked double shifts, under adverse conditions, with no days off or vacations, in order that they could survive, as well as provide the best they could to their loved ones they had left in Greece. In those days an 8 hour day would have been recreation; their work day was morning to night, seven days a week.

But, being ambitious to succeed, they sought ways and means to become independent entrepreneurs, starting as vendors, and selling varied articles from their pushcarts.

Their lack of English was no impediment. With patience they persevered and succeeded. But, even with this round the clock involvement in their work, and the success in their endeavors, they still felt an emptiness from within. Something basic was lacking. They sensed that their spiritual counterpart was famished. A deep nostalgia was felt for their Village Church, which had been the center of their spiritual life in their respective Villages. Even though the original plan was not to stay in America permanently, they gave top priority to the formation of Parishes. Invitations were quickly sent to the Village Priests to come to serve their spiritual needs in America, even for a few years.

The Greek Orthodox of Long Island were no different. They were motivated by this identical longing. Three pioneers, Nicholas Barbatsuly, Tom Pappas and Homer Piakis, all now reposing in the Lord, took the initiative, and called an organizational meeting on April 21, 1944 at the Court View Hotel, operated by the late Peter Katavolos. The 16 Faithful, who attended, became the nucleus, and the signal was given to form a Community. A temporary Committee elected Constantine Chingos, President, Nicholas Barbatsuly Secretary, and Messrs. Michael Alexandrou,

James Boulukos, Soter Harbolis, Peter Katavolos, James and Paul Stratos and George Zervoulides, as Members. The 16 present at this initial Meeting were from various Villages of Nassau County.

The sub-foundation was laid. The spirited feeling, the propaganda, the visits, and many personal contacts sparked the enthusiasm, which was very vital to constitute a Community. With the invitation of the late Bishop Germanos Polyzoides on Jan. 22, 1945, to preside at a meeting attended by some 250 people in the Episcopal Church in Hempstead, the die was cast. His Grace designated 3 Members to approach the nearest Parish, St. Demetrios in Jamaica, and request permission to institute the first Parish on Long Island. They encountered much resistance, but after repeated negotiations, the Jamaica Parish did grant this request. Finally the formal planning could commence.

Application for Parish & N.Y. State Charters

The Council applied to the Archdiocese for a Charter to be recognized as a separate Parish. This was granted on May 22, 1945. The proposed Parish, was to serve the Greek Orthodox Faithful of Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The greatest percentage of our people lived in Nassau County, and for practical reasons and accessibility, Hempstead, the hub of Nassau County, was selected as the city in which the Community Complex would be built.

There was no time to be lost. At the initial Meeting held in the Episcopal Church in Hempstead on May 22, 1945, the Legal Counsel, Nicholas Lambadakis presented the necessary legal documents to incorporate in New York State as a non-profit Organization. Twenty Members were elected to the Parish Council. The elected Officers were: Constantine Chingos, Pres., Peter Katavolos, V.Pres., Nick Barbatsuly, Sec'y and Soter Harbolis, Treas. On June 1st a decision was taken to commence the drive to be able to purchase a parcel for the future construction of a Community complex.

1st General Meeting & Elections

Plans were made to convene the 1st General Meeting, which was somewhat overdue. On June 10, 1946 this Meeting was held at the Hempstead Elks Club, under the supervision of His Grace Bishop Germanos. During this Meeting the following were elected as Trustees: George Balabous, Nick Barbatsuly, James Bouloukos, Constantine Chingos, Peter Cosmas, James Demetriou, Thomas Hero, Soter Harbolis, Peter Katavolos, James Langis, Homer Piakis, Frank Potamos, Tom Pappas, George Sfaelos, George Stratigos, Paul Stratos, George Tsatsis, and Alex Bellas. Basil Skelos was the first runner-up. These Trustees were representative of Villages of Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

The first major decision made was that the Parish should definitely be located in Hempstead, because of its centrality and accessibility.

At the Parish Council Meeting of June 27, 1946 the following Officers were elected: Constantine Chingos President, Peter Katavolos, Vice. President, Nick Barbatsuly, Secretary and Soter Harbolis, Treasurer. Nick Lambadakis was chosen as the Legal Counsel, and Evangelos Theodore as Accountant.

At the Meeting on September 5, 1946 it was decided to support any Greek School that could be opened. The first commenced on November 14, 1946, in Hempstead, with an enrollment of 28. There was also a Greek School in Freeport supported by the parents of that Village, with Mrs. Helen Pavlakis teaching.

Purchase of the Greenwich St. Parcel

The Pioneer Group having collected \$26,000 purchased a parcel fronting on Greenwich Street, diagonally across from the Hempstead High School, on January 9, 1947.

As Christians, the thought shouldn't escape us, that the Lord at a given time will summon us. It was this thought

that moved nine Council Members, to contribute the purchase price for a section in the Pinelawn Cemetery in Farmingdale for our Orthodox burials. The Community owes them a debt of gratitude for their foresight and generosity.

2nd General Meeting

At the 2nd General Meeting, Nov. 17, 1947 the elected Parish Council Officers were: George Stratigos, President, Peter Katavolos, Vice President, Nick Barbatsuly, Secretary, Basil Skelos, Asst. Secretary. Board Members elected were: Tom Barbatsuly, Alex Bellas, Gus Boulukos, James Boulukos, Constantine Chingos, Peter Cosmas, George Demetriades, James Demetriou, Charles Efthimion, Thomas Hero, George Joannes, Peter Langis, George Manos, Tom Pappas, Steve Pappas, Homer Piakis, Frank Potamos, Paul Stratos, George Tsairis, and George Tsatsis. Nicholas Lambadakis was re-appointed Legal Counsel and Evangelos Theodore, Accountant.

3rd General Meeting

The 3rd General Meeting on January 24, 1949, elected the following to serve on the Parish Council: Nick Barbatsuly, George Balabous, Alex Bellas, Gus Boulukos, James Boulukos, Constantine Chingos, Charles Coffas, Peter Cosmas, James Demetriou, Peter Dimon, Charles Efthimion, Soter Harbolis, Thomas Hero, George Joannes, Peter Katavolos, Steve Pappas, Tom Pappas, Homer Piakis, Frank Potamos, Basil Skelos, George Stratigos, Paul Stratos and George Tsairis.

Of these, George Stratigos, was elected President, Peter Katavolos, Vice President, Nick Barbatsuly, Secretary, and Soter Harbolis, Treasurer. George Tsairis was elected Correspondence Secretary.

Groundbreaking and Loan acquisition

The principal endeavor over the past year had been to solicit funds, approve the Building Plans, and to put out bids for the first building to be constructed. A Community Dance on February 12, 1950, netted the sum of \$8,069.

With the approval of our Loan of \$50,000 at 4% on June 1, 1950, the wheels were set into motion. A few days later, on June 11, His Grace Bishop Germanos broke ground for the future Parish Center and Church on Greenwich St. in the presence of hundreds of tear-laden Members and City Dignitaries. These are historical records, concisely reported here to acquaint the St. Paul Members of the earliest period, covering the first 5 years, prior to September 1950, when Fr. Papadeas assumed his duties.

This first segment of this "mini history" of St. Paul's centers on the historical data, prior to the official functioning of the Parish which commenced on September 1, 1950, when Fr. George Papadeas was assigned by Archbishop Michael to be the Founding Pastor.

Hopes and Dreams Realized

The time had arrived to request a Priest to organize the Parish, and commence regular Services. The year was 1950. It was recognized that the preference was for an American-born Priest, not only for the young generation, but for the many mixed marriages. In those years, there were only two in New York City. Fr. George Papadeas, the assistant Priest at the Archdiocesan Greek Cathedral, and Fr. Theophilos Theofilos, the assistant at St. Spyridon in Washington Heights.

I was no stranger to many Long Island residents, having become acquainted with them from their Cathedral visits, weddings, baptisms, etc. These same people over the years would invite me to all parts of Long Island as far east as Greenport and Hampton Bays for their Sacraments. Also

Mr. Basil Skelos, of Rockville Centre was born in New York City, and grew up in the Cathedral Parish. His Parents were long time Members of the Cathedral. It was he, who was appointed by the Parish Council, to approach me, in the hope that I would accept the position.

Before I briefly describe our meeting with Mr. Skelos, I think it is necessary to mention some important background information, pertinent to that time, and which was to be of tremendous importance and benefit to St. Paul's.

A few Facts about Fr. George's background and experience

From 1942-1950 I was blessed to have been the assistant of a veritable Church Luminary, Fr. Basil Efthimiou of blessed memory. He was the father of our Fr. Milton Efthimiou, who faithfully served as my assistant here at St. Paul's for three years.

In my eight and one half years of service at the Archdiocesan Cathedral, I was so very fortunate to have been taught so much by word and by example. The Cathedral in those years had, and will always have, a unique status among our Churches in America. It was by far the most beautiful of all our Churches then, and all the major Events of our Archdiocese came to pass there.

During the first three years, when I served as a Deacon, aside from my Cathedral duties, I was regularly called to help the late Archbishop Athenagoras, mainly to type endless correspondence, since he knew that I was a touch typist in both Greek and English. Why was I called? Those, who remember that era, will recall, that we were living in lean years. If there ever was a skeleton crew, it surely was at the Archdiocese. But, how else could it have been different, when our Archdiocese derived its income from the "monodollarion?" That is, one dollar per year from each Member of our Communities' families, over 18 years of age.

This service to Archbishop Athenagoras was added experience for me, as also was the opportunity to travel as the Archbishop's Deacon to many Churches throughout the Archdiocese, when he would make his Pastoral visits.

As I continued to work endless hours in the multi-faceted duties of the Cathedral, situations arose which progressively added to my work load. These extra assignment consisted of the directing the two Afternoon Greek Schools, and supervising the Sunday School, which soon became one of the most popular and best attended in the Country, etc.

About this time when the Federation of Greek Orthodox Communities of Greater N.Y. was organized, I was elected Secretary. I also was given the additional responsibility of overseeing the two popular Youth Groups at the Cathedral, the Olympians and Olympiads, which for years were headed by one of the unsung heroes of the Church in America, the late Dr. Nicholas Iliopoulos.

There were no days off for me; the clock just kept ticking away the hours, while I tended to the varied and endless demands made at the Cathedral. These were legion, only because of the Cathedral's unique position among our Churches of America. All these extra assignments though, had endowed me with treasured experience, which one day would be implemented, for the greater benefit of our Church. Would you also not agree that few things in life weigh heavier than experience?

Truly, I tremendously enjoyed working under Fr. Efthimiou. Each day for me, seemed to be a new experience. Nonetheless, as was natural for any creative and energetic person, I dreamed that someday soon, I would be able to have my own Parish.

Over the years at the Cathedral I had been approached numerous times by various Officials, of other Communities, near to, and far from New York City to accept to serve their Parish. I was always receptive to these proposals, but, when they were made to Archbishop Athenagoras, the answer was always in the negative. Consequently I resigned myself, that I was to remain at the Cathedral for the long haul.

