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ST. SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



the testament



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the testament

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FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Parishioners,

As I close out my time as the Co-Editor of the Testament, I wanted to reflect on the past and how it has shaped the person I am today.

For 35 years, St. Sophia has been my second home. I've been fortunate to be a part of the St. Sophia community from infancy to now as a young adult. It's also been a blessing to have Fr. Pat as both my Spiritual and actual father, watching him serve our Church and guiding his parishioners all these years.

I was born at St. Peter's Hospital, a couple blocks from the church. I learned my ABC's, how apple cider is made, and all about *Stone Soup* at the St. Sophia Nursery School with Teacher Mary Sokaris (yes, she'll always be Teacher Mary to me). I attended Sunday School under the direction of Mary Pat and the late Chris Googas, learned to Greek Dance, with Mrs. Yavis as our Dance Director, and danced for years at the Greek Festival. My Friday's were often spent running around with friends playing kickball and watching movies during JOY nights and learning how to make prosforo for the first time. In high school, with GOYA, learning about community service, going on trips to Wildwood and Disney World, and participating in the Direct Archdiocesan District's Junior Olympics.

As a young adult, I've been active in our community serving as a Sunday School teacher, Sunday School Director, and Co-Editor of The Testament. Previously, I served as a youth advisor and was an active member in the Maids of Athena and Daughters of Penelope and assisted in the planning of various events in our community.

To me, this is just a short summary of my time growing up here at St. Sophia. There are too many memories that I could fill this article with, about each individual experience, that it would likely take up pages in this edition of The Testament. Instead I will hold onto those memories and share with anyone who asks to hear about them.

Through the years, we as a community have experienced laughter, love, and sadness together. While at times there was hardship, overall it was filled with joy.

As Fr. Pat said during his speech at his celebration luncheon and in his last sermon here, St. Sophia will always be considered a part of our family. Just as the pivotal theme and quote in the movie ***Lilo & Stitch (2002)***, "**Ohana' means family. Family means nobody gets left behind or forgotten.**"

We want to thank the community for the beautiful event held on June 7th in honor of Fr. Pat. To see over 450 family, friends, and parishioners come together to celebrate 37 years at St. Sophia was very moving. We will always keep you in our hearts and continue to keep in touch.

We welcome Fr. Neofitos, Presvytera Catherine and their children, George and Eleni to St. Sophia and wish them many blessed years ahead, just like our family has been fortunate enough to have.

We cherish the memories we've shared together and look forward to the future memories to come.

With love and respect,

Michél-Gabrielle Legato

OUTGOING CO-EDITOR & DESIGNER
THE TESTAMENT



FROM THE EDITOR: PHOTO GALLERY



SUNDAY SCHOOL GRADUATION 2000



GREEK FESTIVAL MAY 2000



JUNIOR OLYMPICS MAY 2006
THE TESTAMENT



JOY/GOYA DISNEY TRIP APRIL 2007



GREEK FESTIVAL MAY 2006



ALBANY SONS & MAIDS ANNUAL VALENTINES DANCE 2019

TOGETHER WE GREW: A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE



June 30, 2026

My Dearly beloved parishioners,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for so many wonderful and Christ-filled experiences. Time seemed to stand still for a moment when, as I approached the ending of the Divine Liturgy this past Sunday, I gazed out at all the parishioners standing and saw the faces of the many I have had the responsibility to guide to the Lord. What I saw truly was moving and emotional. The experience was most humbling.

I am so grateful the Lord allowed for my ministry to St. Sophia. The first time I entered the church thirty seven years ago, I said to myself that someone made a mistake. I felt neither excited or sad, but unworthy. His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos must have made a mistake, I mused to myself.

Who would have thought that the majority of my life would be spent in the hallowed altar of St. Sophia for nearly four decades.

I owe so much to the wonderful communicants who have come and gone from our midst. I was entrusted with all your spiritual comforts, discomforts, apprehension, success, disappointments, challenges, and victories. I was entrusted with your lives and felt overwhelmed at times and yet grateful. It was the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit that always seemed to inspire me and provide me an answer or solution.

