

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The first Greek settlers that came to this country, were uneducated and unable to speak the English language, however, they had faith and a dream to better their lives and the lives of their loved ones. With the simple living and the unity of their families, they placed a foundation in Tarpon Springs, developing a Greek community that established values, which consist of sacrifice (thisias), hard work, honor, love for their old and new country, and tradition. They tried to improve not only their lives, but also improve the lives of their children through education. The New Greek Americans became doctors, lawyers, teachers, priests, scientists, civic leaders in every branch of government, and most of all, they became very productive citizens with very strong family ties. Through their success, they still maintained their Greek identity and heritage. A lot of them and their children served with pride and honor in two World Wars for the United States, and also served in the Korean and Vietnam War.

The St. Nicholas Greek community has honored their memory by placing their names around the fountain that stands to the side of the church. The city of Tarpon Springs built a memorial for the veterans at the Springs Bayou to honor those persons for sacrificing their lives for our freedom.

THE BEGINNING

The history of the St. Nicholas Orthodox Church begins with the original Greek settlers in this small seaboard on the West Coast of Florida in the Gulf of Mexico. This small town is known as Tarpon Springs, more commonly known as “Greek town”. In the late seventies many people refer to this town as the Epiphany city.

In the 1896 the first Greek man John Cocoris, arrived in Tarpon Springs from the village of Leonidion, Kynourias, Greece. However, he was in the United States since 1895. John Cocoris became the founder of the sponge industry and the pioneer of the Greek community of Tarpon Springs. In 1898, he brought his brother George from Greece and in 1900, his other brother Elias followed.

John Cocoris went back to Greece in 1901, where he married Anna Nicoloulia, and then returned to America with another brother Constantine. When he brought Anna to Tarpon Springs, she was referred to as the first Greek woman to ever sew her roots in Tarpon.

During next couple of years, John and his brothers began to work for Mr. Cheney, because their expertise was in the area of cleaning sponges with chemicals. It was during this time that John and his brothers began using chemicals to bleach the sponges, which they found out that they would sell faster. John and Constantine would search the beaches and neighboring islands during their free time for sponges, which were known as the riches of the Gulf. In Tarpon, the only way at this time to retrieve sponges from the gulf was with a hook and spear, so John’s dream was to get the special equipment that was used in the

islands of Greece, and bring it back to this area. He wanted to create a very prosperous Greek island in Tarpon Springs.

John Cocoris took his wife Anna to New York while she was expecting their first child. It was during that time that he met Spiros Vouteris, which was a sponge dealer from Greece. John helped Spiro sell his sponges from Greece. They became very good friends, so John entrusted Spiro with his secrets about riches of the Gulf of Mexico.

Spiros returned to Greece and after awhile, he came back to New York with a complete sponge crew, along with a sponge engine and equipment, to replace the hook/spear that had been used since 1849, by the Key Westians and Conchs.

The crewmen were from the Island of Agena and they were Captain Paul Moutsatsos; the diver were Demosthenes Kavasilas and Stelios Basis, the two deckhands were Elephtherios Moutsatsos and Miltiades Stathes, who also worked as life-line tenders.

While in Tarpon Springs, George Cocoris bought from William Low, the boat "Pandora" for one hundred and eighty dollars. Later however, the Cocoris brothers decided to change the name of the boat to "Hope". They felt that this name was a symbol for their new enterprise in the sponge business. On June 18, 1905, the "Hope" sailed into the Anclote waters and out into the Gulf of Mexico for the first time.

Demosthenes Kavasilas was the first diver to work on the bottom of the Gulf. They, then bought the schooner "Pelican", and then more boats "Leonidion", "Amphitrite", "Agia Trias", "Chariclea", and "Colombia". More and more men from the islands of Hydra, Agena, and Spetses came to Tarpon to join this enterprise.

The young men who came here to work as spongers were happy of the working conditions and amazed at the riches of the Gulf of Mexico. These men wrote back to their homeland that the Gulf was less dangerous to work than the around Greece, because many men from the Aegean islands of Dodecanese, Kalymnos, Halki, and Symi began to arrive in Tarpon Springs. In 1905, five hundred young men arrived from these islands with enthusiasm and full of dreams. They had either left their families behind or were single at the time of their arrival.

By that time, the only Greek family was Anna and John Cocoris with their son Michael. Michael was born in New York and Anna's daughter Stamatina was the first Greek child born in Tarpon Springs in 1906.

As the growth of this town began, many other Greek immigrants came not only from Greece, but also from other parts of the United States and Canada. They brought with them their knowledge of the restaurant, grocery, tavern, and coffee house business. As time passed, the area began taking on the appearance of a typical island of Greece, as they

have created their homeland here in this town. They strived to maintain their customs, beliefs and tradition as they explored and started a new life.

The foundation of the Greek heritage is their religious beliefs. In 1907, the men who worked as spongers organized a committee to establish an Orthodox Church. The first President and organizer for this mission was Nicholas Peppas from Aghena. He arrived to this area from Canada. Upon his arrival, he was able to gather all the people from the different Islands to proceed and build the first church. The small-framed church was painted white with a cross over the entrance. The structure portrayed dignity though its small sized. The seating capacity held 250 people. It was named St. Nicholas in honor of the protector of the seamen. The Greek community was incorporated and chartered. The property was bought from John Cheney in 1907. At that time, it was purchased for three hundred dollars; however, it cost three thousand five hundred dollars to build. The first priest was Rev. Stamatis Koutouzis, followed by Chrysanthos Aggelopoulos, Chrysanthos Iakovidis, Arsenios Davis, Seraphim Stelidis and then George Papakonstantinou up until 1922.

