

The Cathedral Chronicle

Volume 24: No. 4

December 25th, 2023



FATHER'S MESSAGE:

Dear Parishioners of St. John's Cathedral,

This month we celebrate once again the Birth of Christ in the Flesh. From childhood we all learn that we exchange Christmas gifts with one another in imitation of the Magi, the Wise Men who came from the East bringing precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the newborn Christ. But more important than giving gifts to our loved ones is that we offer all that we have to the Holy Child. We owe all that we have and all that we are to the Lord, who has given us every blessing in our lives. In gratitude we, too, should receive Him into the manger of our hearts and offer Him the most precious gift we have to offer, ourselves: our love, our worship, our prayer. That is how we receive Him as King of our lives during the Christmas season. While Christmas is a beautiful time of gathering with friends and family, it is first and foremost a holiday – a *holy* day – of the Church. It is the feast of the Incarnation of God the Word, and we must celebrate it first with our spiritual family, our brothers and sisters in Christ, *in the Church*. Only then, out of joy for the proclamation of Christ's Birth, can we truly celebrate the other festivities with knowledge and understanding of the great gift that we have

received in the Nativity. This gift is so great that we celebrate it in the Church for twelve days, until the feast of Theophany, Christ's Baptism. This feast of Lights, *τά Φῶτα*, as we say in Greek, celebrates the arrival of Christ, who is the Light of the World, at the darkest time of the year. Come take advantage of the many services during these Twelve Days of Christmas, and light your candle in recognition that Christ's light has conquered the darkness and has enlightened our souls.

Wishing you and your families a joyous Christmas and a blessed New Year, I remain with paternal love and blessings

in the New-Born Christ,

+Fr. Gregory Gilbert

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Dear fellow St. John's parishioners,

On behalf of the entire Parish Council, I wish you a joyful Advent season, full of wonder, gatherings with family and friends, and reflection on the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As this Chronicle comes together (many thanks to Dr. Peter Hilaris, once again), it's mid-December and we are hurtling towards the New Year.

We are grateful to God for His Providence during this year, with all its twists and turns, and the leadership of our wonderful Proistamenos, Father Gregory:

- Attendance is up roughly 10-20% since the summer.
- Our youth ministries had an extremely active Fall, with enjoyable seasons for both our GOYA volleyball and basketball teams and their well-attended "lock-in", while the Scouts held their annual camping retreat at St. Basil's. Sunday and Greek School attendance is also increasing, and let's keep it that way. We thank all our school leadership, youth advisors, coaches, teachers and PTO for their tireless efforts!
- Our Philoptochos was as active as ever, holding its annual (and well-attended) Christmas party and holiday bazaar, while generously contributing to the Cathedral's decorations for Christmas. Meantime, Kali Parea hosted its festive and well-attended Christmas party, and a fine time was had by all! And our vibrant AHEPA held several fundraisers including a wonderful, co-hosted Veteran's Day Brunch with the Philoptochos – we are blessed by our Bergen Knights!
- Meantime, several of our parishioners (Michael Camarinos, Spiro Dongaris, George Papas, and Phil Philliou) became Archons, among the highest number for any parish in the country, while George Tsougarakis was named Hellene of the Year by the Hellenic Medical Society. To all, Axios!

- As was reported by our head of Stewardship, Phil Philliou, we closed the year well and we are thankful to the entire community. As always, your Stewardship and financial contributions to our ministries are deeply appreciated and needed.

There's much to look forward to the rest of December and into early 2024! To begin, on Christmas Eve Day we will welcome with joy His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, as he presides at our Divine Liturgy.

Meantime we will showcase our amazing youth and Sunday and Greek Schools in several events, including our upcoming Christmas Pageant (12/17), Greek School Christmas Celebration (12/21), and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey's Three Hierarchs Celebration (1/27). We look forward to your continued participation in all our ministries, from PTO to Philoptochos to GOYA to AHEPA to Scouting – please check out our weekly, *Cathedral Happenings*, for all the details.