Here I found love, support and profound guidance. At times, I lost focus, but the inspirational Lord always brought me back to reality with a kind word, suggestion, or soft whisper. And yes, at times, He overturned the tables and chided me to, "get with the program."

We accomplished so much together that I look around and still think, someone made a mistake. All the joy and laughter, tears and sorrow, hard work and lazy days made us grow together. Here, I found a family, and along with each other, we experienced it all. We endured and accomplished, built and remodeled, thought and pushed ourselves to accomplishment. It was truly a group effort.

I do apologize to anyone I may have offended, and humbly ask for forgiveness for my shortcomings. I was not perfect in the beginning. I am not perfect today, but I am enthusiastic and comforted in knowing that our Messiah has great plans in store for us.

This is not the end. This is just the beginning.

Presbytera, Theodosia, Michél-Gabrielle and I thank you for embracing us and allowing us to make our home here for so many years.

So welcome to the future. It is bright, welcoming, and beckoning us to grow continuously in His Grace. May His light always shine and intensify, and may His Kingdom be our dwelling place and mighty reunion.

With respect and love,

Fr. Pat & Family

FR. PAT'S INSIGHTS

It is so easy to lose our way.

Let's take a look at Sam Papalagouras and his family. They were the model Orthodox Christian family. Sam grew up loving the Church, and spent his youth fascinated by the stories of Jesus, as told to him through the eyes of his grandmother, his Sunday school teachers, and especially his priest. He was so impressed with the meaningful mission of the Lord that he even tossed around the idea in his mind of becoming a priest, that is, until he went away to college. It was there where he discovered a very different lifestyle. The result was subtle, but he slowly began to wander away from the life of the church. Activities, frat parties and the central meeting place at his university, the College Union consumed most of his time. It was there that he also met Panagiota. She was everything he had dreamed about. She was smart, good looking and had a bubbly personality. The entire CU seemed to gravitate towards her.

Maybe she was out of his league, he thought, and then she sat down at the table where he was holding court with his friends. One by one the fraternity broke up until it was just the two of them. It was Panagiota who initiated the conversation. Sam was amazed at her knowledge and ability to converse about so many subjects. They had clicked! It was then that "Yota" told Sam that she had seen him in church a few times, but not recently and wondered why he had stopped coming. Sheepishly, he made a few excuses, but none seemed pausable. He then volunteered to meet her on Sunday just as she began to rise to head back to class. He knew right then and there that he was going to marry this girl.

And so it happened....

Soon after graduation they were married in the Orthodox church Yota had grown up in. They found excitement and closure attending Services every Sunday. Shortly thereafter, they had two children to compliment their relationship, and the family as one began their vibrant trek to church. The kids participated in all the activities of the church starting with JOY and through GOYA, but there was a subtle change happening. The kids were so immersed in activities away from the church, that Sunday attendance was becoming less and less frequent.

Music lessons, sporting events, school plays, homework, and travel teams seemed to consume the family and before long church became a once a month family event and eventually a twice a year family reunion. The Papalagouras family had become victim to the move from religious sanctification to secular overindulgence. The church, once their cornerstone of life, had become a non-entity. Demetrios and Maria often complained that church was a “waste of a good Sunday.”

Sadly, Sam and Panagiota had lost their interest as well. However, God is patient and kind, understanding and forgiving, and all He needs is an opening.

One Sunday, Yota was on her way to have breakfast with a friend. The trip took her towards church, and like a homing pidgeon, she absent mindedly turned into the church parking lot. Other parishioners were also on their way into the lot. What was she to do? Feeling boxed in, she exited the car and began walking into the church. “What,” she thought, “No questions?” She went through all the motions. She purchased a candle, lit it and went to a pew she used to frequent. She could feel the eyes piercing the back of her head, felt the faces of everyone turning and staring at her. Even the priest appeared to take a second look back at her while censuring. Self conscious, she began to sweat profusely, constantly wringing her hands, and even started to slump down in the seat. Her breathing quickened and she was preparing to run out of the church, and started to stand, when the priest turned to face the congregation and proclaimed, “With the fear of God, faith and love...” The Holy Communion invitation was being proclaimed.

