

Ordination Address of Efstratios (Yianni) Magoulas



Your Eminence, Metropolitan Tarasios, I would first like to begin by thanking you for being here today.

With humility, I stand before you today, asking that you invoke the Holy Spirit, that through the Grace of the Holy Spirit to change my imperfections and fill that which is lacking for the glory of His Holy Church as I enter into the ranks of the Holy Diaconate.

Almost a year ago, with the blessing of Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, I began the formal process of where I stand today. The past year has brought us so much uncertainty. But everyday, I give thanks to God for the health of my family, friends, and loved ones, neighbors and strangers. While these times are not what we are used to, I am thankful we are able to gather here today safely, to pray and celebrate the amazing and life-saving sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and the transformative sacrament of Holy Ordination.

But this journey has been more than just a year in the making. This journey to standing here, before the Holy Throne of God, has been one on my mind since my

earliest memories.

It is fitting to begin by thanking Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco. Your Eminence, from the moment I served as an acolyte at your elevation, to during my studies at Hellenic College-Holy Cross, to my service to the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Sacramento, I would like to thank you for your paternal guidance and constant prayers. Thank you also for the blessing to be ordained in my home parish, the parish where I grew up, and the only parish I attended until I left home for college. I was baptized in this church, I have sat in the pews here with my family and as a Sunday school student, I have served the Holy Altar here as an acolyte, I have prayed the beautiful hymns of our Church here throughout the liturgical year, and it is a blessing to be ordained here, to shortly be taken through the Beautiful Gates and to kneel before the Holy Altar, as the Holy Spirit is invoked to, “fill me with the totality of faith, love, power, and sanctification, by the descent of the Life-giving Spirit.”

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Tarasios. Since I was a young boy, I was enamored with your dedication and service to Christ our God. From your ministry in the Patriarchate, to the Metropolis of South America, and now, thankfully, just a few hours away at the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, I am thankful to have your prayers and guidance.

You may not know how much this means to me, but a few months ago you called me to discuss some ideas regarding PAOI and OCF. I am so very thankful for our relationship, and for your guidance and prayers throughout my entire life. You asked me just a month ago, “Why aren’t I your Godfather?” I laughed, and I am fortunate to trace my succession to Christ and the Holy Priesthood through your prayers and the Apostolic Tradition of the laying on of hands.

Just over a year ago you said to Danae and me... “For the prayers of parents make firm the foundations of households” We cannot do this alone, work, school, life, and most especially, our faith.

This prayer read at the Sacrament of Marriage has always had a special place in my heart. The prayers of our family have such a large impact on our lives.

In the corner of the TV room of my parent’s home there are a lot of pictures. These pictures are not art or scenery, they contain a very special, unique, family and church history.

First, there is a large picture of a young man with a trimmed goatee, standing before the Holy Altar. In 1910, my pro-pappou, the Reverend Father John Magoulas

came to this country from Greece. He met his wife, got married and began to start their life in the new world. As the Greek immigrants began to establish themselves, the need for the Church was ever-present in their hearts. The St. Athanasios Academy was formed in Astoria, New York, to train young men to serve and preach the Gospel of Christ in America. After a short program, my great-grandfather was ordained to the Holy Priesthood. In preparation for today we realized, my pro-pappou was ordained in 1921, 100 years ago. While I never met my pro-pappou, I have often found myself reflecting on and thinking about the person and priest that he was through the stories we share to this day.

Of their many children, two followed in his footsteps, the Reverend Father Nicholas J. Magoulas, of blessed memory (+2011) and Dr. Harry Magoulas. Both brothers attended our Holy Cross Theological School in Pomfret, Connecticut and were students during the move from Pomfret to Brookline. For 46 years, Fr. Nicholas faithfully served the Cathedral of St. Paul in Hempstead, New York. His wife, Presbytera Marilyn, Aunt Chickie, was unable to travel here to California, but I know she is watching online, and praying with us. Dr. Harry went on to write and teach Byzantine History at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. During my studies, I am thankful to have both been able to pray and celebrate the Divine Liturgy at St. Paul's many times, as well as read and learn from my great-uncle's publications during my studies.

Their oldest brother, Efstratios, my grandfather, gave birth to three children, the youngest being my father, the Reverend Father Jon Magoulas. My father attended our Σχολή and in 1977, he was ordained to the Holy Diaconate and Priesthood. Now in the 44th year of his ministry, he continues to serve here, at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Modesto, California, as well as serving on many Archdiocese and Metropolis committees.

Through the prayers of my forefathers and father, the foundations of our household and of our Faith, have been made firm. It is with their prayers, I enrolled in Hellenic College-Holy Cross, I have served faithfully the Annunciation parish in Sacramento, and it is with their prayers I humbly approach to serve before His Holy Altar.

For 100 years, a Magoulas has served Christ and His Church on American soil. I say this, not in a pompous or boastful manner, but referencing what was said in the Sacrament of Marriage, "For the prayers of parents make firm the foundations of households".

These prayers offered are from parents, as well as godparents. The role of the godparent is to spiritual guide and support their godchild. All the more important is

this calling when the godfather is a priest, and his godson is also following on this path. Fr. Nick, Nono... you have been a guide, a support system, a friend, and so much more. We have shared so much, especially in the beautiful services of our Church. Since Holy Week and Pascha of 2015, we have been able to walk together with Christ into Jerusalem, to His passion and crucifixion, and to celebrate His Glorious Resurrection. I thank God for all the experiences we have shared, and for all the more we will have, especially serving together at Christ's Holy Altar.