And beyond all else, ***"For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"***

(Isaiah 9:6-7).

Let's welcome Him and the Season with joy, together, at the Cathedral — we look forward to seeing you all at St. John's.

Merry Christmas,

George L. Staphos,
Parish Council President

STEWARDSHIP:

Dear fellow stewards,

As we approach the end of 2023, we are pleased to provide you with an update on our stewardship program. As of December 6th, we have received 471 stewardship pledges for a total of \$420,000. This is an exciting increase in both the number of pledges and the amount of money pledged. The Stewardship Committee would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to the community for their genuine support of the stewardship program. We would also like to recognize the impressive work and dedication of Fr. Gregory and Bobby Koykas in educating parishioners about the importance of stewardship.

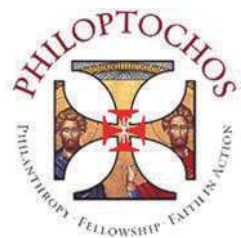
Although we have made progress and are moving in the right direction, there is still much work to be done to improve our stewardship program. Our community has a budget of \$1 million to meet, and there are many Orthodox Christians who live within a 30-minute driving distance of St. John's who are not stewards of any church. We all likely know someone who is disconnected from our church. We can each make a difference by reaching out to these people and inviting them to

church. In addition to church services, we have vibrant ministries such as Sunday School, GOYA, Greek School, Scouting, Philoptochos, Kali Parea, and the Choir. We encourage everyone to find a way to connect people with these programs and help them become more involved in our community.

If you have not received your Stewardship Card in the mail, please pick one up at church or call the church office. Thank you.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2024

The Stewardship Committee



St. Philothea Philoptochos Society News

December 2023



On behalf of the St. Philothea Philoptochos Society of our Cathedral, I pray that this message finds you all well as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

RECENT CHAPTER ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACTIVITIES

October Activities - Our Chapter certainly had a very busy Fall! We kicked things off in October with our annual Cakeless Bake Sale in honor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month – We sincerely thank all who donated to help support this worthy cause!

Then, at our first General Meeting on October 17th, we enjoyed a fun night of fellowship and sharing at our first ever “Harvest Festival”, where we “sampled and swapped” our favorite homemade Autumn-themed dishes, desserts, and recipes! In the spirit of Thanksgiving, some of



our Board members also took time out of their busy schedules to shop and deliver much-needed food items to the Center for Food Action in Englewood. Our Chapter also donated funds to feed over 200 people at Family Promise of Bergen County in Hackensack, which provides temporary shelter



and targeted support to homeless working families. A huge THANK YOU to all who support our Chapter! Every dollar you generously donate makes a difference and helps fund these important causes!

Veterans Day Celebration - In November, our Philoptochos Chapter and the AHEPA Bergen Knights joined together to host the annual Veterans Day Celebration. This beautiful and moving



tribute honors the Veterans of our community for their selfless military service with a Wall of Honor and Color Guard Ceremony, followed by a delicious community breakfast. Proceeds from this noble event are used to raise funds to provide service dogs for military Veterans who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



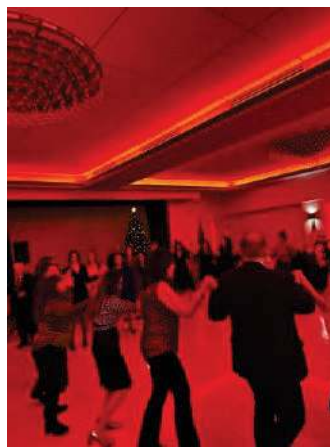
(PTSD) caused by their service. SPECIAL THANKS to our Veterans for their proud service, and to our own Barbara Kostakis, who beautifully spearheads this event every year for our Philoptochos!