The Lord opens the Path

All of us, I feel, are familiar with the popular phrase *"man proposes, but God disposes."* Archbishop Athenagoras was elevated to the supreme Throne of Orthodoxy in the Autumn of 1948. When he departed in glory aboard President Truman's "Sacred Cow" for Constantinople, the Dean of our Pomfret Seminary, our deeply lamented and forever remembered with eternal gratitude, Bishop Athenagoras Cavadas, was appointed the *"Locum Tenens."* of the Archdiocese. He was to govern our Church in America, until the Holy Patriarchate would elect our new Archbishop. This Hierarchy of tremendous stature, whom the Pomfret graduates believe is the veritable Hercules of our Church in America, had many God-given talents, which he always applied. Bishop Cavadas had been the main source of inspiration for the students of Pomfret in those first difficult years. As the Founding Dean of our Seminary he had completely absorbed himself with exemplary devotion to the monumental mission assigned to him. He had dedicated his whole being, and constantly strived for the best possible success.

His appointment as the first Dean of our Theological Seminary, founded in 1937 had to be providential. With his fervent spirit and dynamic personality, to be sure, he succeeded in inspiring the young Seminarians, so that upon graduation they could emerge girded with the panoply of enthusiasm, to serve as Priests in our Communities. Bishop Cavadas verily was my spiritual Father and Mentor during my five years at Pomfret, Conn. Now, seven years later, I was so thrilled to have my idol, the revered Seminary Dean nearby, at 10 East 79th Street. So it was, that once again I found myself devoting additional time in the Archdiocesan offices.

In 1959 Archbishop Michael of Corinth was chosen by the Holy Synod of our Patriarchate in Constantinople, to be the Archbishop of the Americas. Bishop Cavadas was elected to be the Archbishop of Europe, with London as the Seat of the Archdiocese.

It wasn't many months after Archbishop Michael was enthroned, that Mr Basil Skelos came in behalf of the Community to request, that I accept to head the first Parish of the two Counties. This was to be my second assignment after more than eight years, and in essence, my first transfer.

How diametrically different the conditions were in those days. The salaries of the Clergy generally were meager, to put in mildly; I would say, almost sub-standard. The Clergy remuneration in that era was solely a straight salary. There were no benefits, no Social Security, no housing or car allowance, no hospitalization insurance, etc.

When Mr. Skelos met with me over lunch, he didn't have to ask me twice. I was very ripe for a change. I readily perceived the offered position as a real challenge. When I quickly accepted, with no apparent reservation, the natural question was asked: "What would you expect for a salary?" In those days the policy for the Clergy was to accept what was offered. Therefore, I had no considerations or demands.

Mr. Skelos informed me that they had nothing, except the land on Greenwich Street, which had been purchased for \$26,000. He seemed greatly relieved when I stated: *"Bill, for me the Priesthood is a calling; I firmly and deeply believe this. However, there is the matter of taking care of our needs, no one can escape this. Recently, I received a raise, and now my monthly gross salary is \$425. If you can meet this, and include living quarters for my family, I shall be most happy to come to serve, with the blessings, of course, of Archbishop Michael."*

I assumed my duties in Hempstead, and while reading through the past minutes, I had seen that the Council had been prepared to offer 50% more than I suggested. This didn't bother me, for God's Providence had given me this challenge, and I prayed that I would be able to meet it.

Archbishop Michael, having recently arrived in New York, was acclimating himself in his high and demanding position. Truly, I was apprehensive, thinking that he might take the same stand as his predecessor. When I did approach him, he asked me how many years I had been serving as the Cathedral assistant. When I replied "over eight years," he was surprised at the length of time and said, "of course you should go; it is time for you to go and have this new

Community benefit from the years of your experience. I'll prepare your assignment papers right away." Needless to say I was overjoyed.

I had a profound feeling of satisfaction. I felt very blessed and find it so difficult to express the intangibles! From days of old, I had pledged to myself, that in my ministry I would always walk that extra mile for the Lord. Consequently, I dedicated my heart and soul to establish a Parish, which would be a source of pride for all involved and perhaps become a model for any Community.

Let's not forget that we're talking about a period almost two generations back. The Churches were still in the immigrant state and mentality. There was much division and strife. Nonetheless, our gratitude abounds. We are forever grateful to our fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers, because, had it not been for their real sacrifices, we could not enjoy the Church we have today.

When I was assigned to the Cathedral in March of 1942, our Church was far from contemporary. Some people, looked upon the Church, I would say, not too favorably. The dues system was the norm for all the Churches. It was the manner by which Members participated in Her support. This was a bone of contention for some of our constituents, who did not contribute even the basic dues, which were usually \$10 per year. This method of subscription was a take-off from lay ethnic Societies, which our forefathers had organized; but for me, this system had no place in the spiritual domain.

I always felt that the dues system was very inequitable, without any relevance to Biblical teaching. I strongly felt that being very foreign to the Christian concept, the dues system at some point, had to be phased out. It was very necessary that a much different approach be implemented, so as to make the Members digest that they are a *vital part* of the Church, and, as Members of the Church, they had certain obligations. They were the flock, and the Priest was the Shepherd, truly caring for his sheep. This has been my credo, over the 53 years, that I have been privileged by the Lord to serve His Church! Thank God I was not proven wrong.

So many people seemed to get turned off by their perception, that the Church's main message was to ask for money. This, of course, didn't justify their absence from the contribution list, because all people should be supportive of their Church. The fault lay with the Church, which didn't educate the Immigrants, especially at the time the Parishes were instituted. But, then again, how was this to be effected? The Church was not properly organized. All in all though, we haven't fared badly. We must still give much credit to those indomitable pioneers!

I'm a firm believer though, that when people sense the spirit heralded, and when they believe in what the Church program is, how it is presented, and witness that the finances are properly managed, they step forth and contribute; often-times unbelievably. I had witnessed this here and at the Parishes that I have served since.

Arrival at Hempstead

Arriving in Hempstead, I anxiously went to see the property on Greenwich Street. As I approached, I saw the sign stating, that on this site would be built the Greek Orthodox Church of Nassau County. I was so deeply disappointed, to put it mildly, for this surely did not conform to the vision which I had fixed in my mind. (If I recall, the property was less than an acre.)

After this dejected feeling, I drove a few blocks down the same road, and saw open acreage, which was for sale. There was an open field, which was more than adequate for all future planning, and I wondered why this wasn't chosen.

When I later asked one of our enthusiastic Trustees, why the Greenwich Street parcel was chosen over other large parcels in the area, the reply was, that our lot was located across the street from the "center of learning", which was the Hempstead High School. In further personal discussions, I was informed that they had looked at an 11 acre parcel adjacent to the Meadowbrook Parkway, but they decided against it in favor of Greenwich Street. How could I

have openly expressed my utter disappointment? Especially to the Council Members, who were bubbling over with enthusiasm. It would have been so very untimely, and a serious blunder on my part to express my opinion as I felt it.

My mission was to organize a Community; to mould people's souls, and after seeing the lot on Greenwich Street I would surely seek to plant the seeds in a subliminal manner, for the future, as I envisioned it. I made it my work to cultivate and promote strong Community unity, based on the Lord's main teaching: "Love one another." Without question this was my top priority and by the Grace of God, it brought us a rich spiritual harvest.

In my dejection then, as I gazed at the sign and looked at the limited in size property, I made myself a promise, that if I had any say in the future plans, I would not permit the spending of a single dollar, which we couldn't transfer to a future location, if it was in the Lord's plan.

The Parish Center, was already designed. It was to house our Church, until the permanent Church would be constructed adjoining the Parish Center. In the Basement would be our Social Hall for all activities. On the first floor was to be my office, and upstairs a small Meeting Room.

I watched the excavation for the foundation, but without enthusiasm. I was viewing a building program, which to my estimation would be repetitious of the short-comings and failings of the Metropolitan New York Churches.

But, what could I say at that point... and to whom could I say it? The reality was, that I was witnessing nothing but enthusiasm and love for the Project from everyone. To me this was most fundamental and significant for all the present and future endeavors. For this reason, I was careful to express myself in a positive manner, so as not to dampen the prevailing enthusiasm, which is so essential to progress. Inwardly though, I harbored my reservations; and I prayed, that one day I would be justified, and as a result make everyone proud for all time.

The Saving of Thousands (\$\$\$)

Relative to this promise to self, as I mentioned before, as regards to avoid spending for anything, that could not be moved, when that blessed time would come, I can cite here two prime examples, which saved many thousands of dollars, which otherwise would have been lost.

As proven in my mission at St. Paul's, everything that had to do with the Church had to be the best. It was the Temple of the Lord. If we are proud of our homes, and strive to do the best for them, how much more should we strive for the Lord's House. But, we are not always able to accomplish what we want, until conditions so permit.

Mr. Katavolos, like all those Pioneers, was justfully proud when the Parish Center was completed. And why not? They never had a Church in the two County area, and the great need of their soul, commenced to be fulfilled!

When we moved into our future Hall, which presently, and for a few years, would serve as our Church, Mr. Katavolos, the Building Chairman seemed to be the most proud of all. It is true that the Hall was stark white, only because there were no funds available for the paint, and the Sanctuary area was open, because there was no Iconostasis (Altar Screen).

One day, soon after we were in our new Edifice, Mr. Katavolos, who regularly would come to my Office told me to start investigating designs and cost to erect an Iconostasis. I told him that it was premature, that we had no funds, although we could raise these through a special drive, but more so it would not accommodate the new Church when we would build it because of design and dimensions. Hearing all my thoughts Mr. Katavolos, seemed to be insistent, and said we could find the way! We sure could, and the money could be raised, but there two opposite and persistent views. One was for the remaining on Greenwich Street, and the other was for the future relocating. No one wanted an Iconostasis more than myself, but I was not about to make this great mistake!

I was fearful, that it may be proposed at the next meeting, and after the decision would be taken to spend

perhaps \$30,000 for an Iconostasis, I would have a monumental task of trying to reverse the decision. True, I would have objected to this decision, but that would open the avenue for basic disagreements with Council Members, with whom I had strived for unity. I had to act fast.

One of my main hobbies was woodwork and construction. I had a few power tools that came in handy for the Church. I measured the width of the proposed, temporary Iconostasis, which no one would see until it was erected, and the cost of materials was about \$200. Going to our President, Mr. Stratigos, I told him that I needed \$200 for some Church article that I needed right away, and which couldn't wait for the next monthly Meeting. Soon I was on my way to the Lumber Yard to purchase the plywood and the studs.

I cannot recall the name of the friend I had summoned to build the Iconostasis together. God love him. Together we worked after hours, and we had fabricated it. Ten sheets of 4 X 8 plywood can put up a wall very rapidly. I had previously spoken to the late Stavros Glyptis, the painter, asking him to make arrangements on a certain evening and to bring walnut stain, varnish and gold paint. When the construction was complete Mr. Glyptis proceeded to do his work. I never saw hands move as fast as his. We had trimmed the Iconostasis with stamped, fancy mouldings, which Mr. Glyptis painted in gold. It was a beautiful contrast.

I had framed in these gold mouldings the estimated dimensions of the Icons, which would be donated for the Screen. In them I had hung small framed Icons, representative of the Icons, which the talented late Iconographer Theodore Tsavalas would paint. He was the uncle of our Member Telly Savalas, who later would become a Hollywood Actor.

This work was accomplished in a few days during the week. To everyone's surprise the Sanctuary now had the Iconostasis that was missing; not the professional one, but one, that was to serve us for many years, and at practically no cost. At the end of the Liturgy, Mr. Katavolos asked me how this came about. Fortunately, I didn't see him disturbed. I answered telling him that I felt uncomfortable with an open Altar and put this up temporarily, until we ordered the

permanent Altar Screen. Besides, it was the only decoration of that stark looking Hall! Mr. Katavolos was happy with this temporary Screen and the permanent one was put on hold.

