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Departed Members and Friends of the New York Press Club

Rev. George Papadeas (1918-2011)

by MARK HOPPER, November 22, 2011
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First Orthodox chaplain of the New York Press Club.

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

Father George was chaplain of the New York Press Club in the 1950's when the Club was known as the New York Metropolitan Newspaper Reporters Association. He was the first Greek Orthodox clergyman to hold that post.

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, Connecticut. 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. "What Steve Jobs did for Apple, (Fr. George) 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.