In March of 1922, the Rev. Theophilos Karaphillis came to Tarpon Springs from Kalymnos and served as priest in St. Nicholas until 1954. He was ordained into the Greek Orthodox religion in January 1912. He served the Greek community of Tarpon and its neighboring communities, until he retired. Father Theophilos became well known throughout the communities for his patience, understanding and his long religious political activities. During his long term, he assisted with the architect beauty throughout the United States then and now. Furthermore, a larger Greek school and community hall was built for community events. Father Theophilos died in 1963, at the age of 80. His love for the church and community will be remembered forever. The Greek community honored him, as they escorted his flowered casket to the cemetery by foot (which would have been traditionally done if he were on his beloved island of Kalymnos).

In 1925, the Greek community built its first parochial school. Two hundred children daily attended the school, as they came after the conclusion of public school. Three teachers with five assistants held the classes, as they taught the Greek language, history, Greek culture, writing, reading, religion, and music. During Christmas and Greek Independence day, March 25, the students would perform ethnic and religious programs. This would not only be entertaining, but would also maintain the tradition of their parents' motherland.

In 1935, it was felt that the church was no longer able to house and serve its community, as the population grew to 2,700. The original frame was worn due to a fire that had occurred and as well as the normal process of aging. At a special general assembly meeting, it was voted unanimously to build a new church. Unfortunately, the problem they faced was that their current treasury account added up to only \$20,000, which was hardly enough money to start the process of building. Thanks to God, the spongers were generous as well as devoted to their church, because they assisted the fund raising without hesitation.

It was agreed to build the church similar to the church St. Sophia of Constantinople. A renowned architect Mr. P. Pippinos was consulted to prepare the plans of the future church, however, he unfortunately died before this could be done. The Eugene Brothers of Chicago were hired to perform this task, since they were known for their expertise in the Byzantine architecture. The cost of the church was estimated to be over 150,000 dollars. The spongers came up with a plan to raise the money that was needed to build the new church. They agreed to donate the best sponges to St. Nicholas, then the buyers would purchase sponges for an increased amount, in hopes to raise the money that was needed.

Many individuals and organizations donated to various aspects of the church, ie. furniture, icons, stained glass windows, sacramental vessels, and murals. The architects, Eugene Brothers of Chicago, sought to create an original design by combining the Byzantine architecture with Gothic décor and a touch of modern, thereby, deviate from the original Byzantine design that was used in all Greek Orthodox Churches. The one true Byzantine characteristic of the church is the large dome around which many stained glass windows have been placed to catch the sunlight as it shines into the church.

The windows depict various episodes in the life of Jesus Christ and various saints. These stained glass windows were hand painted in 1942 to 1943 by Joseph V. Llorens of Atlanta Georgia. Hanging from the center of the dome is a beautiful crystal chandelier that was imported from Czechoslovakia, which gleams with a thousand iridescent lights as the sunlight strikes on it. Three smaller chandeliers are added to help complete the lighting of the church.

The beautiful altar, throne of the Bishop, choir stalls, and other parts, were built of pure white selected marble of Mount Pentele, Athens, Greece. The marble weighted about 70 tons, and was sent by the Greek government to the Worlds Fair in 1939, for the building of the Greek wing. At the end of the exposition, the marble was dismantled and remained on the fair grounds. In January of 1943, George Frantzis, who was a special secretary to the Greek community of Tarpon Springs, wrote to the Greek Embassy in Washington for the marble. He explained to the Greek Embassy why the people of Tarpon Springs deserved to obtain the marble for the use of the church. The Embassy responded quickly and through the New York Consul, they sent to the people of Tarpon Springs the marble, as a gift from their motherland. The start of the new church began in the later part of 1941, and in May of 1942, they leveled the old church to the ground. After 35 years of the congregation attending the old church, sadness fell upon them because they realized that the old must be cast off, to make way for the new.

In January of 1943, during the Archbishop Athenagoras visit to St. Nicholas for Epiphany, he consecrated “one of the most beautiful Orthodox churches in the world”, as he proclaimed after the service. In 1948, they erected the marble Grecian “kiosk” as it was classic in its simplicity. This was to be used for the agiasmo “sanction of the waters” and for Easter services.

In the early 1950, the Greek community approved under the president and project director Phil Demas, to commission the renowned Greek Iconographer (one who paints icons) George Saklaridis, to create the icons of St. Nicholas church. This project had been approved by the Archdioceses. George Saklaridis was born in Nisyros of Dodecanese and became well known for his creative work in churches in Greece, United States and Canada.

During his 42 years of experience in painting iconography, he was able to capture the biblical expressions in the faces of the icons, because of his intensive study of the bible and his deep religious faith. In his paintings of Jesus Christ, they are all portrayed with the same facial expression (from the time Christ was a child to the moment he was a man). The icons were actually painted on a canvas in a studio located in New York.

Anxiously waiting for the unveiling of the Icons, the day finally came on October 29, 1952. The parishioners had the opportunity for the first time to view the first 29 icons, which was followed by 12 more icons by December of 1952. Gradually, icons were added during the following years.