Our limited parking area was unpaved. It was not long after it was being used that we had enlarged "pot holes". Again, our Building Chairman said that we must pave the field. No one wanted it paved more than myself, but I was thinking of the thousands of dollars that would be spent and we would not be able to take it with us! I went to our Builder Mr. Jackson and asked him how much it would take to bring in some bluestone and compress it over those "holes." I recall that the cost would be \$300, which I raised and the job was done. Not asphalt, but our lot was smooth. Again, I reassured Mr. Katavolos that this was a temporary situation, and that we would soon be raising funds for this purpose!

Money was extremely tight then, as you can imagine. There was a series of such instances that would have cost several thousands; instead, we improvised and found ways to stretch our funds, in order that we move ahead and apply "permanent improvements" to our future site.

Our First Divine Liturgy

The Council had made arrangements for the use of the small Episcopal Church in Roosevelt, L.I. We had use of this Church for over five months. It was such a great pleasure for me and for all to see the Church overflowing every Sunday. No one though, could have ever imagined the many and varied preparations, that had to be made for each Liturgy, because of the make shift situation. It was trying and taxing to say the least, to make the many adjustments to celebrate the Liturgy after the Episcopal Service, but we thank God for all, and in all.

Life brings to fore many teachings. What one learns in his/her youth comes to use at some time during life's span. I was most fortunate from my young years to have played violin and clarinet for twelve years. I was a member of the Altoona High School Band and Orchestra. This gave

me a rather decent background in music. This would now be put to use. I became the temporary Choir Director, until I could find the most qualified person of our group to lead the Choir on Sundays, but I would continue to conduct the practices.

After the first Liturgy, I asked for volunteers to form the Choir. At least fifteen Young Adults responded, and that very first week we held practice. Much to everyone's surprise and delight, our Choir chanted the hymns of the Liturgy the very next Sunday. After the first Liturgy, I asked for volunteers to form the Choir. I had appointed George Kaftan of Lynbrook as Choir Director, He had a background in music, and a melodious baritone voice. Every week we practiced, and each week we got better, much to the delight of our Congregation and myself.

There's always a Better Way

I cannot be critical of practices, which were adopted, and perpetuated in our Metropolitan Churches from the early years of immigration, but I could not agree with them.

During my years in New York City I had seen so many expressions, which were imitated and accepted routinely. It surely was not for me, the young Priest among the many elderly and respected Priests of the N.Y. Metropolitan area to say anything. But, I did promise myself then, that if I was ever assigned to a Parish of my own, I most assuredly would effect many adjustments, regarding the accepted "traditional" ways, wherever I would be assigned to serve.

I would make these changes, even if my Parishioners had learned certain things, totally different from what they would be seeing. Little did our people know, that the immigrant Priests, who mostly came from the Villages of Greece, while pious and conscientious, had been perpetuating certain practices, that had evolved over the 400 year occupation of Greece by the Turks. I also reasoned, that when these changes would be made, I would perhaps run the risk of creating some enemies.

Little did I dream, that one day sooner than I thought, I would be creating a Parish from the foundation up!

We must remember that those, who initially banded together to constitute the first Community on Long Island, had come from various parts of Greece, as well as from different Metropolitan Parishes. Others, who settled many years ago in various and distant areas of the 135 mile span of Long Island, hadn't attended an Orthodox Church in many years. Some of the above mentioned, had rather fixed ideas, as to what should and shouldn't be done in Church!

It was a challenge to work with this diversity of backgrounds, working at fusing them together in the traditional mould of the Church. It wasn't easy; yet it wasn't hard. I just had to persist and insist, and show love and understanding. I also had to convince my unforgettable and lovable co-workers, those wonderful and selfless pioneers, that the historic ecclesiastical tradition was the only way.

The implementation of these "innovations", which were nothing but the holding steadfastly to the true traditions of the Church, proved me right, and St. Paul's rapidly became a Community of exemplary expressions and practices, second to none.

Ecclesiastical Articles acquired

Our Church had no sacred articles or utensils needed for the Divine Liturgy. Instead of asking for donors Sunday after Sunday, I decided to cut out colored pictures from Ecclesiastical Catalogues and paste them on a large white cardboard describing their use. The cost was listed, and a line was drawn underneath for volunteer donors to choose accordingly, and sign. I prepared this poster, and displayed it in the Episcopal Church Narthex.

Lo, and behold, after only two Sundays all the Articles were committed, and when we moved into our own Church on Greenwich St. a few months later, we were completely equipped through the love and generosity of our dedicated Parishioners.

Parish House purchased

On October 5, 1950 the Parish House was purchased for \$15,000 at 72 Mead Street in Hempstead, which my family was to occupy for the 13 years I served at St. Paul's. A couple of years after, the Parish House sold for \$35,000.

Though not completed, we commence Liturgies in our own Edifice

Although our new Building on Greenwich Street was not completed, it was vitally necessary to at least occupy it on Sundays, because the overflow at the Episcopal Church could no longer be handled. After securing a temporary occupancy permit we celebrated our first Vesper Service on December 23, 1950 and the Divine Liturgy on the 24th. What a bountiful Gift the Good Lord had bestowed on our young Community at Christmastime! How difficult it was to hold back the tears!

The enthusiasm generated, seemed to always be on the increase, and for this I constantly thanked God, and prayed that it would never leave us. It is precisely this enthusiasm, which brought to fruition the many accomplishments of St. Paul's in such a short span of time. (It is fitting here for those who do not know the etymology of the word "enthusiasm", to learn that it is a composite Greek word, "en + theos", that is, "in God")

Church Personnel

We had no Secretary, and did not hire one for five years. Also, we had no regular caretaker for almost two years after we occupied our Building. This resulted in tremendous savings for our Church.

The most problematic of these two, was the absence of a regular caretaker. As for the office, I reasoned that my

being a touch typist I could rapidly take care of all the written matter, when I was in my office. When I was out on calls, I was fortunate to have many of our teenagers volunteering on a regular basis. It was a pleasure to welcome them daily in my office after school. Thus, our mass mailings were made with ease, and our phone was being answered. Thank God, that with this spirited help we were able to get by.

We also were fortunate to combine the two positions with a minimum salary. Eleftherios Liakoutsis had just disembarked in New York, and sought employment in the N.Y. Churches, but was unsuccessful. He was informed that a new Parish had been instituted on L.I., and found his way to our new Community, to apply for the position of "Neokoros," (Sexton). I explained to him, that we had no funds, but if he stayed with us, he soon would be able to make a competitive salary. Part of his salary would be the residing on the premises, which was also advantageous for the Church. When he told me that he was one of the Chanters of the Cathedral in Hydra, it was an answer to my prayer, because now we also would have the services of a "Psalti". I hurriedly went to purchase a folding bed, so that by day we were still able to use this small Meeting Room.

Again, I thanked the Lord that this great void in our new Parish was filled so quickly and unexpectedly.

My daily duties of our widespread Community, reaching all the way to Montauk Point, compelled me oftentimes to absent myself from the office. I traveled to Greenport, Hampton Bays and other distant Suffolk County Cities, to Baptize, solemnize Marriages and bury the deceased in their area.

Strongly believing that a successful Parish is one founded on service, communication for me was ultra imperative. For this reason, I arranged to have the Church phone ring also at the Parish House, when I was absent on missions from my office. Presvytera was always there as the faithful Secretary. After my return I would answer all calls the same evening. This arrangement lasted for 5 years, as I already have noted, and was very advantageous for our Community Treasury.

Long Island is just as its name describes it; long! As I traveled its length numerous times, in the many missions, to every little city and hamlet in the pre-super highway years, I envisioned, that as families continued to pour into Long Island, new Parishes would naturally be founded.

I had pledged to help any such effort in any area that warranted a Parish. Not many months later, I scheduled myself to travel once a month on Saturdays with our Choir to Patchogue, to celebrate the Liturgy. A group had banded to organize the first Parish in Suffolk, just as our group did in Nassau County. I felt it my duty to help them as much as I could. After the Divine Liturgy we were offered the proceeds of the collection to at least defray our travel expenses, but I would reply: "Thank you very much; it is always a pleasure to be with you. Please keep the proceeds for your treasury as our contribution, to help you realize your dream that much sooner. "

As history testifies, contrary to the resistance that St. Paul's had experienced for independence to organize a Parish, on February 1, 1951, we readily gave our blessing to the Patchogue group to institute their own Community.

Our Parish is Named

Our Community once again broke the norm, which had become the accepted practice in all our U.S. Churches. In the past, when a new Church was to be named, there was the bidding process. The largest contributor had the privilege of naming the Parish. For life, he had the singular honor of being the "Godfather" of the Parish. Through this process the Church was able to collect needed funds.

This troubled me. Living in America, with all due respects to all our Saints, I wanted a name, that could easily be pronounced and recognized by our fellow Americans. Meeting with the Committee, I explained my thoughts on this matter, and they were favorably accepted. We would choose the names of five Saints and circulate these to our Parishioners, asking them to vote their choice. A contribution of one dollar per vote was requested as a donation. There

was no limitation. I thought that this perhaps may appear somewhat mercenary, but it was an endeavor within our own family, and all knew well, the very demanding needs of the Church.

The many votes and comparable donations were rapidly and enthusiastically pouring in. The Council set a date on which, we would make the final tally, and finalize the title for our new Parish. We invited Archbishop Michael, to bless and break bread with us, and to oversee the selection.

His Eminence for years had been the Metropolitan of Corinth, and his Patron Saint was St. Paul. The Cathedral in Corinth is honored with St. Paul's name, because St. Paul had spent many months there preaching the New Gospel, and also did write the two Epistles to the Corinthians, as we read in the New Testament.

Thus on April 15, 1951, His Eminence officiated at a Vesper Service, followed by a Dinner in our Basement Hall. There was standing room only. The Archbishop was overwhelmed by what he saw. Smiling faces, exuberance, enthusiasm. He commended the Community for the phenomenal progress, which had become the talk of New York City and other metropolitan Areas.

At the Dinner we continued to collect more votes. St. Paul and St. George had far outdistanced the other three Saints, and were in close count. As more votes came in, they were immediately announced. St. George was ahead, then others gave, so that St. Paul could outnumber St. George. The contest was very exciting and seemed as if it would not come to an end. The clock was rapidly ticking away, and His Eminence announced, that the hour was getting late; he would soon be returning to New York. When the competition kept repeating itself His Eminence said:

"I see that both sides are very persistent for the Saint, after which they want this Church to be named. Therefore, at this point, I want all those who favor St. George to go in one corner of the Hall, and those for St. Paul to the opposite corner. While we have our dessert, we'll give you ten minutes to solicit and concentrate your votes; when you have added your total count, this will be added to the votes we have on hand, and the Name will be announced promptly."

His Eminence receiving the votes and adding them to the existing ones, makes the official pronouncement: "With God's blessings, and the intercessions of St. Paul, this new Community is to be known, now and forever, as the Community of St. Paul."

Assisted by the Clergy, His Eminence immediately chanted the Hymn of St. Paul. Everyone was so pleased with the proceedings and results. Our young, harmonious and progressive Community was also facilitated with the extra funds collected from this innovative effort.

A few years later when the Flushing Community was organized, the Church was named in imitation of St. Paul's. Thereafter, every new Community that was organized chose to follow this tradition, established by St. Paul's. (In mentioning St. Nicholas in Flushing, I was so thrilled, when one of the main organizers of the Church, Dr. Anthony Vasilas, asked me to come and speak at the organizational Meeting. He admired what St. Paul had accomplished and wanted his future Church to be patterned after St. Paul's.) This was very flattering for St. Paul's, and as Parishes were organized St. Paul's appeared to become the prototype.