She had no choice. She proceeded down the aisle and received Holy Communion. She was awestruck, and consumed by the “Bread of Life,” reigniting the Light within her. Something changed or sparked within her. The fire, which she thought had extinguished, had come back to life. She became emotional and joyous at her renewed spirit. Soon, the service ended and Father George came out to give the sermon.

He spoke about St. Peter and his relationship to Jesus. He related that Peter was a fisherman, who was called to become an Apostle. He was a friend and very boastful about his protective proclamations towards Christ. Father also reminded the congregation that Jesus had foretold Peter that he would deny Him three times, and seemingly betray their relationship, and after Jesus was arrested, Peter found the courage or the curiosity to follow Jesus to the courtyard of the High Priest where Peter did deny Christ three times fulfilling the prophecy. Tormented by his betrayal, Peter left and wept uncontrollably. “Yota” knew the story and felt the same pang of betrayal. “How quickly one can lose their way,” she thought to herself.

Father continued his sermon and stated that even with his betrayal and suffering in misery, Peter was not abandoned by Christ. Jesus would appear to Peter after the Resurrection and question him three times asking, "Do you love me?" Christ's response after Peter had overturned his thrice denial said, "Tend my sheep, and feed my lambs." All was forgiven and all was restored.

We all lose our place. We are, by nature, wanderers. Sometimes, we separate from the Church and abandon our relationship to God. We forget the purpose of Sunday, "the Lord's Day." No matter our circumstances, and actions, God never stops loving us, and it is never too late to return. We all become doubters, question teachings and practices of the church, bemoan our losses, get overwhelmed with the mundane and lose our way. We slip away and think we have abandoned Christ and are so embarrassed, hide from the Lord. His Light is the face of forgiveness and love. He is patient and kind, and we...are human.

"Yota" had turned into that church parking lot that day, because Christ guided her back. There were no recriminations, and no pointed fingers. She felt the Holy Communion burn away her sins, and felt one with Christ, just as St. Peter had. She too was forgiven, and reclaimed. She and the rest of the family had simply prioritized events over church.

On that day, things changed in the Papalagouras household. Yota's epiphany became the rallying event to return to what is truly our home, Church. The Papalagouras family had become wound up and were spinning in a different direction, but a car that had a mind of its own began the return of the family back to church and a restored life in Christ. To this day, the Papalagouras family regularly attend services and are active in all facets of worship and support. Oh, and Maria has since married and her family has joined in the festivities of growing in His grace, as well..

It is so easy to lose our way. The Sun is patient, warm, full of light and an abundance of love. If we begin to wander, please remember the Papalagouras family. They are no different than any of us. Have a blessed summer.

A little backstory...

Over the years I have endeavored to share the exploits of the "Papalagouras family." They are actually a combination of people I've encountered through the years and are all of us in some ways. They came to me in the summer of 1975 while serving as a counselor at Ionian Village in Greece. It was there that I discovered many of my shortcomings and wanted to share them. They became the influencing factor of finding my way back to the Church. It still took eight more years to fully commit myself to a life in Christ, because there was so much to change, but the Lord always seemed to Light the path while I was busy trying to avoid him. The "Papalagouras family" has, is, and shall always be my pathway to the Lord. He lights the path, and I have been lucky that they influenced me as well.

I dedicate my last message of the Testament to the divine guidance of the Lord and to the Papalagouras family; They really are all of us.

FR. PAT'S INSIGHTS FROM JANUARY 1990

PASTOR'S MESSAGE.....

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to harvest that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones;
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to tear, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace;...."

(Ecclesiastes 3)

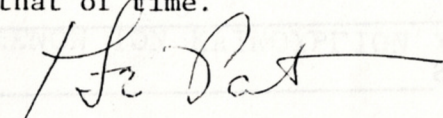
Time is a very precious resource. Yet, it is not often viewed as such. The start of the New Year provides us with an opportunity to reflect on this. The Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament tells us that "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven...." For most of us, though, time is nothing more than the face of a clock, which sets the rhythm of our lives and calls us to the tasks which we have set for ourselves. If we could view time from a different perspective, however, we would come to see it for what it really is....a precious resource and a gift from God!