The frames of the icons were covered in 24-karat gold leaf; others were framed in marble that was imported from Greece. Each icon represented a gift from various families or individuals of the church. Moreover, on January 6, 1965, a new altar was dedicated as part of the Epiphany services in memory of the late Very Rev. Theophilos Karaphillis, Pastor of St. Nicholas church for 32 years. He retired in 1954, but remained active in the church until he died on May 9, 1963. This new altar was made with white Carrara marble with a Florentine gold leaf mosaic of Jesus Christ centered on a Greek cross of yellow Sienna marble decorated on the front panel. A tabernacle of bronze and yellow Sienna matches the marble of the altar. This altar was a gift from Rev. Karaphillis son, Dr. John Karaphillis and family, and several members from the parish.

The priests, teachers, chanters and other community employees were paid by contributions and offerings of the Greek people of Tarpon Springs, St. Petersburg, and Clearwater. The largest income for the maintenance of the church was from the spongers. Beside their personal donations, they joined together and donated one and a half of one percent of the gross sales to the church.

The church board consisted of nine members. Two were Kalymnians, two Halkites, one Aeginites, one Symian, and three were from other parts of Greece. In later years, Archbishop Athenagoras suggested that all islands of Greece be represented, by a system of proportion to population. The board rose then to sixteen members, consisting of the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The elections were held on the third Sunday in January by secret ballot. The new board consisted of: three people from Halki, three from Kalymnos, two from Symi, two from Aegena, one from St. Petersburg, one from Clearwater and four members from other parts of Greece. These members volunteered their time to manage the affairs of the church. They played a key role when it was time to prepare for the festivals associated with the church and history of the Greek

tradition. Traditional celebrations that took place are Epiphany (Cross Day), Greek Independence Day (March 25th) and Orthodox Easter.

Three events that took place which are noteworthy are: the weeping of St. Nicholas icon, the proclamation of Tarpon Springs becoming the “Epiphany City”, and the elevation of the church to a Cathedral of West Florida.

On December 4, 1969, the framed icon of St. Nicholas located inside the main entrance of the church, was noticed by the cleaning person Kalliope Xypolitas to have drops of moisture around the halo of the tightly enclosed icon. During the following days, the phenomenon was witness by thousands of faithful visitors of all faiths. This phenomenon appeared again on December 14, 1969, this time it was discovered by a young GOYAN John Xypolitas. He called Father Elias Kalaoritis who became an eyewitness to the perspiration of the icon. The Greek Archdioceses of New York said: “ The phenomenon is beyond human comprehension”. Fr. Elias continued daily prayer services (supplications) until Archbishop Iakovos arrived for the Epiphany. His Eminence came on Epiphany and examined the icon of St. Nicholas. He then said: “ This May be a sign of the way the eternal God conveys his message to the believers and only time will reveal the message”.

The Tarpon Springs, Board of Commissioners, designating the city of Tarpon Springs as an official “Epiphany City” of the United States, passed it as a resolution #1486 on October 7, 1975.

On January 6, 1976, St. Nicholas church was elevated to the rank of a Cathedral of West Florida. The elevation took place during the Archieratical Divine Liturgy of Epiphany. This ceremony was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos, His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Catania, His Grace Bishop Philotheos of Meloa, St. Nicholas Pastor Rev. Fr. Tryfor Theophilopoulos, Archbishop Deacon Methodios Tournas, and other priests from neighboring communities in U.S.A.

EPIPHANY

The Orthodox Christian celebrates Epiphany on January 6th of each year, in remembrance of the baptism of our Jesus Christ in the water of Jordan River 2000 ago. In the old country, Jesus Christ baptismal day was celebrated with spiritual emotion and long procession. Following tradition, the Greek community established that January the 6th of each year will be celebrated with the sanctification of the waters and the immersion of the cross in the Spring bayou on “Cross Day” or “Epiphany”. The first observance of Epiphany in Tarpon Springs was celebrated by the first settlers in 1903, and was held in a Episcopal church which was attended by few people. In the next few years, as the news spread throughout USA and Canada, devoted Greeks and Americans made the pilgrimage from all over the nation and Canada, in order to take part in the celebration of Epiphany and its three-day festivities.

One of the faithful visitors was the late Rev. Dr. Thomas J. Lacey, Director of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Brooklyn, New York. He came in 1906 at the insistence of Bishop W. Crane Gray, from Orlando. Since Bishop Gray was unable to attend, Dr. Lacey represented him. Rev. Lacey was so impressed with the Greek religious ceremony, that he had made it an annual pilgrimage to attend the Epiphany. He became one of the most familiar religious figures noted at the celebration. He attended for twenty (20) consecutive years, and thirty four (34) out of thirty six (36), and became an honored member of the Greek community. Furthermore, the Greek government with the "Order of the King George" decorated him, for his work among the Greek people. Rev. Lacey participated in the celebration by reading the gospel in English and offered prayers for the president and the United States Forces.

Nowhere in America was the feast of Epiphany celebrated as it was in Tarpon Springs where the ceremonies are identical to those taken place in and around Greece. The whole city was covered with Christian banners representing the baptism of Christ, Easter, and other Christian scenes. The whole town became alive with activity not only down town, but also the waterfront, where the entire sponge fleet and the other boats anchored in line. Most of them were painted in white and blue symbolic of Greece, and in their mast, they flew the Greek and American flags. Moreover, these flags were also placed on the light poles of the streets in the city.

Vendors would move along the crowd selling toy balloons, cotton candy, whistling birds on a stick, and various sweets.

Church service would start as soon as the sun would rise on the eastern horizon at 7:00am. Two candles which were six feet high would be placed at the entrance of the altar. They would be lighted the evening before Epiphany.