Our Afternoon Greek Schools

The New Testament was written in Greek. Ours is the only Church, which reads from the Testament as it was written by the hands of the Apostles. Contrary to the Latin, which is a non spoken language, Greek is still spoken, and a person with a Greek High School education, is able to comprehend these readings in the original Greek.

Since Greek is the language of the Bible and of the Greek Culture, from which the western civilization emanated, each Parish in America from the earliest years, organized Afternoon Greek Schools to teach fundamental Greek to our young ones, after attending their Public School classes.

This of course, was never the ideal situation for the young ones, who were always puzzled as to why they had to go to Greek School; also, it is not the best time of day, since

the young ones are rather tired after a day in school; and now after school hours, they're are taught a language, of which they cannot appreciate its real value. It may have been more practical to teach Greek to those of High School age, but at that age, other priorities come to play.

Later in life though, and especially for those in the scientific and cultural world, our Youth are often remorseful, because they didn't learn Greek, which would have afforded them a better foundation in their sciences.

As mentioned, in the years prior to the functioning of the Community, there was a Greek School in operation in Freeport. Also, one in Hempstead, but it was short-lived. However, with the founding of the Community it was reorganized. Because of the vast distances, and the hours of the Greek School, parents living far from the Church, could not bring their children to Hempstead.

Witnessing the general and sincere interest even from the American-born Parents, I made a comprehensive study of the Villages, where we had a reasonable concentration of Members. Thus, we could possibly institute district Greek Schools. My thinking went beyond the instituting of these schools. I believed, that each School would also serve as the nucleus for the formation of a future Parish. This did happen ultimately.

Very early in our Community history we had established Greek Schools in Glen Cove, Long Beach, Ocean-side, Hicksville, Valley Stream and Massapequa. Today, there is a Church in Glen Cove, another in Hicksville, one in Island Park, adjacent to Long Beach, another in Merrick, one in Wantagh, and still another in West Babylon.

The well attended Hempstead School, required the hiring of additional Teachers. In September 1951 Constantine Raptis, a graduate of our Seminary, who was ordained a Deacon at the end of his first year at St. Paul's, was employed as a Teacher and Supervisor of our Sunday School. After a year though, because of the shortage of Priests, he was ordained a Priest and assigned to Martins Ferry, Ohio.

The Archdiocese then, assigned Socrates Tsamutalis, of blessed memory, also a graduate of our Seminary to replace Fr. Raptis. Ordained two years later, after his marriage to Sevasti Leondis, Fr. Socrates had been with us

for four years, at which time the newly founded Tenaflly Church was being organized. Admiring the progress at St. Paul's, the Council of that Church petitioned the Archdiocese to assign him to Tenaflly. Again, the programs and influence of St. Paul's resulted in the progress of other Communities.

"Saint Anna" Philoptochos Society

How pleasantly surprised I was to have seen our Ladies already organized into a Philoptochos Society, when I arrived to assume my duties. They had helped the organizers of our Community, every place where the woman's touch becomes an act of mercy.

This Society grew and developed to aid, not only our new Community, but extend its philanthropic arm in the far corners of our Nation and Earth. Our Philoptochos over the years was in the forefront of every expression of the Church. We had repeated affairs and dinners, which could have never been successful, had it not been for the support of our Philoptochos.

As with all the Organizations of our Church, I would always attend the Meetings and lend my support and guidance, which I felt was always gratefully received.

What made me especially happy and proud, was the cohesion of all our Organizations. There was no strife, and they did not compete against one another. If anything, one came to the support of the other, when occasion called for it. It was this spirit of cooperation, which made our Community flourish. Attending as I did, all the Meetings of our various Organizations, greatly aided this cohesion, and St. Paul's expressed itself at all times as one, loving, unified Family.

The accomplishments of our Philoptochos were many and varied. I'll never forget that we had succeeded to secure the use of the Luxury Ocean Liner Vulcania, as a Fund Raiser for St. Paul's. This soiree, attended by many hundreds, at no cost to us was a lavish affair, with the ship's orchestra playing to the enjoyment of all. As a result, the Building Fund of St. Paul's was greatly enriched. The organization and the

initiative for this unique affair was the brainchild of Fannie Pavlides, of blessed memory.

Our women initiated programs, that were never even imagined by other Societies.

Our Philoptochos was always receptive to new ideas, as to how they could help even more in the philanthropic field. I always had a strong feeling that our Church one day would establish Trust Funds, so that we wouldn't always be functioning on a day to day basis.

There was need to especially secure our Institutions financially. It was shameful, that the necessary finances were always lacking. As a Church having a sound program, we could have worked miracles, by creating Funds within each Community, to effect and perpetuate Projects, which other-wise could not have come to pass.

For this reason, I asked the women to become pioneers in this effort. I asked them to create separate Trust Funds and contribute from their Treasury a monthly sum, no matter how small. One for the Academy of St. Basil, another for our Theological Seminary and still another for St. Michael's Home for the Aged in Yonkers. They also decided to include a Fund for the "Platytera," which one day would adorn the Apse behind the Altar.

Without any hesitation they established these Funds contributing \$50 monthly to the Platytera Fund, \$25 each to the Academy and the Seminary and \$15 to the Home for the Aged.

In today's exchange these amounts may appear small, but in those days they were substantial for our Organization. It was a perpetual outlay of \$115 per month. These Funds increased steadily over the years with interest being added.

I did approach Archbishop Michael to nationalize the plan for all the Philoptochos Societies, but somehow, nothing ever came of it, much to the detriment of our Institutions, which are always clamoring for support. Just imagine if our 500 U.S. Communities subscribed to this plan at that time. These Funds would be worth millions today.

However, I was extremely proud over the years to work closely with the Philoptochos. I referred to them as the "Mother" of our Church, always caring with tenderness and

concern for all Her needs. We owe these women an eternal debt of gratitude.

Our Youth Organizations

When I arrived in Hempstead in 1950, again to my pleasant surprise, I found a senior Youth Group, which had titled themselves, DANAANS. I was so happy to see that these young adults shared their parents' enthusiasm and were appreciative of what the elders were trying to do for them.

Since I had experience from the Annual Greek Independence Day Parade on 5th Avenue, I suggested to them to participate, perhaps with a Float, so as to project St. Paul's. They were receptive to the suggestion and immediately commenced their planning for a successful presentation.

One of their first projects was to participate in the Gala Greek Independence Day Parade of 1952 up Fifth Avenue in New York.

There were no available funds, but there were vibrant and talented individuals. These, to me, were more valuable, and I knew that the Funds could always come. I approached Mr. Jackson, of the Jackson Construction Co., which had just completed our Building, to loan us his huge flat-bed truck. It was long enough to build 3 tiers, on which we were to display the power and influence of Greek Civilization. On the top tier were four 10 foot white columns portraying an ancient Greek Temple. Standing in front of these columns were white costumed Maidens, and in the center of these was the goddess Athena, donning a golden helmet, and holding a long spear in her right hand and a shield in her left. The height of the Float at the top of the columns was about 20 feet. It was massive.

Over the cab and the long hood of the truck, all the way to the front bumper we constructed a platform, which became the top tier of the three tiered Float. It was covered completely with green Astroturf. In line with the windshield we used a fine green netting to enable the driver to see.

Looking at the lengthy Float the spectators wondered how the Float was moving along without a visible driver.

On the face side of the Float in large letters, sprinkled with reflective silver, the viewers read: GREECE - FOUNDER AND DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY. At the base of the top tier on either side was the title: The GOLDEN AGE OF PERICLES. On the middle tier, were the figures of the Bishop of Old Patras Germanos, who on March 25, 1821 raised a banner with the Cross, declaring the War of Independence against the Turks, who had enslaved Greece over the four previous Centuries. Kneeling before the Bishop were the fighters, receiving his blessing and taking the pledge to fight for freedom, even unto death.

On the lower tier, at the rear of the Float, was Greece fighting triumphantly over the AXIS, as no other European Nation had done, even though these Nations had massive armies and sophisticated weaponry. Also, on this lower tier was a portrayal of victory over Communism, showing the breaking of the Hammer and Sickle. With the help of America, Greece had triumphed over Communism, which had threatened its democracy after the end of World War II.

Walking on each side of this gigantic Float, 20 teenagers in native Greek costumes, held long ribbons attached to the Float. Not seeing any driver, many spectators wondered if these youngsters were actually pulling this gigantic Float! This was a Senior Youth Group effort, and its complete success made one more contribution to the glory of St. Paul's.

Our young people greatly enthused by their success commenced planning for the following year. We decided to portray St. Paul preaching to the Athenians. Again our young people, like bees in a honeycomb worked endless hours and days to produce a masterpiece. On a long flatbed truck we constructed an ancient Greek Temple with columns. There stood Paul with his listeners facing him, all dressed in tunics.

There was a marble altar, simulating the one dedicated to "The unknown god". We had improvised an ingenious portable sound system, and on the long course up 5th Avenue, St. Paul's voice was loudly heard through

Jimmy Tsairis: "Men of Athens, the unknown god, whom you worship without knowing, Him I come to preach to you!" We were all so very proud. Again, "All things are possible to those who believe."

By common acclaim, our Floats were among the best; they were so professionally constructed, that no one could believe they were our own handiwork, and that they were built as we say, on a shoestring. These are but a couple of expressions, of a series of successive "miracles", that made St. Paul's a truly vibrant Community.

It was this type of involvement of our young generation, which was always encouraged, hoping that one day soon they would succeed us. We were conscious of our every move, to always give the proper example, and to instill enthusiasm and the proper spirit in their hearts. This would qualify them, so that one day they could be at the helm of St. Paul's, as seasoned Parishioners and Leaders, to continue the great tradition, that was methodically and progressively being established at St. Paul's. Fortunately, this did happen.

A Community is no different from a Family. In fact it is the amalgamation of Families. If a Family at home is happy and united and expresses itself with love, the children will generally follow the pattern of love. If there is dissension and contention in a Family, the results are disastrous. This is also very true in the experience of Communities.

The N.A.P. Organization

On the heels of the DANAANS came the organization of the NAPS. The title was an acronym of the Greek, (Neolaia tou Agiou Pavlou), that is, the Youth of St. Paul's. These fine youngsters were our Teenagers, who became involved in every aspect of our Community life, assisting at all times where they were needed. An example, was the annual project of making the Palm Crosses. They also took an active part in philanthropic work, like the distribution of Thanksgiving Baskets, etc. It is from the NAP that we conscripted our Altar Boys. Truly they were a credit to our Church.

Our Acolytes (Altar Boys)

One of the great joys of the Priest is to experience the eagerness of our young boys to join the Altar. We had a plethora of young ones, who couldn't wait to become twelve years old, so they could be inducted into the Altar.

Then, when the Archbishop would come, it was such a thrill for them, and a moving experience for the parents and elders to see the boys tonsured as Readers of the Church (Anagnostai.) The boys were always neat looking in the Robes, which were always contributed by our generous Philoptochos, "St. Anna." Of these boys, Gus Mangos and George Dounelis enrolled in our Seminary, and were later ordained into the Holy Priesthood.

