

Frigid Temps Don't Faze the Faithful of St. Nicholas in Epiphany Celebration

By Eleni Kostopoulos
The National Herald Staff Writer

NEW YORK—Paul Apostolakis, 21, was the sole brave soul to dive into the frigid waters of New York Bay on Sunday, January 10 to retrieve a cross thrown in by Rev. John Romas of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church. Members of the community, from both Brooklyn and Manhattan, cheered on Apostolakis from the shore of Battery Park by South Ferry at around 2 p.m., when the wind chill was about 20 degrees.

"I'm very proud of him," Apostolakis' mother, Pauline, told The National Herald. "He's very religious and he likes to keep tradition alive. He looks forward to it every year, although he wishes he had some more competition - some years he did, and other years he was the only one."

Ms. Apostolakis added that she was worried the first time her son participated in the ceremony of the Epiphany, but got used to it after some time. "He's also a diver; he's participated in national competitions and East Coast championships so he knows what he's doing," she said.

Brooklyn-based Apostolakis currently attends Rider University, where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration, double majoring in Finance and Entrepreneurial Studies.

The celebration was especially sentimental for the community that applauded Apostolakis, as it also marks another year gone by that St.



PHOTOS: ETA IMAGE

ABOVE: 21-year-old Paul Apostolakis braves the cold water to retrieve the cross thrown in by Rev. Romas. RIGHT: Rev. Romas of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, which was formerly situated by Ground Zero, with Apostolakis, following the Epiphany tradition.

Nicholas, which was destroyed by the collapse of the World Trade Center towers during the September 11 attacks, exists without a home. Within a month of the attack on the trade center, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios said the four-story church would be built "on the same sacred spot as a symbol of determined faith."

More than eight years later, the

re-building of St. Nicholas remains a dream. The agency overseeing reconstruction, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, has yet to finalize the exchange of land needed to provide the parishioners with a new home near ground zero.

"We gather here every year and after September 11, we still come here and I hope we'll have our church back soon," said Rev. Ro-



mas. "Right now, we have Sts. Constantine and Helen in Brooklyn - they love us and we love them."

Rev. Romas also prayed for good health of the community and encouraged all to embrace forgiveness.

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church stood across Liberty Street from the South Tower of the World Trade Center. The building that housed the church was built in the mid 1800s. In 1916, Greek American immigrants started the congregation of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and one year later, started to hold worship services at the Manhattan location.

Although the church building was small (22 feet wide, 56 feet long and 35 feet tall) the church had a congregation of about 70 families, led by Rev. Romas. One day of the week it was opened to the public, including individuals who worked in the Twin Towers, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, who would use the space for prayer. The valuable possessions destroyed in the attacks include some of the remains of St. Nicholas, St. Catherine, and St. Sava, donated by Nicholas II, the last czar of Russia.

Although the Epiphany celebration triumphed again this year, members of the community hope that they will be able to call Lower Manhattan home again for their congregation sooner rather than later.

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Four Greek American Powerhouses in N.Y. Gather Their Members for Vasilopita Cutting

By Eleni Kostopoulos
The National Herald Staff Writer

NEW YORK—Four dynamic professional organizations—The Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce (HACC), the Hellenic Medical Society of New York (HMS-NY), the Hellenic Lawyers Association of New York (HLA) and the Hellenic American Bankers Association (HABA)—collaborated on Monday evening, January 11, to host the annual "Traditional Cutting of the Vasilopita". The social event was well-attended and welcomed both members and non-members of the distinguished professional Hellenic American organizations to the Holy Trinity Cathedral Ballroom in New York City, including special guests Greek Consul of New York Evangelos Kyriakopoulos, Nassau County Supreme Court Judge Peter Skelos, Judge Harriet P. George and Justice Norman George of Floral Park, Queens.

Reverend Dr. Frank Marangos of the Cathedral welcomed all those who attended on behalf of the church's Board of Trustees and commenced with a blessing.

"I've been thinking about Jason and the Argonauts; Jason needed 50 rowers to go after the Golden Fleece," Rev. Dr. Marangos said. "In



Dr. George Tsoulis, President of the Hellenic Medical Society.

many ways, each and every one of you is a Hellenic rower on behalf of the church and on behalf of Hellenism. We spoke about the organizations that are here this evening. If we all grab an oar and we move in the same direction and in the right direction, the church, [and all those in] business, medicine, law, education, etc., would be very

proud, because we come from a wonderful background of Hellenism and Orthodoxy. This evening, we gather together as Hellenic Orthodox professionals under the offices of the church to offer this vasilopita on behalf of health and prosperity for all our respective organizations."

