

Christ is in our Midst!
He is and Always Shall Be!

A single skilled musician can bring forth a beautiful melody in the sound created by their solitary instrument or voice. Free of any distraction they can create a clear note that resonates in the ear of the listener. Yet, when that individual musician is joined by another, equally skilled in manner, they create a beautiful harmony that further enhances each chord that is struck. Continue to add musicians, trained in the same way, and the music takes on a fuller sound, each note a deeper and dynamic tone, until its sound fills the entire room, no matter its size, lifting the listener with each crescendo to a new experience of cohesive delight.

Each musician however, does not begin their journey as a virtuoso. It takes many years of effort and struggle; even failure, before one can tune their skills to the tone set before them.

Our Mom, Presbytera Margaret, by her own account was a young, shy girl born in Brooklyn, New York. The youngest of three sisters she preferred the quiet company of her friends to the boisterous gatherings of large groups. Raised in the Church of Kimisis Tis Theotokou, her love of God took root and flourished as she grew in both faith and stature.

When our Dad arrived from Greece, it was at the parish of Kimisis Tis Theotokou in Brooklyn, that he too found a spiritual home in America. Where he was able to work and support his family in Greece, and prepare himself to follow his call to serve God as a priest in the vineyard of the Church.

Their two separate melodies of praise soon were united as a duet, and through God's Grace, they were able to blend into a perfect harmony - even if Dad's notes may have been more bouncy and unrestrained, they were most assuredly grounded by Mom's tranquil and soothing style, creating a most pleasing sound.

Soon after their duet became a trio with the birth of their daughter, our sister Stephanie, then it was my turn, followed by my brother George and sister Kathy. The sound of our family 'band' of praise made all the more sweeter as our dear sister Stephanie's voice was added to the chorus of Angels at such a young age.

Our parents taught us, and more importantly showed us, how to open our hearts to the message of the Gospel, how to express our love for God in the manner in which we lived our life. That didn't mean that their weren't missteps - certainly there were plenty, but both of our parents demonstrated great patience and grace. Well... Mom perhaps a little more than Dad - but Dad too, in his own way, embodied such a wonderful model for all three of us to emulate. They were both incredible individuals and we feel blessed to call them Mom and Dad.

Mom had a certain eloquence and grace about her. She treated each of us fairly - but differently. She knew instinctively how to balance each of our particular characteristics and needs. Her lessons were the same - but she skillfully and adeptly presented each of us with the needed information, lesson or discipline in a manner that was tailored to each distinct child. That allowed us the time to pause, reflect, gain perspective, ask forgiveness and grow. She provided us with these wonderful tools as the three of us ventured out to follow our own call to serve the Church and praise God in the manner in which we live our lives. She shared these same gifts with our spouses and welcomed Vangie, George and Maria into her life as her own children, showing them the same love that she shared with us.

Over time our family grew and it was humbling to watch her share these same beautiful lessons with her nine Grandchildren. She saw the beauty of each one, and recognized the God given talents of each of them. She encouraged them, taught them and shared with them the same lessons that she had shared with us as children. She allowed opportunities for the talent of each grandchild to be appreciated, and the space for it to flourish - and through time, taught each one how to create their own inner joy adding to the orchestra of our family magnum opus.

Truth be told... these same examples of humility, patience and grace were shared with everyone who had the pleasure to meet our Mom, I'm sure my brother George and sister Kathy would agree. She greeted everyone with her carefree smile and treated each person in such a welcoming manner that you at once felt loved and appreciated.

She was an affectionate younger sister to Helen and Frances; a cherished Aunt to many nieces and nephews and their extended families; a Nouna to many beloved Godchildren; a mentor to many Presbyteras; a light to the Sunday School children of Saint George Church; an organized (let me restate that) a meticulously organized administrator of various programs such as the Oratorical

Festival and other Church related functions. She led by quiet example. She had a special love for plants and flowers and she herself became a most fragrant blossom in God's garden here on earth. She was particular in caring about her nutrition and made the best Avolemono, Gemisi, Meatless Pastichio, and pear-shaped cookies. She even purposely gathered all her family recipes and placed them into a beautiful cookbook that she had professionally bound for each of us. She had a deep love for Broadway Musicals, which she graciously and enthusiastically shared with each generation.

She still thought of herself as that quiet, timid young girl from Brooklyn - even though we saw her as a giant; a Presbytera of high character, dignity and grace. Only to be made more perfect through her suffering. Her inner strength was inspiring - perfected through God's Perfect Timing and through His Perfect Will.

Even her suffering was an opportunity for growth, not only for her, but for each one of us children and our spouses, and the grandchildren alike for we gathered around her, not to feel sorry for her, but to walk with faith - to meet every challenge - to make our Stavro, to give thanks to God, to seek the Panagia's intercessions and to recognize "angels unaware", of which many of you are to both our Mom Presbytera Margaret and to us.

She left our caring hands only to be received into the All-Encompassing Arms of our Lord and be reunited with her beautiful daughter - our sister Stephanie, her loving grandson John-Peter and her cherished husband, Fr. John. Margaret, once again made whole through God's Love. May we remember her in our thoughts, prayers and actions as she continues to ceaselessly intercede on our behalf - for God's Grace to fill our every need.

May her memory be eternal. Amen.