



## GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

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### ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ



### **The Falling Asleep in the Lord of Rev. Father James Tavlarides** *March 7, 1924 – May 3, 2018*

It is with great sadness yet with hope in the Resurrection that the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco conveys news of the passing of Rev. Father James Tavlarides, who fell asleep in the Lord on May 3, 2018 at the age of 94. Father James was a distinguished clergyman in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America for 65 years.

“Father James was remarkable in his strength and in his faith. Regardless of what circumstances he faced in life, he always gave thanks to God,” stated His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco. “He was visionary in his ministry and forthright in his teaching. Father James was a mentor to many clergy, and used every conversation as an opportunity to preach the Word of God. While we know he is in the loving embrace of the Lord whom he so faithfully served, I extend my deepest condolences to his family and all those who mourn his passing.”

His parents, Vassilios and Maria, lived in Chalkis, Evia, Greece, and had one son who was named Cortessis at birth. He was raised by his faithful parents whose involvement in the church was part of his inspiration to pursue the priesthood. When Cortessis was 16 years old, his mother passed away. He remained active in church and served as an altar boy and chanter, but knew in his heart that he was called to the priesthood. A few years later he was given the opportunity to travel to the United States to study for the priesthood.

Cortessis arrived in December 1946 and stayed with his aunt and uncle in Columbus, Ohio, until he went to Connecticut to begin his studies at the Pomfret Greek Orthodox Theological School in January 1947. After one year, the campus moved to its present location in Brookline, Massachusetts. Due to immigration problems, Cortessis had to leave school and returned to live with his relatives in Columbus, Ohio. This turned out to be a blessing for it was there he met a young schoolteacher, Catherine Speros. They were married on June 18, 1950. Father James’ prayers for twins were answered when they were blessed with the birth of their first two children, twins Vassilios and Maria, on their first wedding anniversary. Cortessis supported his young family by working three jobs – as a bellboy, a factory worker, and as a butcher.

In 1952, Cortessis returned to Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, to complete his studies. He left Catherine and the children back in Columbus with his mother-in-law, Despina Speros. She was a devoted yiayia to her grandchildren, caring for them while Catherine taught elementary school.

Ordination soon followed where Cortessis was given the name James (Iakovos) and by September 1953, Father James, Presvytera Catherine and the twins boarded a train to Cheyenne, Wyoming where he would serve as parish priest at Saints Constantine and Helen Church for 12 years. During their time in Cheyenne, Father James and Presvytera Catherine welcomed two more sons into their family, Angelo and Constantinos (Takie). Father James' ministry extended into Casper, Wyoming where he helped this small congregation establish a parish of their own and even complete the building of the church. He also served other small communities throughout the state of Wyoming.

In 1965, the Tavlarides' loaded up their 1956 Buick and traveled to the deserts of Arizona, where Father James served as the priest at Holy Trinity Church in Phoenix. His inspirational leadership of this community lasted for 26 years. During this time, the church grew and required expanded facilities. Upon relocation to a larger parcel of land, the church became a thriving Orthodox Christian community. Father James was also active as a teacher and was visionary in his ministry. Over 40 years ago, Father James incorporated the use of English in the Divine Liturgy and encouraged the faithful to prepare for and partake frequently of Holy Communion.

With the Lord's guidance and the leadership of Father James, the parish of Holy Trinity achieved several milestones including the Consecration in 1983, and the elevation to a Cathedral in 1988. Holy Trinity Cathedral also became the mother church of the greater Phoenix area, nurturing the development of three other Greek Orthodox communities to provide for the spiritual needs of this growing area.

Following his retirement in 1991, Father James and Presvytera Catherine moved to Palm Desert, California where he served as the priest of the Saint George parish. Again, with the Lord's guidance, the community took on an ambitious building campaign which developed into a strong congregation of faithful believers.

Father James loved the Lord with all his heart, and wanted nothing more than to serve Him and be His instrument in bringing others to know the depth of Christ's love. He spoke his mind, but always with pure intentions to keep people on a straight and narrow path towards salvation.

His family brought him great joy and fulfillment, and he was able to share many years with them, and with the many spiritual children whose lives he guided through his wise counsel. His ministry impacted thousands of people, and he continued to praise God until his final days on earth.

Father James was predeceased by Presvytera Catherine who reposed in the Lord on Pascha in 2017. Sadly, six months later, Father James would lose his youngest son, Constantinos (Takie) to

cancer. He is survived by his children William (Rebecca), Diakonissa Maria (Deacon John) Thrasher, Angelo (Mary), and daughter-in-law Nickolette. Father James was also blessed with 12 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren, with one more expected in the coming months.

The services for Father James will be officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and will be held at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 1973 East Maryland Avenue, Phoenix, AZ. The Trisagion Service will be prayed on Tuesday, May 8 at 7:00 p.m. with visitation beginning at 6:00 p.m. On Wednesday, May 9, Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:00 a.m., followed by the Funeral at 10:00 a.m. The burial will be held at Saint Anthony Greek Orthodox Monastery, 4784 N. St. Joseph's Way, Florence, AZ.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be offered in memory of Father James Tavlarides to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 1973 East Maryland Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85016.

***May his memory be eternal!***