As the service continued in the morning, the parishioners and the visitors crowded into every available space in the church. Immediately after the Divine Liturgy, his Eminence followed by the priests, deacons, and the Byzantine choir, would go to the marble "kiosk", which is on the north side of the church ground. It is here that he would give his blessings of the holy water. The holy water would then be taken home by the parishioners as well as little sprigs of basil, which is symbolic of good health, blessings, and happiness.

A colorful procession began after the Agiasmo (sanctification of the waters), at 12:00 noon. The procession is led by the police on motorcycles and cars, along with the United States Coast Guard. The grand Marshall then, followed by the Acolytes (altar boys) in blue and white, as they held religious banners, followed by the Greek school. Some of these students would dress in the costumes of their ancestors, while holding the American and Greek flag. Following them would be the Boys and Girl Scouts. The various Greek clubs and societies would follow the bands of Tarpon Springs High School and neighboring communities. Clubs and societies that participated in the procession include: Kalymnians, Halkians, Symians, Aegeans, AHEPA, GAPA, Veteran organizations, and the American

Legion. Twelve young girls dressed in ancient Greek costumes, would have a ribbon across the torso that would have the name of the Dodecanese islands written on it. Three young girls would then follow, representing America, Greece, and Liberty. Next, would be the children in evzone costumes, which would always be the highlight of the procession.

A designated person to be the dove bearer would march in the procession, wearing a black robe while holding the white dove that had a blue ribbon tied around its foot. For several years, Kostas Tsimpikas, a Halkian Prominent member of the community was the dove bearer. However, in 1935, many members of the young Byzantine choir chose Melba Smitzes, which was a ten-year-old girl, to be the first girl dove bearer. Since then has become the tradition of the procession young girls to be dove bearers. George Anastassiou would lead the Byzantine choir since he was the original director of the choir and the principal of the Greek Parochial School.

The Archbishop would then follow, as he wore his formal religious vestments. The priests, deacons, the chanters, and mayor of the city, president and members of the communities, visiting dignitaries, and then faithful parishioners would follow the Governor of Florida and the Ambassador of Greece.

Once the line of the procession would reach the Spring Bayou the Archbishop along with the other priests, deacons and the choir, would board a barge that would take them to the center of the circular bayou. This made it possible for nearly every person to see the ceremony. Four loud speakers would form a cross over the Archbishops head, so that everyone could hear him. However, in 1956, the barge was no longer used, instead, a sponge boat was used. In may small rowboats, young spongers and high school students would wait anxiously for the great moment. The Archbishop would bless the waters, then read from the first chapter of St. Mark's, verse 9, "and it came to pass in those days...he saw the heavens opened, and the spirit like a dove descending upon him, and there came a voice from heaven saying "thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased". It is at that moment that the white dove would be released by the dove bearer. The white dove symbolized the Holy Ghost, as it appeared when John baptized his teacher in Jordan River (the symbol of peace).

The Archbishop would then throw a golden cross into the water, which the same moment, the divers would dive into the waters, as they would swim, wrestle, and churn the waters in search of the cross. The throwing of the cross symbolizes casting of the bread of truth upon the trouble world. The plunging of the young boys into the waters signifies the immersion into the river Jordan of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The diver who retrieves the cross would then climb onto the barge and kneel before the Archbishop, as he would hand him the golden cross. At this time, the Archbishop would bless the young man and congratulate him.

For hundred of years in the land of the Greek forefathers, whoever retrieves the cross, it has been said that he would have good fortune and divine beneficence. Upon return to the church, the divers are asked to stand at the altar, while the retriever would receive special blessings. The successful diver with the rest of the boys would make the Epiphany rounds, as they visit the houses and businesses of the town. They would sing religious hymns of Christ's baptism. The people are allowed to kiss the cross, place flowered basil on the silver tray and give donations to the church. A portion of the money collected would be given to the boy who retrieved the cross.

After the ceremony at the bayou, the procession would return to the church, where bottles of water, which have been blessed earlier, would be distributed to the faithful, so that they could bless their homes with it. In the afternoon, the Archbishop and priests could go the waterfront where the Agiasmo (sanction of the waters) took place; they would then bless the boats. The Greek community believes unconditionally that a hurricane will not pass through the city of Tarpon Springs because St. Nicholas, which is patron saint and the protector of the seamen, will protect the city and its residents as well. The last hurricane, which passed through this city, was in 1920.

Following the closing of the religious services, the people would then gather at the Glendi festival area where they would eat, drink and dance. It would be an opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones. In the evening, many would attend the Epiphany ball.

The next day would be a Gulf outing that was arranged by the Greek community. They would ensure that enough boats from the sponge fleets would be available to carry everyone the Gulf (to the Anclote islands of Tarpon Springs). This excursion would be free of charge.

For three days, the city of Tarpon Springs would celebrate Epiphany with dances, picnics, and theatrical plays that were provided by the societies, AHEPA and the Philoptochos.