St. Pauls' Boy Scout & Cub Scout Troops

Believing that involvement and activities, are the key words to keep a Community vibrant, we also organized Boy Scout and Cub Scout Troops. We all know the tremendous benefits of the character building of these organizations. Both groups were successful thanks to the direct interest of the Parents and the Volunteers, who served as Scout and Cub Masters. It was a delight to see our Church always buzzing with some form of activity.

Purchase of additional property

In line with the foresight I had mentioned, as one of our Community's attributes, we decided to purchase eleven residential building lots, on the side street across from the Church. This purchase was made, just in case it would be our destiny to remain on Greenwich Street.

This property would have served as our parking area. Fortunately, when we sold the Church, we also sold these at a profit.

A successful means of communication

We were a widespread Community. It was necessary to publish a monthly periodical in Greek and English with pertinent articles, Community news, etc., to keep our widely scattered Community informed. Funds were not available, but as always experienced, our people responded readily and generously, when an acceptable proposal was made for a project.

I didn't want to publish in the common fashion of untidy mimeographed bulletins, produced by various Communities. We required a professional looking periodical, and I wouldn't concede for less. I approached the late Stacy Mathas, one of our greatest supporters, and a most talented individual. Stacy put his Advertising Agency at my disposal. Also Steve Rockson, who was in the engraving business furnished us with all the plates, and on January 1952, when the first issue appeared, all Members were genuinely pleased and amazed, as were many New Yorkers.

I included some friends from N.Y.C. on our mailing list, and as a result, seeing something novel and progressive in our Church life, they came to our financial support. The late Charles Taylor, of the St. Moritz Hotel on Central Park South, was so impressed, that he sent us \$2,500, which back then, and especially to us, was a sizable amount.

In seeking a proper title for our periodical, many names were submitted, and finally the title selected was offered by Basil Skelos, since St. Paul wrote the 14 Epistles of the New Testament.

"The Epistle" became a periodical that served our Community well. As today, It was published monthly, now with a history of forty three consecutive years.

Our Model Sunday School

You can own the most lavish mansion, you can build the fanciest schools, and the most impressive Church Edifice,

but if you do not teach and nurture the young ones, who one day will be the successors or inheritors, you build in vain.

That is why from the very first year we sought to implement our Sunday School, with the very best that could be offered.

We wanted our Children to nudge the Parents to bring them to Sunday School, and not the other way around. This did happen, and our Sunday School rolls encompassed all the youth of our widespread Community.

We were blessed with volunteers, not teenagers, as does happen in many Churches, but mature adults, parents, teachers of our Public Schools and professionals, who met once a week with their Priest to prepare for the Sunday lessons and also for them to be instructed.

There was a major problem, in that there were no adequate materials at that time from the Sunday School Dept. of the Archdiocese. The few hundred pupils of the first years were rapidly increasing, and early on the Priest and the Sunday School Teachers went to work to develop their courses and the curriculum as outlined.

We also had a separate Fund for our Sunday School, which facilitated us to move freely without having to go through the Parish Council. The Priest with the Sunday School Staff took the decision, and things happened rapidly.

Again, I was so against the mimeographing of the materials. They had to be printed professionally to be attractive to our youngsters, and through the help of Steve Rockson this was accomplished.

We published books for each grade and a Teacher's Manual from Kindergarten through High School. We were successful in keeping the interest of the High School Students, whom we would graduate at the same time of their graduation from High School. Special exercises were held, and they participated with cap and gown at these, receiving their diplomas.

Because of the separate Treasury that was instituted for our Sunday School work, we were able to publish all these books by paying \$10,000 from our Treasury.

Our U.S. Communities were facing the very same

problem. Thus St. Paul's became the supplier to many Communities, and as a result was able to realize extra funds to continually improve the work of the Sunday School.

These complete materials took years of preparation and a great quantity of "midnight oil" was burned. They were printed at the time of my transfer to the Archdiocesan Cathedral.

What pleased my heart, was to see the ocean of children attending both sessions. Before they went to classes, the Priest that wasn't serving the Liturgy conducted a short service, at which the children sang the hymns of our Liturgy, and heard a sermonette from the Priest. Standing on a platform in the large Auditorium, it was a sight to behold the hundreds of youngsters so attentive. I remember that we had 1,260 children registered, and a Sunday School Teaching staff of 125.

At the close of each Sunday School year we sponsored a Dinner for the dedicated and capable Staff, at which special recognitions were given. When youngsters graduated from Sunday School, we felt confident that with the knowledge of God and His Church, they were imbued with the love and the feeling, that St. Paul's was always going to be their home, away from home.

St. Paul's Choir

A melodious Choir adds so much beauty to our Liturgy. We were successful in conscripting many with wonderful voices. Each week we held a practice. Mrs. Maritza Lazo succeeded George Kaftan as Choir Director. We were fortunate to have her young son, Lance, a talented pianist fill the position of organist. Mother and son worked conscientiously over the many years with the compensation of only the full gratitude of the Priest and the Community.

For years mother and son contributed their invaluable services, helping enhance the beauty of our Church. A Junior Choir was also organized, much to the delight of all. In time these youngsters, easily made their transition to the Senior Choir.

We are grateful to the scores of volunteers over the years, and more so, when extra demands were made on some when we started the two Liturgy system in 1955. Both Choirs always did an outstanding job. St. Paul's was the first of our U.S. Parishes to incorporate the two Liturgy system. Some of the largest Parishes in our Country wrote to ask us how our system worked, and how we scheduled the two Liturgies, so that they also could schedule in the same manner.

St. Paul's Mr. & Mrs. Club

In my ministry, every time I saw a need, I made every effort possible to effect a remedy. Here we are, a new Community, with limited resources and many demands. New people were moving to the Island all the time. These were chiefly American born young couples. When they visited our temporary Church on Greenwich St., they began to attend regularly, bringing their children to Sunday School.

Welcoming these young couples, it was also my great desire to personally greet them, but it was almost impossible to speak with them after the Liturgy. How much I dreamed of having a Coffee Social Hour, following the Liturgy, in slight imitation of the AGAPES, mentioned in the 6th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. But where? The downstairs Hall was jammed with our Sunday School classes. Fortunately, many waited after Church, and would invite me to bless their homes. These were the greatest opportunities to get to know my flock intimately; and it is on these occasions, that the relationship developed, and they felt true love and concern. It was so encouraging for me to hear how they loved our Church, and especially the fact, that it was so well organized, even with such limited means. It was pleasant to hear that St. Paul's was a rejuvenating experience for them; for some one that they had experienced for the first time in their life.

I was still very troubled that it was so difficult for the new young Members to become acquainted with one another; this wasn't easy, because they lived far from one

another. I ascertained this at the Baptisms, (and we had many during the first years,) the sponsors invariably were members from their immediate families. But, the purpose of having sponsors, is to enlarge the scope of spiritual relationships. We needed to bring these young couples in contact with one another.

I organized a Mr. & Mrs. Club, which in retrospect is the best thing that I have done for the St. Paul's Community; because the Mr. & Mrs. Club helped the Church blossom so. The Members of this Organization were destined to cover the complete field of expression in all, that St. Paul's had to offer; and it was a vast field indeed.

I was on the phone for the greater part of day, personally contacting a few couples to form the nucleus of a hopefully promising Organization. On short notice, about 15 couples showed up. I spoke to them of the problems to overcome, as I perceived them, broadly outlining the purpose of this proposed Organization and the benefits of the Fellowship, which would naturally evolve.

John Economos, of blessed memory, was chosen as Chairman, to preside at meetings, until the members could become acquainted with each other, and then hold formal elections for the Officers. The Chairman announced, that the next meeting would be on Tuesday, December 16, 1953, and asked those present to try to bring another couple. It wasn't long before we witnessed the "mushrooming".

The Club very early, more than justified our expectations, and manifested all the marks of permanent success. The strangers of a few weeks before, had now become friends, and the invitations to one another for mutual visits in their homes, became the call of the day!

To my great pleasure I started seeing former strangers now becoming sponsors at Baptisms and Weddings. This kept increasing, and very soon, there was a beautiful mesh in our Community Fabric of a most attractive design. I was very proud to be the spiritual Father of this calibre of Orthodox Christians! It was these spiritual injections, and a priceless Presvytera, which provided the added energy, for me to continue broadening the scope of this effervescent Community.

The Program Committee was busy in creating interesting programs of a cultural, religious, educational and recreational nature.

It wasn't long before we had over 200 Members attending and enjoying all the proceedings. Firstly, the short business Meeting, then the scheduled program, followed by the coffee and cake hour for socializing.

There was great talent in the Club. When they scheduled to hold their first Dinner-Dance at the Garden City Hotel, they decided to put together a Musical, in imitation of the successful Broadway productions. For months they rehearsed with great fervor for perfection. They didn't fail in the least. The late John Paul was the master in these productions, which had become the talk of the Metropolitan New York area. The oversubscribed audience watched a first rate Broadway production, much to their surprise.

This then, would constitute the pattern for all future Dinner-Dances. One Affair seemed to outdo the other. We were always successful in creating new productions. As a result we would always pre-sell tickets for the following year's Affair. Hundreds of people from New York, Conn. and New Jersey, attended these Affairs annually.

St. Paul's increased its Membership from some of these attendees, simply because they were thrilled by the spirit they felt. When some decided to make a move from various Cities, they chose to move in the St. Paul's area, to become a part of this illustrious group. These newcomers related to me that the spark they felt, when they came to our Community was the reason they moved to the St. Paul area. I am so thankful to God, that this enthusiasm never waned.

Pews Donated

The Mr. & Mrs. Club readily participated in the Fund. When construction was under way, the Mr. & Mrs. Club took on the responsibility of sponsoring projects to collect funds to donate the pews of our new Church. As a result we have

our beautiful pews, which will survive the ages, and will always be a badge of honor to this resourceful Organization.

Lightning Landscaping

Sometimes, things happened at St. Paul's as quick as a flash. When the Church Complex was finally completed, there was no money for the thousands needed to landscape the grounds. A masterful Landscape plan was made, showing the position of every tree and shrub, which would be planted.

Through the efforts of George Markos*, who was in the Greenhouse business, we purchased trees and shrubs whole-sale and brought them into the large Auditorium.

After an announcement in Church one Sunday, the Congregation proceeded to the Auditorium, which looked like the Garden of Eden. There, each Member looked at the plants and chose the plant to fit their pocketbook.

The men of the Mr. & Mrs. Club had pre-dug the holes on Saturday, according to the Landscape plan. On Sunday everyone was surprised to see the men of the Mr. & Mrs. Club in attention, wearing white, sparkling coveralls with a contrasting red carnation in the button-hole.

They were there, as the personal attendants next to the wheelbarrows they had brought from home. When a purchase was made, it was loaded on the wheelbarrow, and one of the men accompanied by the donor, the tree or shrub, was planted with the donor's help. It was an ingenious way to have everyone's participation in the landscaping, from which, we also realized a profit for the building Fund.

With such and comparable expressions, how could it not be, for every Member to feel, that they were an integrate part of this live and ever energetic Community!

Our landscaping even made the papers, by mentioning that Sunday morning one saw small mounds of dirt on bare land on the vast frontage of the Buildings, and by early afternoon the grounds were completely covered with lush greenery. Again the spirit produced an added "miracle" for St. Paul's!

