

# LOOKING TOWARDS OUR CENTENNIAL

**D**o you have fond memories growing-up in Sacramento? As we approach our 100<sup>th</sup> year as a Greek Orthodox parish here in California's Capitol, maybe you'd like to share some of your memories and reflect on the past, maybe even at 620 N Street, or what it was like going to Sunday School in the old Victorian house next to the current church at Alhambra and F Street.

Your stories are welcome. Just give me a call (916-455-5682) or leave word with Effie at the office, (916-443-2033).

The following article was written by Mr. Bill Triphon who graciously shared his reflections and thoughts as we look toward the future.

Terry Kastanis

*Chair, History Committee*

## **THE ANNUNCIATION PARISH: A Retrospective view from a long time parishioner**

**I** was born in 1951 (the year the new Annunciation was dedicated) and baptized in our current church. I have fond recollections of growing up in our church in the fifties and sixties and I suppose people would call me and those like me a cradle orthodox. The importance of the church at that time was two-fold; first, the church was our religious home, and second, it served as a cultural gathering place to speak Greek and preserve the customs, culture, and values of the native homeland. The parishioners sixty years ago were comprised mainly of Greek immigrants and their first-generation children. The church helped us adapt to living in two worlds - America and Greece. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in Greek, and when I traveled to Greece in 2005 the church service was almost identical to what I experienced as a child; it was heartwarming and brought back memories of Father Parthenios Kirimitsis celebrating the Liturgy.

During my formative years, a great number of us children regularly attended Sunday School. We lacked a formal education building, but classes were taught in the old Hellenic Center using rolling blackboards as dividers separating the classes. Our Sunday School teachers were most often professional teachers since at the time women were encouraged to go into teaching or nursing as traditional professions, and I felt the instruction was excellent. One of my happiest times was receiving Holy Communion. Many of us had immigrant parents, and we were taught to fast prior to receiving holy communion with rigid rules. However, even though I felt a sense of satisfaction when fasting, I was really excited to have donuts, pastries, or pancakes, and milk waiting for me and everyone else in Sunday School following communion. Sometimes the simplest things give the greatest pleasure. It is a happy memory that many of us treasure from that time, and we still enjoy thinking and reminiscing about it today.

During the fifties and sixties fraternal clubs were quite popular; the Messinian and Roumeli clubs and other similar organizations were made up of members from various parts of Greece, but the two largest fraternal organizations were AHEPA (American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association) which was formed in the South to combat racism and promote Hellenism and GAPA (Greek American Progressive Association) which was formed to preserve Greek language and culture. My family was in the AHEPA and my father, Ted Triphon, was secretary for over 30 years. Many other parishioners were also involved; Eugene Fotos was president of GAPA and Aris Kufasimes was president of the AHEPA; both men were patriots to both Greece and America and charismatic leaders. I was a member of the Sons of Pericles and fondly recall the conventions and basketball tournaments and other social events.

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In those days it felt like the church was one big Greek family and it seemed that you knew most people; Sacramento's population was much smaller, most people lived close to the church, and only one Greek Orthodox church existed. Additionally, there was a sense of community whereby, we felt that other Greeks parents were looking out for us. During that time, we children were cautious and I'd even go as far as to say we were afraid someone would see us doing something mischievous or something frowned upon, and tell our parents which would lead to our inevitable punishment.

I have a few other memories from the sixties that made a great impression on me. First, when I was serving in the altar, I met Archbishop Iakovos when he came to Sacramento and he spoke to all the altar boys which made us feel quite special. Another event of significance was when the stained glass windows were installed in the church. As a child the transformation of the church with the stained-glass windows was wondrous; the windows made God, Christ, and the Virgin Mary more real to me. The beauty of the windows was breathtaking. I'm told they came from Holland, a very famous artist by the name of Louis Boermeester, well-vested in the aesthetic tradition of Byzantine art. They cost \$1,000 each which seemed like such an exorbitant amount to me, but I could never place a monetary value on the windows since they seem to transport me closer to Christ and make our religion more tangible.

Sacramento has increased in size since then and people live farther from the church seemingly necessitating three churches in the area (Elk Grove, Roseville, and the Annunciation). Our parish is different now in that family members have passed, others have moved away, and new families have moved to Sacramento. While many people of my generation may feel as if we no longer know many of the other people in church, the purpose of the church is the same - to protect Orthodoxy and promote our faith. We are still a strong viable parish with a bright future if we work together, and I still recall a sermon of Father Kirmitsis in which he said, "A single stick is easily broken but a bundle of sticks together are strong and cannot be easily broken". I believe unity will be the key to our growth.

We have a great deal to be proud of as Greek Orthodox Christians; while it may be nostalgic to recollect the past, our responsibility is to preserve the parish and leave it in a better position than we found it for our children and their children.

Sincerely,

Bill Triphon