The presidents of the organiza-



Mami Stathatos-Fulgieri, President of the Hellenic Lawyers Association.

tions—LeRoy Lambert (HACC), Dr. George Tsoulis (HMS-NY), Mami Stathatos-Fulgieri (HLA), Georgia S. Mouzakis (HABA)—all offered their welcoming remarks and wishes for a happy and healthy new year.

"It's so wonderful to see so many organizations getting together and collaborating so well for such an

auspicious event," said Stathatos-Fulgieri. "It's been such a pleasure working with so many professional Greek American organizations."

Rev. Dr. Marangos, also took the opportunity to announce an upcoming gathering to take place in New York City.

"This coming Thursday, [January 14], FOS will be gathering at

the Onassis Foundation, which is hosting our outreach gathering for this session of lectures," he said. "The lectures take place here on Tuesday evenings and this year we will be focusing on Hellenism [including Greek mythology] and Orthodoxy."

The Chamber of Commerce was founded more than 50 years ago to promote and strengthen economic and cultural ties between the U.S. and Greece and has since then fostered and developed commercial and trade relations between the two nations. The HLA was formed to address the needs and concerns of attorneys of Hellenic descent and has more than 450 attorneys as members. HMS-NY is a society dedicated to strengthening networking in the medical profession and to raise money for medical scholarships. HABA is a not-for-profit organization established in 1982 to promote the professional and educational interests of Greek Americans in the banking and finance industries. Its current active membership consists of over 200 professionals representing more than 50 institutions across the financial spectrum. All four organizations were founded on the basis of promoting Hellenic culture in the United States.



Michael Gianaris announced he will run for New York State Senate this November, to take the place of long-standing George Onorato.

Mike Gianaris Says He's Running for N.Y. State Senate

Continued from page 1

said.

"I should be able to chair a committee immediately upon entering the senate and it will give me the opportunity to represent almost three times as many people as I represent now."

Gianaris said that among the many issues that will be on his agenda if elected, the economy is the most important.

"This past year, I was the only democrat from the downstate part of New York who voted against the state budget in April," he said.

"At the time, I said I was worried that we were spending too much given [the condition] the economy was in. In November, we weren't supposed to be in session, but we were, because the state ran out of money. The economic recovery helps people get jobs, it helps people get insurance, it helps families get their kids back in school, so that is the top priority so far."

Other concerns during his tenure

as assemblyman that he hopes to continue to focus on if elected are the environment and helping to improve the air quality in Queens.

"Queens has more power plants than anywhere else in the city and that means our air quality is especially bad. This month, we'll be closing the worst polluter in the city in the last 30 years based on an agreement I reached with power authorities. I'm also always looking for opportunities to beautify the neighborhood."

Gianaris told TNH that the Greek American vote is imperative for these elections, and for the primary elections, which will take place sometime in September of this year.

"I am very thankful for all the support I've received from the Greek community, but I also want to stress the importance of getting out there to vote; we Greeks started democracy and whoever is here in the United States now, who aren't involved in politics and who don't vote, are forgetting where they come from," said Gianaris, who added he has hired dozens of Greek American interns in

hopes of inspiring them to enter public office, much like he was inspired to do so as an intern for fellow Greek American, presidential candidate Michael Dukakis, while attending college at Fordham University.

Gianaris continued pursuing his political endeavors as an aide to late-Rep. Thomas Manton (D), and later as the Queens County regional representative for Gov. Mario Cuomo (D). He also practiced law as a litigator for several years before being elected to the Assembly in 2000.

Gianaris, who represents the 36th Assembly District in Queens, is the first Greek American to be elected to office from New York City. Among his accomplishments, he authored the first-in-the-nation "Airline Passenger Bill of Rights" and "Energy Consumer Bill of Rights" legislation, which provided unprecedented consumer protection to New Yorkers.

He also authored important public safety measures, including the state's first major anti-terror law after September 11, 2001.

His Energy Security Act became a

national model and his approach was expanded to include other critical infrastructure sites throughout New York.

Onorato, who is completing his final term this year as a state senator, is among the endorsers of Gianaris (U.S. Representative for New York's 14th District, Democrat Carolyn B. Maloney is also publicly endorsing Gianaris' candidacy).

Onorato currently sits on several committees: he is a member of New York State Senate Democratic Puerto Rican and Hispanic Task Force, the Senate Minority Task Force on Vietnam Veterans, and the Senate Minority Task Force on Waterfront Development.

He is also the Vice Chair of the Majority Conference, Co-chair of the New York State Armed Forces Legislative Caucus, and Co-Chairman of the New York State Senate Democratic Task Force on Energy & Conservation.

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