**In the mentioning of George Markos, we all know how vast our parking area is. We also know how much snow covers it in winter, and how costly this removal is. St. Paul's never spent a nickel to bull-doze the snow, neither did we ever have to call anyone. George Markos, without even being called would routinely come with his tractor to plow, and work for hours so that our parking lot was always clear of snow. Isn't this, also, a true blessing from Above?*

Great Friday & Easter Decoration

Again the ever energetic Members of the Mr. & Mrs. Club with the help of the Youth Organizations decorated our beautiful Church profusely. Tony Laskaris of the Fellan Florist, in memory of his mother Nicoletta would donate thousands of dollars worth of flowers to St. Paul's.

Under his direction, the many willing hands proceeded to decorate the two Epitaphios (another innovation in our Communities,) for the simultaneous Great Friday Lamentation Services. Then all day Saturday they would decorate the Church mainly in white flowers... Tony would also prepare an 8 foot cross of styrofoam, laden with Easter lilies. The Church was a sight to behold. The whole atmosphere was awe inspiring. Easter was celebrated at St. Paul's in full Glory! Truly, as I have mentioned, things were done differently at St. Paul's, and most important successfully, *because the spirit was ever present.*

The Grecian Gourmet

The Mr. & Mrs. Club Members were very productive in a multi-faceted way. Their spirit and thoughts were always concentrated, on what they could do for St. Pauls' ever growing Community, while enjoying the effort. It had often been discussed, that some Greek Churches had produced Cookbooks, and comments were made, that many of the recipes were simply copied, and a few of their own added.

The consensus of our women was, that if we were to attempt the publication of a Cookbook, it would have to be with tested recipes. A group of volunteers stepped forth from the Mr. & Mrs. Club Membership, headed by Theodora Lourekas. Discussing the proposed project, they decided to meet regularly in each other's homes and test the recipes, which would be spelled out in the projected Cookbook, leaving no guesswork, as very often does happen.

There were sixteen women, who had dedicated themselves to give priority to the Book, so that it could be published, as soon as possible. The Community owes them much gratitude. The sixteen were: Georgia Arapakis, Tina Barbatsuly, Helen Calfo, Irene Carnavos, Bella Carpou, Sandy Cidis, Mary Djinis, Helen Hayes, Dorothy Kollar, Theodora Lourekas, Jean Maravell, Presvytera Bess Papadeas, Helen Pappas, Kay Poulos, Irene Skeados, and Ethel Vlahakis.

The book was finished. All the recipes were tested. Again with the help of Steve Rockson, we printed 3,000 copies of our Book, titled "The Grecian Gourmet." in 1956. Much to our surprise and pleasure, these didn't last long. We decided to print another 3,000. They also, were moving just as quickly, especially after our Book came to the attention of the world-famous Food Critic Craig Claiborne. In a one half page spread of the New York Times, Mr. Claiborne made very favorable comments and descriptions, also showing attractive Greek dishes.

St. Paul's came to international attention through that tremendous article. The renowned firm Doubleday International had been planning a series of Cookbooks representative of all the Nations. The series was titled "ART OF ...COOKERY." Their Editors had amassed all the Greek Cookbooks they could find. After applying their method of making the determination, they chose our "Grecian Gourmet!" Our Book was renamed, "ART OF GREEK COOKERY." Aside from the economical aspect, it was another avenue, by which Greek Orthodoxy came to the attention of hundreds of thousands worldwide. In the foreword that I wrote for the Book, the buyer would be informed as to the existence of our Church.

To promote our Book, *Doubleday* made

arrangements with the Ocean Liner, QUEEN FREDERICA to prepare a sumptuous Buffet with food cooked from the St. Pauls' recipes. They had invited the Governor and Mayor of N.Y., Congressmen and other dignitaries, with a battery of newsreel cameras rolling. Our Members were also invited. It was such a spectacular Affair, which stayed with us for a long time. As a result, our St. Paul's Church received most favorable and universal publicity.

I'm informed that as of this writing, St. Paul's has collected over \$300,000 in royalties. Again, how can we ever thank those energetic and tireless women of our Community.

Lamp unto my feet

The late Nick Andromedas was a student of history and of our Orthodox Religion. He wrote poems and plays. One day he came into my office to talk about producing a Miracle Play, which involved the Epitaphios and Orthodox Easter Services. He wanted very much to have it produced over national TV.

We were successful in making connections with Mrs. Pamela Ilott, who was in charge of Religious Programming for CBS-TV. Mrs. Ilott was very impressed with the script, and proceeded to make arrangements. The Starring role was given to the well known actor William Shatner, now of Star Trek fame, who in 1956 was establishing his mark in Television.

Working with Mrs. Ilott for the preparation of the appropriate props, etc., we were happy to see a full-size Iconostasis on the set, as well as a decorated Epitaphios. The taping was to be at 5 a.m. Easter Morning. That would just about give us enough time to freshen up after the Resurrection Services at St. Paul's and drive to the CBS Studios on West 57th Street in New York. Since we needed two Altar Boys at that most unusual hour, it was convenient to take my sons Lee and Dean with me. Accompanying us also, were members of our Choir, who would render the appropriate hymns of Great Friday and Easter.

We participated in a couple of practices, weeks before the actual filming.

Thus, at that early hour on Easter morning we presented a successful Miracle Play, which was viewed across the United States later that Morning. The half hour program was titled "Lamp unto my feet." The viewers saw a small segment of the Lamentations of Great Friday Evening with the Priest standing in front of the beautiful Epitaphios, as well as the Priest emerging from the Altar with a raised candle commencing the Resurrection Services by chanting:

"Come, receive the light from the Light that never wanes; and glorify Christ, Who has risen from the dead!" A highlight of that same program was a short Easter Sermonette by the late Archbishop Michael.

How proud we all were, for being able to put on such a production, seen nationally! To what great and unexpected heights St. Paul was reaching! As a result of this introduction to Orthodoxy, Mrs. Ilott became closely affiliated with our Archdiocese and was instrumental in the production of Orthodox Programs nationally. It was a pleasure to have seen her once again at a recent Clergy Laity Congress and to reminisce how St. Paul's introduced her to Orthodox Programming.

Long Range Planning

Although I was occupied 7 days a week from early morning to late at night tending to all the facets of our Community life, covering both Counties, I nonetheless used my long hours in the solitude of driving all over the Island in thinking of our Church's future.

The first and foremost in my thinking, was to be able to find a qualified Architect for our future plans. My friend Themie Lymber found this person, after I had asked him to comb the field and find an Architect, who is a Church specialist. Soon after, Themie introduced me to Mr. Raymond Julian. He impressed me by his great knowledge of the Church of the Holy Wisdom (Aghia Sophia) in Constantinople. I told him that in a modified and minute

form, we would like to build this type of a monument to Orthodoxy on Long Island.

We became close friends. He would invite Presvytera and myself for Dinner to his house, and we to ours. I told him that we were very far from even planning for our Church, because we had just built our Parish Center on Greenwich St. Also, I told him that I could never promise him anything, because I had no authority. However, I did promise him, that he would have the opportunity to compete when the time came.

I may note here that Mr. Julian was a pious man, who twice weekly, was an Altar Server in the High Anglican Church. He was very acquainted with the Orthodox Church and admired us for holding fast to the Ancient Traditions of the Church.

I mentioned to him that we had no funds available to even ask for a sketch from an Architect for a proposed Church Edifice, but I believed that having one, would put us that much closer to our goal. After showing him some pictures of Orthodox Churches and commenting on some preliminary sketches he had made, he produced a colored rendering, which was the preview, of what we finally built on Cathedral Avenue.

For those, who have old issues of the Epistle you can see the rendering as early as 1952, which we published every month, asking for volunteer contributions, as seed money for our future Edifice. You will notice how beautifully Mr. Julian tied in our Parish Center on Greenwich Street with the Church, which was going to be constructed next to it, and connected with the traditional arches. He did this for me and very enthusiastically, without any cost to the Church.

It was a little over a year that we had occupied the Greenwich Building. The plaster was still drying. At the General Meeting we held in the Church Basement, attended by a couple of hundred Members, I announced that we're going to start the drive for our future Church.

I'll never forget Mr. Louros of Freeport getting up and saying: "Father, I have the best to say about you. I admire you for all that you have done for our Church until now. We must thank God for having enabled us to build this present structure. But with all due respect to you, I, who am old

enough to be your father, want to tell you that you young people move too rapidly. You're talking about a Church, which will cost hundreds of thousands, when we have a nice building, that is serving our purpose. Did you ever think, "what if we had a depression like we had in the 30's? Father, please don't proceed so fast." I couldn't fault his thinking, because I knew what my father had gone through, and how he catered to the "bread lines" outside of his confectionery/luncheonette all during the depression.

I thanked Mr. Louros for his input and he happily he sat down. I listened of course, but, I had the figures in mind, coupled with the undying enthusiasm of our Members, and I believed that we would not fail. However, this announcement that I made was only to get our feet wet, and put the Community in a future frame of mind.

Many thought that I was not practical, and premature in my thinking, being that the plastered walls of Greenwich St. were still drying. But, my sights were *definitely* set far into the future. We were just getting settled on Greenwich Street.

As a result of publishing Mr. Julian's rendering month after month, the contributions were trickling in from some Members and from Friends in N.Y.C., whom I had placed on our mailing list.

Our move from Greenwich Street

Let's not forget that the architectural rendering appearing monthly in the Epistle, showed our future Church adjoining our Greenwich St. Building. The President was Mr. George Stratigos. Mr. Peter Katavolos was the Chairman of the Building Program and Vice President of St. Paul's.

One day, in a relaxed discussion in my office, Mr. Katavolos expressed his enthusiasm and joy at seeing our Church occupied to capacity on Sundays, and the hundreds of Sunday School Children in the Basement. He reminisced of days of old in his Parish in Brooklyn, where there was much strife, and he was so thankful for the peace and harmony that prevailed in our Church.

It is then, that I said: "You're so very right Mr. Katavolos. The spirit that prevails in our Church will bring forth miracles. That's why we should start looking for suitable property to be able to expand, etc." I must have struck a nerve, because all of a sudden his whole countenance radically changed. I was confounded! In no uncertain terms, he stated that if I would dare again to mention "moving", we would be parting company, and would become "residents of two opposing villages" as the Greek saying goes. I couldn't believe what I was hearing! He loved and respected me, as I did him. He was a veritable gentleman; and was so to the end. He was a positive person for our Church, and helped greatly in our every effort. This I always kept in perspective and appreciated such an ardent supporter.

But, he was frozen on the idea of staying and building on Greenwich St. His thinking was to purchase and demolish the homes bordering our parking area and expanding. At this point, I tried to reassure him, that we were both dedicated to St. Paul's and we parted friends. *However, this, in no way, changed my thinking, nor the course I had mentally charted. I would remain focused.*

About a year down the road, when he became President, again in one of his profusely expressed feelings about our Church progress, which he had never envisioned, I got the opportunity to say to him: "Yes, Mr. Katavolos, we're all proud of everything that has come to pass. Sky is the limit for us if we continue to travel on God's road. Don't you think it is time to plan for the foreseeable future, and not be caught shortsighted like all the Metropolitan N.Y. Communities? We have thirty wonderful and cooperative people on the Board, but we can't start discussing future plans before such a large body. Why don't you appoint four or five trustees, to plan all the Buildings needed for all time, and we'll start building in phases according to the strength of our finances." I was so careful not to slip again, and mention that bad word "moving!"