Below are the names of the cross retrievers starting from 1920 to 2005:

		1928	Vasilios Pokratis
1920	Steve John	1929	Demosthenis Kananis
1921	Zacharias D. Zacharias	1930	Eleftherios Athanason
1922	Steve John	1931	Vasilios Pokratis
1923	Steve John	1932	John Eliou
1924	Ierotheos Athanasiou	1933	John Cardullias
1925	Ierotheos Athanasiou	1934	Mike Eliou
1926	Ierotheos Athanasiou	1935	John Athanason
1927	George Kakkalis	1936	Athanasios T. Athanason

1937	Demetrios Psarakos	1970	Stacy Zembellas
1938	Tony Houllis	1971	Nikitas Manias
1939	Stanley Polychronis	1972	George Vouvalis
1940	Theo Lelekis	1973	Nick Kondodiakis
1941	Theophilos Katras	1974	Nikitas Lulias
1942	John Cortessis		Manuel Karvounis
1943	Manuel Houllis	1975	Phillip A. Stavrakis
1944	Mike Sturgis	1976	Manuel Kondodiakis
1945	Mike Koulias		John Saclarides
1946	Theophilos Daras	1977	Alex Allisandratos
1947	Nick Kosely	1978	Jimmie Nicholas
	John Georgiadis	1979	John Kontodiakos
	Mike Koulianos	1980	Steve Stavrakis Jr.
1948	Mike Houllis	1981	Andrew Tsongranis
1949	Hercules Ypsilantis	1982	John Korfiatis
1950	Nick Faklis	1983	Tony Grigoris
1951	Mike Ergas	1984	Dean Theophilopoulos
1952	Nick Cutsuries	1985	Jerry Theophilopoulos
1953	Tokey Samarkos	1986	Chuck Kyriakou
1954	Deno Moutsatsos	1987	Manuel Koutsourais
1955	Mike Skaroulis	1988	Alex Ioanou
1956	Bill Kotis	1989	Manny Cladakis
1957	John Georgiadis	1990	Trevor Meyer
1958	Mike Stergos	1991	Anestis Karistinos
1959	Sammy Mack	1992	Andrew Nikiforakis
1960	George Georgiadis	1993	Michael Saroukos
1961	Jim Demet	1994	John Kapaniris
1962	Manuel Kamarados	1995	Thomas Dellis
1963	Costas Pappas	1996	Christian Koulias
1964	Jim Mouzourakis	1997	Theo Koulianos
1965	John Tsavaris	1998	Theofilos Mamouzelos
1966	Emmanuel Tsavaris	1999	Jason Colbe
1967	Emmanuel Pondakos	2000	Valandis Pilatos
1968	Jim Marcus	2001	Luke Pappas
1969	Pete Kondodiakis	2002	

In the history of the divers, they were formally from Tarpon Springs, except in 1936, when Athanasios Athanasiou from Sparta, Greece and in 1937, Demetrios Psarakos was visiting from Long Island, New York, and retrieved

the cross; it was made then a rule that only local boys can compete in the dive. In the early years, the Greek community chose the divers.

In 1947, his Reverence Bishop Gerasimos broke the tradition by throwing the cross into the water three times. Fifteen-year-old Nick Koseley was waiting for the cross and he solemnly crossed himself three times. Fifteen-year-old Nick Koseley was waiting for the cross and he solemnly crossed himself three times. This caught the Bishop's eye, so he threw the cross directly to him. Nick caught it instantly and the rest of the divers demonstrated that they didn't have a chance, so Bishop Gerasimos threw the cross again. The second time around, Mike Koulianos retrieved the cross, so the Bishop believed that he should throw the cross as many times as Nick crossed himself. He cast the cross again into the waters and John Georgiadis became the third retriever. He then blessed the three of them. In 1970, Stacy Zembillas retrieved the wooden cross after the gold cross was not found; minutes later George Nicholas retrieved the gold cross from the bayou. His Reverence Archbishop Iakovos blessed both. In 1974, a wooden cross weighted with lead in order to make it sink, was not retrieved. After waiting more than three minutes, Archbishop Iakovos said: "the will of God is the gold cross" and he then threw the gold cross and as the cross touched the water, it was caught by Nikita Lulias. As Nikita celebrated triumphantly, Manuel Karvounis retrieved the wooden cross for the bottom of the bayou. Both of these young men received the blessing from Archbishop Iakovos. In that same year, when the dove was released, it perched itself on top of Archbishop Iakovos' crown and waited calmly until he tossed the cross into the water.

Below are the names of the chosen dove bearers from 1920 to 1995:

1920-1934	Costas Tsimpikas	1949	Nina Peperis
1935	Melba Smitzes	1950	Zula Peperis
1939	Evee Anastassiou	1951	Tasula Nicholas Syron
1940	Mary Lerios	1952	Elsie Sakiotis
1942	Mary Gillis	1953	Joanna Dichtas Paitakis
1943	Maggie Kavouklis Nichols	1954	Angie Pappas
1944	Minnie Fassol	1955	Leoni Peperis
1945	Katherine Kavouklis Arvanitis	1956	Marcena Kolianos
1946	Helen Sakiotis	1957	Evelyn Miaoulis Bilirakis
1947	Evelyn Kavouklis Joanos	1958	Nena Psaras Assimack
1948	Mary Nicholas	1959	Evelyn Spirtos Samarkos

1960	Mary Diamandis Kouchis	1982	Elena Katsulos
1961	Marcena Kolianos	1983	Helen Gonatos
1962	Zula Hourdas	1984	Renee Katsaras Cortessis
1963	Evelyn Lelekis Fatolitis	1985	Elaine Kolias
1964	Tina Manticos	1986	Andrea Faklis
1965	Kathy Maninis Alesafis	1987	Mary Gnatos
1966	Nancy Miradakis Lyras	1988	Anastasia Cypreos
1967	Mary Georgiou Moutsatsos	1989	Maria Loulougras
1968	Mary Nicholas Drew	1990	Kostadina Kanells
1969	Maria Kataras	1991	Sophia Saravanos
1970	Florinda Pappas	1992	Loula Giannet
1971	Leah Cretekos Willis	1993	JoAnna Papadacos
1972	Doukisa Giallourakis	1994	Kalliope Kanellis
1973	Anastasia Kiriazis Smith	1995	Irene Bakas
1974	Stephanie Lelekis Sullivan	1996	Katina Kavouklis
1975	Chris Megaloudis Rondeau	1997	Irene Mellis
1976	Irene Karaphillis Tharin	1998	Vasiliki Leontaras
1977	Evelyn Manias Miller	1999	Sandy Georgakakis
1978	Lena Pantelis Saroukos	2000	Toni Tharin
1979	Irene Grigoris Delmadouros	2001	JoAnna Frangos
1980	Penny Zervos		
1981	Maria Zervos		