The Church provides us with the path to follow. The path is paved with the wisdom of the fathers, the blood of the martyrs, and lives of the saints. We walk this path with the help and guidance of our spiritual father. Fr. John Kocolas, for my entire life you have been a teacher, and a guide, even at our beloved Σχολή. Not only did you begin to teach me the beauty of Byzantine Chant, you were the one to bring me to the chant stand. In 2010 when I traveled to Boston to visit Hellenic College-Holy Cross for the first time, unfortunately, due to a parish emergency, my father was not able to come. You were the first person to take me to the chapel, to show me the campus, and the city. Now, through the beauty of our Church, you have searched the depths of my soul. I pray that for many years to come I will be blessed to have your spiritual guidance and prayers.

The ordination of my brother-in-law, Fr. Michael Prevas, to the Holy Diaconate was the first ordination that I understood or could really comprehend what was happening. In preparation for today, like the photo of my father and you at your ordination on the wall of our TV room, there is an image I cannot get out of my head. Like it was yesterday, I can still see you standing before the icon of Christ. I was young, only ten years old at the time of your ordination, but I saw the emotion, the prayer, the love and dedication to Christ, which I have always kept in my mind and my heart during my studies and in preparation for today. I find it so beautiful and fitting today, that my four nephews, three are your sons, are able to stand and serve where I did, at this same, beautiful, transformative Divine Liturgy and Sacrament of Ordination.

To Fr. James Retelas, and the Parish of the Annunciation in Sacramento, many of who are here today and even more are joining us online. Thank you so much for welcoming me into your parish. Over the past three years we have shared so much, we have laughed and danced together, we have cried and mourned together. As much as you welcomed me, you also welcomed my wife, Danae, into your open arms and hearts. We are so proud to call Sacramento our first home together, and the Annunciation parish will always be in our prayers.

To the Annunciation Parish here in Modesto, those who are physically here today

and those who are joining us online. As we all recently experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic, even though the church may seem empty, it never is. Standing here today, surrounded by the saints, reminds us that although not everyone is HERE, everyone IS here in the Divine Liturgy. Not many priest kids can say they grew up in one parish, even my sisters cannot say that. It is an honor to be a child of this parish, to have been baptized in this church, to have participated in her ministries, and to now serve before the Holy Altar.

There are many people who cannot be with us today, due to both distance, and the separation between this life and the next. Our family and loved ones who have passed before us, whom we remembered yesterday in the Saturday of the Souls, and who have been commemorated today, they too are here with us in the Divine Liturgy...

“For the prayers of parents make firm the foundations of households”

The prayers of my mother have so much influence in my life. Mom, words cannot explain how amazing, loving, and self-sacrificing you have been in our entire lives. I am so thankful to have always had a home cooked meal, a supporter at athletic events, a ride to and from school, even when I only lived a block away. Your prayers have raised and connected me to my three sisters. Presbyteria Matia, Maria, and Anastasia, I am so thankful you are able to be here today, and for always being here for me in everything and every event in my life.

Soon, I will take my first steps into the beautiful gates. These, the first steps of my ministry coincide with the first steps I took towards this calling almost 19 years ago in this church.

Dad, Pops, I remember the first day of my service as an acolyte so many years ago, like it was yesterday. As a child, I was and still am amazed at the prayerful precision and execution of every movement, something, you have shown and taught me over the years. I still remember the first day that I received the calling to be where I stand today. I always would come to Orthros with you, so that I wouldn't be late. I would help light the kantilia and make sure the church was in order before the services began. One morning before Orthros, while you were praying the service of Proskomidi, preparing the Holy Gifts for the Divine Liturgy, you saw me watching you. You invited me to the Prothesis and began to show me every liturgical vessel, (the chalice, the paten, the asterisks, the lance), explaining what each one meant, and why it is part of the Divine Liturgy. You read the prayers aloud for me, and connected the dots, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, to who we are called to be as Christians today.

Danae, my Danae, I cannot image a world without you. We were brought together through a ministry of the Church, I am thankful that from our first conversations when we met, you knew I was answering this calling. I am so thankful that we have been able to enjoy our first year of marriage, we have been able to get comfortable with this stage in our life, and walk together into this next chapter of our lives. As we met in a ministry, we will continue to grow in the ministries of Christ and His Church. I love you so much and I will also support you, as I know you always will support me.

I stand here today, boldly and confidently, because of all your lessons and with "The prayers of parents make firm the foundations of households". I stand here clothed in love, prayers, and support of my forefathers, family, spiritual father, dear clergy, and faithful parishioners. I stand here today, in the same white stixarion that my father wore at his ordination 44 years ago, which was made, with love and with her prayers, by my yiayia for her son.

Surrounded by the saints and the angels, by family and friends, both those with us here present, and those joining us in prayer who cannot be with us due to distance, and those looking down on us from heaven, with their love, prayers, and support, and with my wife by my side I know that I, that we, will never walk alone.

As this date was selected for my ordination to the Holy Diaconate, I could not help but think about the beautiful coincidence of the importance of this date, and its correlation with Judgement Sunday. Now the time has come to take the first steps, led by my family members, spiritual father, and respected clergy, into the Holy Altar, and to kneel and serve at the Throne of God, until the awesome and glorious

Second Coming.

I pray that the Lord may fill me, Your servant, whom You have consented to enter the ministry of a Deacon, with the totality of faith, love, power and sanctification by the descent of Your Holy and Life-giving Spirit. That I may one day stand blameless by You in the Awesome Day of Judgement and receive the true reward of Your promise.

goarch.org