"That's a good idea," he replied. After we scanned the Members of the Board, wanting to choose those, whose back-ground would be of great help, we picked, as far as I can re-call, Nicholas Lazo, Chris Brous, Achilles George, John Paul and George Pavlides. We sat around the table many

nights, until finally we specified all our requirements. If they would be approved by the Parish Council, we would then give them to the Architect, whom we would choose in the meantime.

When the Planning Committee had outlined all the Buildings we felt would be needed in the future, and all agreed, that these should appear on the overall, future plan, regardless if there were adequate funds to build them. I said that I fully agreed, with one exception. As the Priest who had seen more from the Church aspect than the average layman, I was insistent on not overbuilding the Church, for economical and practical purposes.

With the overflow of our Sunday Congregations, not speaking of course of the High Holy Days, some members of the Board had suggested that we should build a Church with 1000-1200 seats. Perhaps that would have been fine and proper, if no other Churches were ever to be built in Nassau County. If this would have been the case, even the 1000-2000 seats wouldn't have been able to accommodate the multitudes in the future. No single Church could ever serve the people of the whole County. I had to convince everyone, so that we would agree in a unified fashion, that our Church should have 500-600 seats, with added room to accommodate a couple of hundred standing. Thus, with the two Liturgy system we could accommodate at least 1200 people. Then, the cost of a larger Edifice, also would have been prohibitive. The Church would have to be twice as large as the present Cathedral in height, length and width.

I knew well that new Parishes would start blooming and that St. Paul's as it was originally planned could adequately serve the people in the Central Nassau Area.

We were all in full and complete agreement. No one of the Committee came forth with thought as to where we would be able to contain all these massive buildings!

It is then, that I posed the question: "Gentlemen, where are we going to fit all these Buildings? Do you think Greenwich Street suffices?" All agreed that there was no way, that this could be done there and all were in unison, that we would have to secure new property.

At this point, I pleaded with them, not to even mention the word "move" until after the Meeting, when the

report would be made. I emphasized to them, that if they mentioned the probability of moving even to their wives, our unified Community would automatically be fragmented irreparably. I said to them, to just describe what our future plans are, without divulging that Greenwich Street was out.

God bless them. They kept their word. At the following Meeting, Mr. Katavolos asked for the report. The Chairman, Mr. Lazo described the work of the Committee, and how they all had agreed, that everything outlined was absolutely necessary.

We would build four independent units, connected of course, but, we would build only according to plan, and as finances would permit us. The Trustees listened attentively and were truly impressed at the thorough and exhaustive work that had been done by the Committee. Mr. Katavolos highly praised the Committee for its excellent and professional work, and asked for a motion. It was seconded and passed unanimously. Mr. Katavolos, never envisioned or imagined even for a moment, what was to follow. When he finished his commendations after the unanimous acceptance, he said, "O.K., Let's hear the next order of business."

Mr. Lazo interrupted by saying: "Mr. Katavolos, where are we going to build all those Buildings? No matter how many houses we buy and demolish, adjoining the rear of our Greenwich Street property, there wouldn't be enough room. Besides, it would be very costly!"

Mr. Katavolos was totally unprepared and taken by complete surprise. But, as I said, he was a prince of a gentleman. He didn't like what he heard, specifying the relocation, but also he was a practical person. Seeing the unanimity of the Trustees, he finally said: "Gentlemen, I'll not sign as President to move from Greenwich Street, unless we get \$80,000 for this Building. Each one of you has the authority to accept a conditional binder for that sum."

I'm sure that he must have thought that I pulled one over on him. Regardless of what was felt, we both loved the Church; and we very much appreciated and loved each other. Indeed, there was a common denominator. We all loved the Church more than self.

The Architect is chosen

In scouting for Architects, we sent our requirements to five Architects, well known in the field, asking them how they would propose to design the buildings, and what their percentage fee would be. Of the five, Mr. Raymond Julian of Syosset, made the best presentation. The entire Parish Council was impressed, and even more, to hear that his fee would be a flat 6%. Also, he would not charge for pew and other designs, which customarily carry a 10% surcharge.

I was elated that the Parish Council saw in Mr. Julian what I had seen. In announcing to Mr. Julian our decision I told him that we were going to travel to many Greek Orthodox Churches in the Metropolitan Area, to point out items we would perhaps incorporate, and mistakes to avoid. After spending much time together, Mr. Julian came up with the masterful design, which was to immortalize St. Paul's forever, and give it distinction, as one of the outstanding Edifices of Long Island and in our Church in America.

Fr. George meets with Fr. Gillick of our Lady of Loretto

It is natural for people to judge, prejudice or compare situations, as they imagine or experience them, oftentimes discounting past situations. We lived in an era then, when there was little, if any, communication with our sister Roman Catholic Church.

The climate was different in those days. We had been neighbors with Fr. Gillick, Pastor of the Church across the street, but we had never met. I had only seen him from afar. However, as a good neighbor, I would always send him complimentary tickets to attend our Annual Dinner-Dance at the Garden City Hotel, but the invitations were never acknowledged. It was difficult to understand.

Disregarding past experiences, the next morning after the signal had been given to sell our property on Greenwich St. I called Fr. Gillick, who asked who was on the other end

of the phone. My response was: "your Greek neighbor across the street!" He was very cordial. When he asked the purpose of my call, I requested an appointment to see him regarding something personal. Immediately, he responded: "Surely. Come over tomorrow and we'll have lunch together." I was pleasantly surprised to have been also invited for lunch. I informed him, that I may be a little late, because it was St. George's Day and I perhaps would be delayed a little by the Liturgy, etc. I promised I would bring over some Baklava and other Greek Pastries, which Presvytera had prepared for my Nameday.

I thought to myself. This is a blessed omen. I would be offering our Building on St. George's Day, my Patron Saint! Having finished dining with the six Priests of that large Parish, Fr. Gillick took me to his office." I'm very happy to have finally met you after all these years!" Fr. Gillick said. "What can I do for you?" I replied: "Well Father, we have a problem, and you also have a problem." In amazement, he asked what the problem was. I told him that when I would arrive early Sunday morning, I couldn't find parking for blocks, seeking to park on the street, so that I could provide an extra space in our very limited parking area. I added, that each year the congestion on Greenwich Street was getting progressively worse, and that we had decided to move.

As good neighbors I was there to offer him the opportunity of first refusal. When he informed me that they had been planning to build a Youth Center, I suggested that our Building would be ideal after some modifications. Fr. Gillick commented, that he had watched the construction each day and considered it a substantial Building.

I stressed to him, that it would be difficult for us to move. if we didn't get every penny that we spent for that Building. After much discussion, as deals go, without going into the many details, we agreed on a price of \$152,000. This was contingent on his Bishop's approval. A few days later, he called me that we had a deal. I couldn't believe it, happening in this manner, and consummated within days. I was truly elated . This would now give us the impetus to initiate our drive, to canvass the Community for our new project.

Requesting to see him, once again, I asked if he was in a hurry to occupy our Building. When he answered in the affirmative, I informed him that the Greek Church is not as systematic in raising money as the Roman Catholics do. Then I asked him: "Father, you're an affluent Church, and comparably we're the opposite. Since you are in a hurry, why don't you advance us the \$152,000, and we'll vacate that much sooner." Whereupon he again told me he had to get the Bishop's permission. I was stunned when he called me two days later, to come over and pick up the check! I felt this was a true miracle, and thanked God and my Patron Saint for this benevolence!

All this happened in less than two weeks after the Meeting authorizing the Trustees to sell our Edifice. The only one to whom I confided this, was to our Legal Advisor Charles Andromidas, who couldn't believe that I had negotiated almost double the asking price, secured a check pre-paid in full and free rent perks!

At the following monthly Meeting, after the reading of the minutes Mr. Katavolos asked if anyone had contacted any interested parties about our Building. The silence was deafening. He then proceeded to the next order of business. Interrupting, I placed the check in front of him. Asking me what this was for, while putting on his glasses, I responded: "Mr. Katavolos, the Church has been sold and prepaid in the amount of \$152,000." Spontaneously there was pandemonium. The Trustees got up, shouted, and cheered enthusiastically. One Trustee even threw up a folding chair toward the ceiling. When the enthusiasm subsided, the lovable Costas Boulukos from Lindenhurst remarked: "Father, if we would have held out, we could have gotten \$200,000!" At this point, what could be the answer? I just smiled.

The Builder, Mr. Gundersen, told us that construction would take about two years. I informed Fr. Gillick of this and he planned accordingly. We did not foresee a steel strike, followed by a cement strike. This delayed our building program for more than eight months.

When the two year period was up Fr. Gillick called me to remind me, that he advanced us the money based on our promise. I was embarrassed when he told me that I had

put him in a very difficult position. I apologized as best I could, explaining about the strikes. From what he had seen, he told me that he doesn't see our project finishing even in a year. I knew he was right, but he was thinking in terms of our complete Church Complex being completed.

Church construction is far more difficult and intricate than the adjoining Buildings. I went to Mr. Gundersen and asked him how long more, before we could occupy at least the Gymnasium. He told me it was almost complete, except for some finishing touches. September 1, 1957 definitely, we could occupy it. I told him to stop all the construction on the Church, and to concentrate on the completion of the Gym. I then called Fr. Gillick to assure him that on October 1, 1957 he could occupy Greenwich St.

This gave us an extra month to be sure, as sure could be. He told me that the Bishop was pressing him, and that he wanted tangible proof, that October 1st he could have the Building. Immediately I sat at the typewriter and typed, that if we weren't out by October 1st, we would pay a penalty of \$100 per day or \$3,000 per month! Barring an act of God, I was preparing the Congregation for a move at the end of August, so as to occupy the Gym by September 1st, as it did happen. Fr. Gillick thanked me profusely for this letter of guarantee, received so quickly.

After making pertinent announcements the beginning of August 1957, requesting everyone's help for the mammoth moving operation, and especially appealing to those who had trucks, we moved everything from our old location to the new. Again, George Markos' flatbed truck was used to move the super-heavy pews. We even sawed the Iconostasis in four sections and refaced it in our Gym. We also cut in sections the 30 foot Soleas (platform in front of the Iconostasis) and moved it also. This massive operation didn't cost one cent. Again, the spirit, that made St. Paul's great.

It was, as we say, almost unbelievable. The previous Sunday our two congregations prayed in our Church on Greenwich Street, and the first Sunday in September they prayed on Cathedral Avenue. The Congregation within one week saw the setting in the Gym identically as it was in the Church, as they knew it on Greenwich Street, but in a much

more spacious area. This same Iconostasis refaced, was again in place. Nine months later, we moved it into our Church proper, once again refacing it. It remained there for many years, until the present marble Iconostasis replaced it.

Our Builder, Mr. Gundersen

When the bids went out for Cathedral Avenue, Mr. Julian, who had worked with Mr. Gundersen for years, building beautiful Churches on Long Island, asked him to bid, but in a way, which was to benefit St. Paul's, as well as Mr. Gundersen to maintain his staff of true craftsmen. I had visited the Churches that Mr. Gundersen had built, and was impressed with the meticulous work that he had done on those Churches. I witnessed his excellence while he was constructing our Buildings. If Mr. Gundersen would have bid according to "going rate" he may not have been the lowest bidder. It was our good fortune that we were in a down market in the building trade, and as I was informed by Mr. Julian, the Gundersen Construction Co., was even thinking in terms of closing its doors.