During the first years of Epiphany, the first Archbishop was Archbishop Germanos, from the Syrian Church of North and South America. For the following nine years since 1922, Archbishop Alexandros officiated the ceremony, but when he first started, he was a Bishop from Rothostolou, but later he elevated to Archbishop of North and South America.

Below is a list of the Archbishops and Bishops who came to Tarpon Springs in order to officiate the ceremony during the Epiphany Cross Day celebration:

Jan. 6, 1922 – 1930	His Reverence Archbishop Alexandros
Jan. 6, 1931	His Reverence Archbishop Damaskinos
Jan. 6, 1932	His Reverence Archbishop Athenagoras
Jan. 6, 1933	His Reverence Bishop Kallistos of Chicago
Jan. 6, 1934 - 1937	His Reverence Archbishop Athenagoras
Jan. 6, 1938	His Reverence Bishop Kallistos
Jan. 6, 1939	His Reverence Bishop Athenagoras
Jan. 6, 1940	His Reverence Archbishop Athenagoras
Jan. 6, 1941	His Reverence Bishop Athenagoras
Jan. 6, 1942	His Reverence Archbishop Germanos
Jan. 6, 1943 – 1944	His Reverence Archbishop Athenagoras
Jan. 6, 1945 – 1946	His Reverence Bishop Gerasimos
Jan. 6, 1947	His Reverence Bishop Gerasimos of Nyssis

Jan. 6, 1948	His Reverence Archbishop Athenagoras
Jan. 6, 1949	His Reverence Bishop Polizoides
Jan. 6, 1950 – 1956	His Reverence Archbishop Michael
Jan. 6, 1957	His Reverence Bishop Elaias Kokkinakis
Jan. 6, 1958 – 1959	His Reverence Bishop Iejekeel
Jan. 6, 1960 – 1961	His Reverence Archbishop Iakovos
Jan. 6, 1962	His Reverence Bishop Silas of Amphilios
Jan. 6, 1963	His Reverence Bishop Germanos
Jan. 6, 1964	His Reverence Bishop Aimilianos
Jan. 6, 1965 – 1966	His Reverence Archbishop Iakovos
Jan. 6, 1967	His Reverence Metropolitan Iakovos
Jan. 6, 1968	His Reverence Bishop Iakovos
Jan. 6, 1969	His Reverence Bishop Silas of Amphipolis
Jan. 6, 1970	His Reverence Archbishop Iakovos
Jan. 6, 1971	His Reverence Bishop Aimilianos
Jan. 6, 1972	His Reverence Archbishop Iakovos
Jan. 6, 1973	His Reverence Bishop Aimilianos
Jan. 6, 1974 – 1991	His Reverence Archbishop Iakovos
Jan. 6, 1992	His Reverence Bishop Phillip
Jan. 6, 1993 – 1995	His Reverence Archbishop Iakovos

SAINT NICHOLAS PASTORS

Rev. Stamatis Koutouzis	1906 – 1909
Rev. Chrysanthos Aggelopoulos	1910 – 1913
Rev. Chrysanthos Iakovidis	1913 – 1915
Rev. Arsenios Davis	1916 – 1919
Rev. Seraphim Stelidis	1918 – 1920
Rev. George Papakonstantinou	1921 – 1922
Rev. Theophilos Karaphillis	1922 – 1954
Rev. Constantinos Raptis	1955 – 1967
Most. Rev. George Thomas	1967 – 1968
Rev. Elias Kalariotis	1968 – 1975
Rev. Tryfon Theophilopoulos	1975 – 2005
Rev. John Katsulis	
Rev. John Bociu	2003 – 2008
V. Rev. Sebastian Skordallos	2004 – 2006
Rev. Michael Eaccarino	2006 – to date
Rev. Ioannis Krokos	2008 – to date

REVEREND THEOPHILOS KARAPHILLIS

Father Theophilos Karaphillis was born in February 2, 1883 on the Island of Kalymnos, Greece. He studied for the ministry in Kalymnos and was ordained into the priesthood in 1912. He arrived in Tarpon Springs the winter of 1922, not knowing what he was about to face, as he came to a new land, a new language and a new life. Moreover, he had the trials and tribulations of overcoming new obstacles, as he would be expected to lead the Greek community of new immigrants into a new era. He assisted many through the depression and war. He became a spiritual leader for many people, as he played the shepherd in directing the flock during many difficult times.

On July 27, 1958 while visiting St. Panteleimon Church in Kalymnos, he was titled “Archimandritis”, that was witnessed by the entire population of the island. He was honored this title by the late Archbishop Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Church.

He served the Greek community of St. Nicholas until 1954, where he retired, yet he continued to play an active role in the church until he passed away on May 9, 1963.

REV. TRYFON K. THEOPHILOPOULOS, DEAN

Fr. Tryfon was assigned to St. Nicholas Cathedral in Taron Springs, Florida, in December 1975. He has since served the community with devotion and has displayed his theological knowledge through his ministry. He was elevated to the “offikion” of Protopresbyter by his all Holiness Demetrios – the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, which is the highest title that could be given to a married priest. This title was one of the last official papers his Holiness signed before he passed away on October 2, 1991.