It has been given to us, like all other gifts, in the form of a trust to be used with the utmost care, in service to God Who gave it.

One can only be saddened, however, when we contemplate how wasteful we are of this resource; how much we all take it for granted. We cannot help but wonder how many of us will give thanks this dawning of a new day, filled with new opportunities, new wonders and new beginnings. We also cannot help but wonder how much of it will be wasted on investments which do not last.

Therefore, take but a moment to consider the value of God's gift of time. Ponder how we will use it. Resolve that it will not be wasted and misused, but rather that it will be treasured as a resource more precious than gold, more radiant than resplendent rays of sunshine, and enjoyed with the reverence and gratitude it deserves.

As we embark on this New Year, let us look ahead and prepare. Let us all prepare for the gifts which God offers us, most especially that of time.



Father Pat

PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT



Dear Parishioners,

As the saying goes, “Don’t be sad because it’s ending, be happy that it happened.” And what a tremendous blessing it has been for all of us to share in Fr. Pat’s 37 years of ministry at St. Sophia.

For nearly four decades, Fr. Pat has been a steady and enduring presence in the life of our parish and in so many of our own personal journeys — celebrating births and baptisms, weddings and anniversaries, offering comfort during times of loss, and sharing in the countless moments that have shaped our individual lives and our community. From festivals and dances to retreats, trips, youth overnights, coffee hours, and the everyday moments in between, Fr. Pat’s pastoral care, good humor, and love for this parish have truly touched generations of families.

I imagine my own family’s experience is much like yours. Fr. Pat welcomed me to Albany 27 years ago with warmth and kindness. He baptized our three daughters, has always graciously welcomed my parents whenever they visit, and has been a constant source of encouragement, support, and friendship through the years. His presence has simply always been there — reliable, caring, and uniquely Fr. Pat.

We are deeply grateful for everything Fr. Pat has done for St. Sophia and for each of us personally. His ministry has helped shape our parish in immeasurable ways.

As we prepare to celebrate and honor Fr. Pat’s service to St. Sophia, we also extend our deepest gratitude to Presbytera Eva, Theodosia, and Michél for the many ways they, too, have contributed to and supported our parish family over these many years.

We look forward to coming together as a community to celebrate a remarkable ministry, a beautiful family, and a legacy of service that has shaped St. Sophia for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Michael N. Christakis, Ph.D

Michael N. Christakis, Ph.D
President, Parish Council

ORTHODOX OBSERVER

ALBANY PARISH CELEBRATES FR. PATRIC LEGATO'S 37 YEARS OF FAITHFUL MINISTRY

BY MICHAEL CHRISTAKIS, PH.D. | JUNE 19, 2026



ALBANY, NY – More than 450 parishioners, friends, clergy, and community leaders from near and far gathered on June 7 at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church in Albany to celebrate the ministry of Rev. Fr. Patric Legato and honor his 37 years of devoted service to the parish and the broader Capital Region Greek-American community.

The appreciation luncheon marked a significant milestone as Fr. Pat prepares to conclude nearly four decades of ministry at St. Sophia, a parish he has helped shape through spiritual leadership, pastoral care, and an unwavering commitment to the growth of the Church and its people.

Founded in 1922, St. Sophia has served Orthodox Christians throughout New York's Capital Region for more than a century. During that time, Fr. Pat's 37-year pastorate has represented one of the most significant chapters in the parish's history, characterized by growth, stability, and a deepening of the community's faith life.

The celebration brought together generations of parishioners whose lives have been touched by Fr. Pat's ministry. Current and former parishioners, youth, and parish leaders reflected on the profound impact he has had on the parish community since his arrival in Albany in 1989. Throughout the program, speakers shared memories and stories highlighting Fr. Pat's unique ability to build relationships, offer guidance during life's most important moments, and cultivate a welcoming church community grounded in faith, service, and fellowship. They spoke of his presence at baptisms, weddings, graduations, illnesses, and funerals—moments that have defined the lives of countless families throughout his ministry.

