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Rev. George Papadeas, former pastor of St. Demetrios in Daytona Beach, dies at 93

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BY MARK HARPER, STAFF WRITER

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The Rev. George Papadeas, the first Greek Orthodox man to become ordained in the United States, died Friday at Halifax Health Medical Center, Port Orange, at age 93.



Fr. George Papadeas in 2010 photo. (NJ | David Tucker)

Papadeas, who served his church in a varied and colorful career lasting nearly 70 years, was pastor of St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Daytona Beach from 1975 to 1983. From his home in South Daytona in "retirement," he established two more Greek Orthodox churches, in the Inverness and Ocala areas.

He was born on June 5, 1918, in Altoona, Pa.

The year 1942 was momentous for Papadeas. He married Bess Matthews and graduated from the Greek Orthodox Seminary in Pomfret Center, Conn. He was ordained a priest in 1945.

Because of his background, he helped bridge the gap between the Greece-based church and its American-born attendees, many of whom were children who didn't learn the Greek language, said his son Tim, a family spokesman.

"He was like a Steve Jobs of religion," Tim Papadeas said Monday. "What Steve Jobs did for Apple, (Papadeas) did for our Greek Orthodox church."

When he was pastor of St. Paul's Parish in Hempstead, N.Y., Papadeas presided over the three Weeping Icons in the early 1960s. He later wrote a book about the experience, which brought much attention and thousands of people through the church to see the Weeping Madonna.

In the 1960s, he translated the Beautiful Orthodox Holy Week Services into English, as well as later completing other important translations. He helped establish a summer camp for American-born Greek Orthodox children in Greece, which in 1970 became the Ionian Village Camp, helping hundreds of people learn about their roots and their faith.

It was at St. Demetrios where he and parishioner Irene Koutouzis started the church's popular Greek Festival, held every November.

In 2004, Bess, his wife of 62 years, died. Together, the Papadeases had five children, nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Papadeas was a man who served his church in eight decades but felt he was the one who was blessed.

"If we believe in divine grace," he said in a 2010 interview, "God comes to people with open hearts."

His family is planning his services, expected to be held Nov. 29.

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