SAINT NICHOLAS CHANTERS

Ioanis Loukas	1910 – 1918	Michael Kindinis	1950 – 1994
Vasilios G. Faklis	1912 – 1944		
Stamatis Ioannidis	1919 – 1922	George Gialousis	1974 – 1980
Michael Thomas	1920 – 1923	Mercurios Kalodoukas	1960 -1993
George Anastassiou	1924 – 1939	George Pappas	1996 - to date
Agapitos Megaloudis	1931 – 1949		
Odiseas Pittas	1944 – 1974		

SAINT NICHOLAS CHOIR

Professor George Anastassiou, Principal of the Greek Parochial School in 1933, organized the first systematic and harmonic Byzantine choir. The choir was composed entirely of fifty young girls. The following year, the number of members increased to seventy-five as it added young boys as well. The assistant director was Agapitos Megaloudis.

After Professor Anastassiou left the choir, Miss Frances Gillas Gretekos took over as a choir leader in 1939. In 1941, Miss Katherine Kavouklis Arvanitis was the choir director until 1945, when Odiseas Pittas took over.

In 1971, Katie Bertanis Faklis became choir director and continued until present day 1995. She directed the choir/organist at the church of Annunciation in Pensacola, Florida from 1952 to 1964.

THE PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY

The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society is the official women's organization of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America, and was established in 1931 by Archbishop Athenagoras. The National Society was made up of over 450 Philoptochos chapters, representing over 50,000 Greek Orthodox Women in America. This society was formed to help the sick, poor, imprisoned and impoverished and to also assist the immigrants to adjust to the new land.

In 1934, the women from the Greek community of St. Nicholas Church, together with Fr. Th. Karaphillis formed the first philanthropic organization Philoptochos (friend of the poor) in Tarpon Springs. They named it "Ypapanti" and its first officers were Mrs. Gus Cocoris, President; Mary Miaoulis; Asimo Veldusis; Katina Krouskos; Ageliki Bizanis; Eleni Psaras; Paraskeve Christo; Matildi Lambrou and Smarli Tsakiris.

The women of the "Ypapanti" helped the needy of the community by assisting them with food, burial service funds, financial assistance and emotional support when needed. Furthermore, they would visit the elderly in their homes, nursing homes and would assist Fr. Karaphillis when he visited the persons who were hospitalized.

In 1940, the society with the support of the Greek community built its own hall on Hope Street, which was completed in 1942. At that time, it was the only church ladies organization to own its own building in U.S.A. All of the social events of the Greek community during the next thirty years were held in this hall.

In 1972, under the President Maria Miaoulis, the Philoptochos donated the hall to the Greek community of St. Nicholas Church. The Church remodeled the hall and designated it to be used by the youth. It was renamed "Youth Hall".

Every year the Philoptochos would raise money by caroling during Christmas and Epiphany; they would solicit donations, picnics, and sold sponges that were donated by the boat captains. Moreover, they sponsored the annual dance of Epiphany on St. Johns Day, on January 7th.

The Philoptochos would depend solely on the time and hard work donated by the women of the community, to help those in need, which is the foundation of our faith.

"THE WOMEN OF ST. NICHOLAS"

Under the guidance of Fr. Constantine Raptis, the women of St. Nicholas Church founded their society in December of 1961. Their goals were to work for the spiritual and physical needs of St. Nicholas Church. The original founders of this society were Mrs. Eeve Pappas, President along with Celia Stamas and Jean Tragos. During the first working year of this society, the membership count was forty, however, by 1977, their membership count grew to 285.

The women of the church reached their first accomplishment in 1963, when they purchased the church pews. The second major undertaking was the purchase of the old city library that was located on Library Lane adjacent to the church. On Sunday, December 6m 1964 following the Agiasmo given by Fr. Constantine Raptis, the hall (the old library) was officially opened for the use by members of the church and its community. The following year, Library Lane was renamed St. Nicholas Lane.

Many members donated their time, hard work and money to paint, install new floor tiles and to refurbish the old building, which is known today as St. Nicholas Hall. Sunday school classes, General assembly meetings and other meetings are held there. The following year, the kitchen was added so that the hall could be used for other purposes besides meetings.

In February of 1977, the women voted unanimously under the President Fanny Katzaras to make a formal request to Archbishop Iakovos, to allow them to become a chapter of the National Philoptochos. As of September 6, 1977, under the President Dutchess Arfaras, the women of St. Nicholas Church became the 483 Chapter of the National Philoptochos. It was and remains that the Priest serves as President of the Philoptochos in order to offer counsel to the local organization. Their official name became "St. Nicholas Philoptochos". Moreover, they adopted the motto of the National Philoptochos "to be a friend of the poor".

One of their main sources of income was and currently is the three-day festival held in February. They solicit funds through donations and other fund raising events. These funds are used to provide help for the needy of our community. The Philoptochos society acknowledges the pride people have, therefore they remain a silent provider.

