



My Beloved Ones,

Beginning October's Clergy Appreciation Month, I am reminded of a beautiful testimonial provided to the Retired Clergy Association, by one of the children of our Metropolis, Evan Scurtis, daughter of Fr. Demosthenes Mekras, who served all his life as the Dean of St. Sophia Cathedral in Miami, Florida.

In the words of Mrs. Scurtis, "My parents were young, 21 and 22 years old and "grew up" with the parish. My Dad taught Greek School and my Mother, Sunday School... As a young Presbytera my Mother sewed altar boy vestments and choir robes..."

"What I learned through my parents was to help those in need. Our door was always open... As an adult I look back on my childhood as a [Priest's Kid] (my generation was referred to as "tou Papa ta paidia") my brothers and I had wonderful experiences meeting persons from all over our great country. Miami was a "winter wonderland" for the "snowbirds" during the 40's and

50's into the 60's before it became a big city. Not that there were not bumps in the road, as all priests experience, but those were small compared to the goodness we shared.

"What I appreciate the most is that when my Dad came home and the front door closed, he was just our Dad. We were a family and did not feel "on call" to our parish. Whether a priest and presbytera or not, my parents would have expected their children to attend church services, attend Sunday School, Greek School and be part of GOYA. So, for my brothers and me, we do not look at these efforts as an obligation as PK's. It was just part of being Greek Orthodox..."

I have shared these words because I hope and pray that we ourselves... *"do not look at these efforts as an obligation..."* May we take our inspiration from the hundreds of clergy families in our Metropolis, who commune with our Lord, and are spiritually uplifted when they serve Him.

I hope that we are all reminded of the sacrifices our clergy families make every single day for us. Living in the world, it can be easy to forget that, though the Priest serves the people, that does not mean he has no life outside his calling. When he celebrates a baptism, a marriage, or commends the souls of the departed to the Lord, often, he is also asking his family to make a sacrifice, whether they realize it, or are gracious enough to accept.

This Clergy Appreciation Month, may we remember to thank our Priests, our Presvyteres, and who give up the "ordinary life" the laity experience, to instead live an extraordinary life, full of devotion to our Lord and His Church. In this way, a clergy family is magnified, including not only a father, mother, and children, but all the parishioners who love them, and look to their spiritual father to guide them to salvation.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

Quotes adapted freely from an essay by Mrs. Evan Scurtis