Throughout the program, speakers shared memories and stories highlighting Fr. Pat's unique ability to build relationships, offer guidance during life's most important moments, and cultivate a welcoming church community grounded in faith, service, and fellowship. They spoke of his presence at baptisms, weddings, graduations, illnesses, and funerals—moments that have defined the lives of countless families throughout his ministry.

Among the highlights of the event was a slideshow featuring photographs spanning Fr. Pat's years of service. Also included were messages and tributes from parishioners and friends, reflecting the deep affection and gratitude felt throughout the community.

It was also noted that under Fr. Pat's leadership, St. Sophia experienced significant growth and transformation. During his tenure, the parish expanded its ministries, strengthened religious education programs, enhanced youth engagement, and undertook major capital and beautification projects. Most notably, Fr. Pat championed the parish's iconography project, helping transform the church sanctuary into a lasting testament to Orthodox faith and tradition.

Beyond St. Sophia, Fr. Pat has been a visible and respected presence throughout the Capital Region's Greek-American community. For nearly four decades, he has represented the Orthodox faith at civic and interfaith gatherings, supported local philanthropic and cultural initiatives, and fostered relationships that strengthened ties between the parish and the broader community. His ministry has helped ensure that St. Sophia remains not only a spiritual home for Orthodox Christians, but also a vibrant center of Hellenic faith, culture, and service.

Parish Council President Dr. Michael Christakis noted that Fr. Pat's influence extends far beyond the walls of the church.

"For 37 years, Fr. Pat has been a spiritual father, mentor, counselor, and friend to generations of parishioners," Christakis said. "His legacy is reflected not only in the growth of our parish, but in the countless lives he has touched through his ministry, compassion, and steadfast commitment to the Church."

As part of the celebration, Fr. Pat was presented with a framed watercolor rendering of St. Sophia Church inscribed, "With Love and Appreciation." The Parish Council also announced that a commemorative icon has been commissioned in honor of Fr. Pat, Presvytera Eva, and their daughters.

The icon will be permanently installed in the church as a tribute to the family's enduring contributions to St. Sophia and their role in advancing the parish's iconography vision.

The celebration concluded with prayers of thanksgiving and well wishes as parishioners expressed their gratitude for Fr. Pat's faithful service and wished him and his family God's continued blessings in the next chapter of their journey. While his pastoral assignment may be changing, those gathered reflected on a legacy that will continue to shape St. Sophia for generations to come.

Dr. Michael Christakis is Parish Council President of St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church in Albany, New York. A lifelong member of the Greek Orthodox Church, he has served the parish in numerous leadership roles and currently serves as Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment at the University at Albany.

source: <https://orthodoxobserver.org/albany-parish-celebrates-fr-patric-legatos-37-years-of-faithful-ministry/>

Through the years...

On June 7th, The St. Sophia community, family, and friends gathered to celebrate and honor Fr. Pat in his service to our parish over the last 37 years. As we close out the month, and to pay tribute this final edition of The Testament under Fr. Pat, this issue will be dedicated to him in his honor.

Thank you to everyone who sent in all the photos through the years from Holy Sacraments, JOY & GOYA memories, Greek festival, his spiritual teachings and more.



PICTURED ABOVE: 40 DAY BLESSING OF
GEORGIE MARINOPOULOS.
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY THE MARINOPOULOS FAMILY.



PICTURED LEFT: VARIOUS PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY THE
PARISHIONERS OF ST. SOPHIA.





IN THE CHURCH



IN THE CHURCH



MINISTRIES



JOY/GOYA



JOY/GOYA



JOY/GOYA



IN THE COMMUNITY



IN THE COMMUNITY



2026 GREEK FESTIVAL



PHOTOS FROM THE 2026 GREEK FESTIVAL
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2026 GREEK FESTIVAL



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2026 GREEK FESTIVAL



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