



FR. JOHN A. LIMBERAKIS
Protopresvyteros of the Ecumenical Patriarchate
Pioneer Priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America for 60 Years
October 7, 1925 ~ June 10, 2010

Father John A. Limberakis, 84 a leading priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America for over 60 years died in Philadelphia, with his loving wife Elizabeth and his children and grandchildren at his bedside. Known as a builder of churches, he led four Greek Orthodox parishes (Fresno, California, Cranston, Rhode Island, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania and Valley Forge (Jeffersonville), Pennsylvania in building houses of worship. A senior priest in the Philadelphia area since 1970, he served in various leadership and ecclesiastical capacities for the Greek Orthodox Church.

Father John was born on October 7, 1925 in Boston, Massachusetts of immigrant parents, Anthony John and Evangeline Karadimitriou Limberakis, who left their homeland of Alatsata, a suburb of Smyrna, Asia Minor in 1922. The eldest of four children, he attended public schools in Somerville, Massachusetts and at age 16, graduating high school in his junior year, he enrolled in Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology when it was located in Pomfret, Connecticut. Upon graduation in 1948, he was appointed registrar of the Seminary, serving as executive secretary to the late dean, the Rt. Rev. Athenagoras Cavvadas, who was also bishop of New England. He pursued graduate studies, first in Fresno, California, then in Providence, Rhode Island and finally in Philadelphia. He received Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Divinity (BD) degrees from Holy Cross School of Theology and a Master of Arts (MA) degree from Temple University.

Prior to his ordination into the holy priesthood on November 8, 1949, The Feastday of the Archangels, he married Elizabeth Constantine, a native of Los Angeles, California. They raised four children, two girls and two boys. Their firstborn, Evangelyn, died at age 11, and is buried in Providence, Rhode Island. Their eldest son, Cary, married to Alexis Demetris, is a dentist in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania with four children; Anthony, married to Maria Borden, is a radiologist in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with three children and two grandchildren; and Catherine, married to James T. Tsatalis, is a school teacher by profession with three children, in Dayton, Ohio.

Father John's first pastoral charge was in Fresno, California, where he immediately initiated a church building program resulting with the relocation of the parish and the construction of a new Byzantine Church of St. George in the suburbs. In 1955 he was assigned to the Annunciation in Providence,

Rhode Island where once more the parish relocated and erected a new church edifice in the suburb of Cranston. He came to Philadelphia in 1970 and was assigned to the Annunciation in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania where the following year construction began on its new Byzantine edifice. In 1990, he retired from the Annunciation and within a week was asked by the Archdiocese to once again, shepherd a parish in need of a house of worship, St. Sophia in Norristown, Pennsylvania. Always eager to serve the needs of the church, he accepted this challenge with alacrity and dedication. Upon his arrival at St. Sophia's a new building program was launched. The parish relocated to the gateway of historic Valley Forge in 1996, not far from the site where George Washington wintered his troops during the American Revolutionary War. In each parish Father John served, building programs were inaugurated, parishes were relocated and new edifices completed.

The church has honored Father John with the Byzantine ecclesiastical offikia of *Economos*, *Sakelarios* and *Protopresvyteros of the Ecumenical Patriarchate*. He was bestowed the high honor of Crossbearer of the Holy Sepulcher (Σταυροφόρος του Παναγιου Ταφου) , a title presented by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. He served in various capacities of elected office for the clergy locally and at the diocesan and archdiocesan levels. He was active in inter-faith and ecumenical affairs wherever he served, and had often been asked to represent his church at various high-level conclaves. During his active priesthood he worked unceasingly to minister to the needs of his flock. On The Feastday of the Archangels, November 8, 2009, Father John celebrated his 60th anniversary to the priesthood.

Father John led some 10 pilgrimages to the Holy Land, often ascending Mount Sinai and continuing on to the Spiritual Center of world Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul. In 2004 he witnessed the return of the Holy Relics of St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom to the Ecumenical Patriarchate from the Vatican where they had been held for 800 years since the Fourth Crusade of 1204. With his family and fellow pilgrims he visited some of the most significant monasteries throughout the Holy Land, Greece and Asia Minor.

Father John A. Limberakis was an exemplary pioneer priest in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America having shepherded four parishes into building houses of worship. A dynamic homilist and liturgist, a devoted husband of 60 years, a loving father, grandfather and great grandfather, he always supported and defended the Mother Church of Constantinople, the Ecumenical Patriarchate. His remarkable and pioneering ministry will long be remembered by the thousands of lives and souls who were comforted by his loving pastoral care.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the St. Sophia Building Fund.