The Greek Community of St. Nicholas Church recognizes those persons in the sponge industry who distinguished themselves for their hard work, courage and generosity to our church. They are as follows:

HOOKER BOATS

PRESIDENT LINCOLN
AEGLI
KALLIOPE
ASTEROPE
APALACHICOLA
ANNA
ANGELIKI
AMERICAN GIRL
ST. AUGUSTINE
ATHANASIA
BESSIE
CHRISTALLO
DEMETRA
DEMOCRATIA
DOLPHIN
INDEPENDENT
GENERAL VANFLEET
DEMOCRATIA
DIXIE
DRANE
ESMINE
ELENI
SAMARKOS BROS.
EYDOKIA
EMILLA
EGEO
ELSIE
GEORGE WASHINGTON
GABUL
GONATAS

CAPTAINS

- Theo. Tsounias
- J. Veniamin
- C. Maillis
- M. Macrinakis
- D. Smyrnios
- N. Kalafatis
- H. Miradakis
- A. Tsanos
- J. Panagis
- N. Koulianos
- C. Peperis
- J. Constantinou
- V. Hristou
- P. Melahrinos
- D. Gianoulis & Koukoulis
- G. Hourdas
- C. Climantos
- V. Pappas
- A. Moutsatsos
- C. Angelis
- C. Samarkos
- J. C. Maillis
- Samarkos Bros.
- M. Gonatos
- C. Panagis
- N. Amorginos
- V. Ioannou
- K. Koukoulakis
- C. Peterson
- E. Perakis

HOOKER BOATS

M. D. ERGAS
ST. PAUL
CHRISULA
INDEPENDENT
KATHOLIKI
KANARIS
LIBERTY
LINDBERG
MARY K.
E. MACRENARIS
CENTURY OF PROGRESS
POSIDON
PORTARITISA
PRES. ROOSEVELT
PRES. COOLIDGE
ROCKABOL
PANORMITS
SOCRATES
KING GEORGE
ELSIE, M.G.
ST. PHILLIP
STAVROS
HYDRA
ST. JOHN
ST. NICHOLAS
UNCLE SAM
WALTER MERES
ZULA
CREMASTO
A. ZAIMES
MARION
VENIZELOS & EROKRETOS
TWO BROTHERS
NEREUS AND SYMI
ROTHANTHIE
FANNIE C. ANGELIS
ELEZA
KATINA
NIKITAS MANIAS
ELEZA
VASILIKIE
PLASTIRAS

CAPTAINS

- D. Ergas
- K. Adzamis
- D. Tsalikis
- P. Leontakos
- L. Panagis
- L. Palogianos
- S. Hourdas
- J. Economou
- L. Kavouklis
- C. Stavros
- Klimantos & Themaras
- M. Tsangaris
- N. Pavlis
- M. Sivris
- P. Macrinaris
- J. Melissas
- E. Gonatos
- D. Leonis
- Smitzes Bros.
- M. Gianaras
- P. Velousakis
- G. Stergos
- V. Vanos
- S. Moshou
- J. Billiris
- A. Angelis
- P. Leonis
- C. G. Pappas (Matemi – The Iron Man)
- C. G. Pappas (Matemi – The Iron Man)
- L. Skiriotis
- G. Manos
- H. Kalezis
- G. Georgiou
- A. Kotis
- D. Pouzoukakis
- C. Angelis
- M. Spanos
- J. Kostopoulos
- M. Manias
- T. Kananis
- P. Phileppou
- J. Panagis

continued

HOOKER BOATS

AEGINA
AGIA TRIAS
ASTEPALIA
BLACK SEA
BOUBOULINA
DIXIE
KALYMNOS
ELIAS
EMILY
IRENE
GERTIE
GOLDIE
COL. LINDBERGH
KATINA
ST. JOHN
LONE STAR
MARIA M.
MARIA G.
MINNIE BEE
MARY EVELYN
MAYFLOWER
NIKIE
OLYMPIA
CRETE
OLGA
PANTHER
YPAPANTIE
PILAROS
PORTARITISA
PRODROMOS
SPARTA
ST. GEORGE
ST. GEORGE
ST. JOHN
SANTA MARIA
ST. NICHOLAS
ST. PANTELEIMON
JOHN WHITE
TRIAN – TRIAS
ANTHOYLA
SEN. FLETCHER
AMERICAN GIRL

CAPTAINS

- A. Kotakis
- C. Galinizis
- A. Antonopoulos
- N. Georgiadis
- G. Skaroulis
- N. Georgiades
- E. Zouloufos
- C. Patiniotis
- E. Macrinaris
- A. Piangalis
- N. Georgiades
- E. Krevatas
- J. Karafillakis
- M. Gaitanos
- G. Maninis
- W. Poulos
- T. Mahinis
- N. Sammarkos
- D. Tsekouris
- S. Pizanias
- L. Paskalakis
- E. Smalios
- M. Makrinaris
- V. Haridimos
- J. Lelekis
- S. Halioris
- D. Tzambatzis
- T. Bakaoukas
- J. Kotakis
- N. Kitzinis
- L. Pappas
- T. Amorginos
- E. Tiliakos
- E. Vanos
- L. Paskalakis
- S. Hatzimihalis
- P. Houlis
- E. Korsis
- E. Tsoukalas
- P. Makrenaris
- P. Kouskoutis
- T. Tsanos

continued

HOOKER BOATS

ANNA
HALKI
GOAKES
DIGIE
ELEZA
ANGELIIKI
APALACHICOLA
ROCAMBOL
ST. JOHN
ST. NICHOLAS
ST. NICHOLAS II
KANARIS
ZAIMIS

CAPTAINS

- M. Sarris
- F. Hristoforis
- J. Cortessis
- G. Pop
- T. Kananis
- G. Kondopodis
- D. Tsalikis
- N. Zannetis
- D. Stamatakis
- J. Billiris
- M. Billiris
- E. Palogiannos
- J. Kazitonis

continued

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