Mr. Julian told Mr. Gundersen to bid low. Perhaps slightly over his cost. In this manner he would have the best chance of getting the contract, and at the same time keep his master craftsmen who would be guaranteed work for two years. Thus he could continue to maintain his operation. Also, for Mr. Gundersen it would be a fine sample of his work for any future similar projects. We were so elated when Mr. Gundersen did come in with the unbelievable bid of \$816,000, the lowest of the five, without sacrificing the finest of materials, as specified by the Architect. When he finished our Project, we owed him \$50,000, and because we enjoyed such an excellent relationship, he carried us for 2 years without any interest.

Our first community-wide drive

Those unforgettable volunteers, who convened from various Villages of Long Island to establish the first Greek Orthodox Community to serve the Bi-County Area, each on his own or in pairs canvassed their friends to contribute to realize their dream. They were able to raise \$26,000 to purchase the Greenwich St. property.

Our Churches, and I'm speaking for the Metropolitan N.Y. area, had never raised money through a systematic Drive. They collected money spontaneously, and mainly from the Businessmen. There were never any all out drives. Again, St. Paul's was to be the first, for others to follow.

I had heard of how Denominations hired professional Fund Raisers, and surmised that they would come in for a fee and raise the money.

I called one of the better known Firms and spent much time listening to their methods. Their fee would be 15% of the money raised. For this, they would pre-prepare and indoctrinate the teams of our Members, who would canvass their neighborhoods. Also, they would prepare an appropriate brochure. After the pledges were received from the Members, each week the Church would collect the pledge in a separate envelope and keep a record of same. This would be very costly for us to hire extra personnel.

I thought this was flawed simply because, if a member absented himself from Church for a few weeks, and living without a economic cushion, he would never make up the lost weeks. Then again, there was the fact that we would have to wait two years to collect the funds to get started.

I labored over this problem. Then I reasoned, that most of our Members were young couples, with new homes, two cars out of necessity, commuting expenses to New York for their work, etc. To be sure most young couples had very little, if any, excess of funds over their many expenses. I too was going to pledge and thought, since I have payment books for my various expenses paid monthly, why not add another book for my Church? Why not go with a monthly payment book?

Our goal was \$300,000. We already had \$90,000 saved in the Bank, mainly because our personnel overhead was minimal over the first five years. Adding this amount to the proceeds of our Greenwich property. We were in a very good position to borrow \$300,000 to complete our project. The way I arrived at the figure of \$300,000 to be raised from our Members, was a matter of simple arithmetic. We had about 1000 families. If they gave on an average of \$300 each over two years, we would gross \$300,000. This plan was most acceptable to the Members, because it amounted to only \$2.86 per week, or \$12.50 per month, and totaling \$300 over two years.

I then talked to the late Sam Cachules, who was Vice President of the Atlantic Bank, if the Bank would implement this plan. I had no doubt, because 1000 new names would be added, which meant new business for the Bank. The two year notes would be discounted and would net us \$276, which we transfer into an interest account until it would be needed. We didn't have to hire office help, which would have been more expensive and surely not as efficient. Also, the great advantage was, that we received the money within two weeks after the end of the Building Fund Drive.

We needed an impressive Brochure for the enlightenment of our people. I met repeatedly with my beloved friend Stacy Mathas. Knowing the urgency, he very quickly produced a masterpiece. The Members, who received it had nothing but lush compliments, and to a great extent, it was the brochure that did the selling.

When the canvassing teams visited our people, most everyone remarked: "you mean to tell me that with only \$2.86 per week we're going to build those massive structures?" It was an easy sell, and in a couple of weeks we had raised all that money; truly a feat for that era.

The Professionals had told me that their plan included an indoctrination Dinner for the Fund Raisers, which would be paid by the Church. During this Dinner, the program would be announced. Also the Church would have the first donors, by signing all those present, even though they may not go out in the field.

Since I knew my flock I selected 120 names, optimistically hoping to have 60 two man teams, but I knew from experience that I would have to settle for at least 40. God bless them. They did the job.

I went to see my friend Mr. Stevens, who owned the Steven's Steak House in Baldwin, and explained the purpose of the Dinner, which we would schedule. He was very cooperative, and said he would serve us the best dinner at cost.

Thus on a given night, most of the 120 invited came. Appropriate speeches were heard. Enthusiasm wasn't lacking, and those present did sign the contracts with the Bank. This was a guaranteed forerunner of the success, that came to pass. When one thinks of it, St. Paul's never really taxed anyone; yet, we built a million dollar building at that time.

If one who pledged lost his job, or couldn't pay for any reason, there was no reflection on his credit, because the Church was the co-maker on the loans, and all that had to be done is for the Church to pay up the loan.

The plan worked like a charm, and the mission was accomplished. We had achieved our goal! After the two years, when our Church Complex was still incomplete, many renewed their pledges on their own, feeling that they had not given enough for such a grandiose undertaking. I did learn a valuable lesson from all this; people have to be educated, when it comes to contributing systematically to their Church.

Once understanding and confidence in the leaders is established, people are never hesitant to do their share.

Today, more than a generation after that era, we have the Stewardship plans, and large projects come to pass more easily, but in those days it was much more difficult.

The Cathedral Avenue Property

Perhaps I was too apprehensive, but I truly agonized fearing the fragmentation of our completely unified Community when the decision was made to relocate.

As I have stated at the beginning of this booklet, I made a pledge to myself from the first moment I saw the Greenwich Street property that someday we would make the move from there. What was advantageous to this thought was that there was foresight and proper planning.

With the decision of the Planning Committee, which the Board unanimously accepted the road had been opened. But there were thirty men on the Board from far flung Villages. There weren't too many desirable parcels in Hempstead, and it was not difficult to find properties outside of the hub of Nassau County. I felt I must act, and swiftly.

I was drawn to the Cathedral Avenue area, and each time I drove up Cathedral Avenue for my visits to our Parishioners northwest of Hempstead. I searched diligently and seeing this forest of trees, I was not able to estimate the size of the property, but the frontage was substantial.

Over the years I had hoped that a "for sale" sign would never be posted there. I asked George Antonopoulos, to search County records in order to reveal the owners. As a result, I called one of them, Dr. Rodin, who had built a beautiful home across from this property. Calling him for a non-medical appointment, I met with him to tell him that we were interested in the property. He told me it was not for sale and that with Dr. Calderone, had submitted applications for a variance in order to build hi-rise apartments, but were always denied.

Then I posed a bold and shocking question to him. I asked: "are you planning to move from your beautiful home?" He responded: "What makes you ask that? Why should I move? I built this home to reside in it." "Doctor", I said: "I can't estimate your finances, but you appear to be quite comfortable. I'm frankly surprised that you would even think of having hi-rise apartments across from your residence, with all the inherent ramifications.

Have you even for a moment envisioned the probable altercations of the many residents. The carousing, the partying, the illegal parking, the occasional sirens of Police responding to situations, and perhaps even bed sheets hanging out the windows to dry, etc."

I could see that my statement troubled him, and at that point I unfolded the beautiful color rendering of our

Church and said: "Dr. Rodin, wouldn't you rather get up in the morning, and have the view of this Church Complex? He stared in amazement, and asked: "You're really planning those buildings?" "Yes," I replied, "if you'll sell us your property. Just let me know your asking price?" After communicating with Dr. Calderone, he would let me know.

I had a feeling that the property would be ours, and had to act fast. Although I had no authority to bind the Community I felt it was for the best interests. I went to my friend, Charles Efthimiou of the Empire State Diner and told him that I was in a great bind; I needed \$3,000 because of an unforeseen emergency. He was very concerned for me, but I reassured him that everything would be all right in a month, when I would return the loan.

Dr. Rodin called. I was prepared to hear a \$100,000 figure, and I still would have gone for it! Thank God that he mentioned that after computing cost and taxes over the years, they would be happy to receive \$70,000. I was elated, but didn't reveal it. I countered with: "Dr. Rodin, I know it's worth every bit of this, but it is way beyond our reach. Why don't you each come down \$5000 as a gift to the Church and we'll issue a receipt." Calling Dr. Calderone, the agreement came and I gave my check to receive the binder. Again a triumph! When the excavations commenced, we sold the excess top soil for \$4000, and thus the land cost a mere \$56,000!

I was literally thrilled. Then I thought of the possible implications with the Board, because I had no authority to bind the Church. The worst that could have happened is for them to say, I bought the property and to keep it. But, I also knew that they had complete confidence in and I in them. At times radical decisions have to be made to secure the future.

To my surprise, a few days after I gave the binder, the President of the Synagogue on Fulton Street, across from A&S called me for an appointment. Three gentlemen in my office told me that they were prepared to offer me \$100,000 for the Rodin property and to enter with them in a most favorable deal for their facility, which would more than cover our needs. Had their complex not been in the business area,

maybe it would have been a solution for our needs, but I would not think of occupying that area.

When I told them that the Synagogue didn't interest me they pressed for the binder, telling me that with the added pro-fit to our purchase price we could find suitable property. My response was, that even if they added one zero to their offer the answer was no, and on that parcel would stand St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church.

I took Charley Andromidas to see the property and he was very excited. Then I contacted Mr. Katavolos, who also had the same feelings as us. It was a "fait accompli", and the Parish Council unanimously decided to make the purchase on Cathedral Avenue.

Yes, things were always happening differently at St. Paul's, and I believe that it was always the Guiding Hand of God's Providence which we always chose to follow, without reservation.

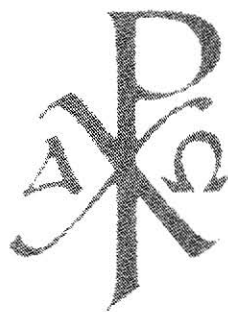
When our "miracle" Project was completed in 1958, I felt the Lord had blessed us with His seal of approval by the Divine Sign of the Weeping Madonna on March 16, 1960, confounding the skeptics, but girding the faith of His followers!

As a result of the Weeping Madonna hundreds of thousands paraded by St. Paul's to see and reverence. The Metropolitan New York papers published pictures and articles for over three whole months, thereby bringing St. Paul's to the attention of millions, nationally and internationally. We had visitors from countless Churches. The Church of Russia sent a Metropolitan, in their behalf to reverence the Icons.

St. Paul's saw great days of glory; the Membership was always there bursting with enthusiasm, and I, the humble servant of the Lord and spiritual Father of this glorious Community was always overjoyed to witness this fulfillment of my spiritual Charges.

My prayer is, that the Good Lord continue to bless Saint Paul's and all the Churches of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

**May the Grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
And the Love of the Father,
And the Communion of the Holy Spirit,
be with you and yours, always.**





Our Symbol *

Christianity has so many significant symbols. It was my desire to create a symbol, or logo, for our Church. I met with the Stacy Mathas of blessed memory, and asked him to help me with the design.

I wanted the shape of the heart to be the center, because the heart is the source of life and love.

Within the heart is the X-P, the first two letters of Christ in Greek. It was the monogram made famous by the first Christian Emperor, St. Constantine the Great.

On the right, is the scale of justice, which in the Christian belief, is absolute.

On top of the heart are the rays of the Sun, which allude to our Lord Jesus, who is the Light of the world!

Above the sun is a Royal Crown, symbolizing Christ's supreme authority over the world. The crown is topped with the Lord's Cross, the symbol of our salvation.

On either side of the heart is the vine, interwoven with wheat, from which come the elements of our Holy Communion.

All the aforementioned symbolisms are neatly tied at the bottom with a ribbon stating the "New Commandment", in Greek, (agapateh allilous), "Love one another."

*As seen on the Front Cover

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