Baking and Selling of Sweets and Pites for the Holidays - With the advent of the holidays, many of our members got together to make huge batches of traditional Greek sweets and pites for sale to the entire community and at our annual, Christmas Bazaar. Thank you to all who never fail to tirelessly help and willingly share their expertise so everyone can stock up on and enjoy these special treats during the holidays!



Annual Christmas Party - On Friday, December 1st, we held our annual Philoptochos Christmas Party in our own Fr. Socrates Tsamutalis Fellowship Hall, which was a great success! SINCERE THANKS to all who worked meticulously to ensure a fun evening, and to all who generously donated! We enjoyed a great turnout, excellent food, lots of fun dancing, and many in attendance took a chance and won from a variety of prizes and raffles! Proceeds will be donated to the Fires and Floods in Greece Relief Fund and our general, ongoing philanthropic mission.





Annual Community Christmas Card - Another recently concluded fundraiser was our annual Community Christmas Card. This project enables our parishioners to extend Christmas wishes to one another while helping us raise money to support local food banks, feeding centers and shelters, and provide other types of assistance to local families and individuals in need.

Vasilopita Sale – Our annual sale of Vasilopites, purchased from Agia Skepi, and traditional Vasilopita Coins for New Year’s Day is underway! Be sure to place your order now before they are gone! THANK YOU to our Board members who ordered and picked them up from Agia Skepi by the trunk load for the entire community to enjoy!



Annual Christmas Bazaar – On December 10, we held our annual Christmas Bazaar in the Fr. Socrates Tsamutalis Fellowship Hall and Peace Memorial Gym. This fun occasion allows our parishioners to relax and mingle after church services while enjoying a delicious lunch, including specialties such as tyropita, spanakopita, bagels, salad, French fries, coffee, and desserts. At the same time, several vendors set up tables in the Gym where curious shoppers could browse and pick up some unique Christmas gifts!



OUR PHILANTHROPIC MISSION CONTINUES

Feeding the Hungry and Supplying Essentials to the Needy:

- **Family Promise, Hackensack, NJ - Feeding the Homeless** – Ongoing distribution of complete dinners to the homeless.
- **Center for Food Action, Englewood, NJ - Local Food Pantry** – Ongoing shopping and delivery of food and other essentials, such as diapers, to our local food pantry.
- **Operation Classroom - Comfort Closet** – Continued support for this program that provides essentials and snacks for needy students at a high school in Newark.

Support to Charitable Organizations:

- **Center for Food Action (CFA), Englewood, NJ**
- **St. Michael's Home, Uniondale, NY**
- **Food Bank, Englewood, NJ**
- **AHEPA Service Dogs**
- **Greek Childrens Fund**
- **National Philoptochos**
 - **2023 Floods and Fires Relief Fund for Greece**
 - **National Philoptochos Children's Medical Fund**
 - **Ecumenical Patriarchate Fund**
 - **Thanksgiving Campaign Fund**
 - **APC-NSP Benevolent Fund**

Social Service Committee: This Committee continually and discreetly distributes supermarket certificates and support to local families and individuals in need through our confidential vetting process. Please contact Fr. Gregory or Maria Kamilaris if you know of anyone who needs assistance.

Metropolis Philoptochos of New Jersey Commitments:

- Emergency Social Service Fund
- Schools of the Patriarchate Fund
- Metropolis Office Fund Obligation
- Social Service Fund Obligation

National Philoptochos Commitments:

- Academy of Saint Basil
- Autism Assistance Fund
- Children's Medical Fund
- Ecumenical Patriarchate
- National Philoptochos Emergency Fund - National Philoptochos authorized \$50,000 to be released from this fund for the Earthquake in Turkey and Syria
- General Medical Fund
- Hellenic College Holy Cross School of Theology
- International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)
- National Sisterhood of Presvyteres Benevolent Fund
- Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF)
- Orthodox Christian Mission Center and Support a Mission Priest (OCM)
- Retired Clergy and Widowed Presvyteres Benevolent Fund
- Saint Photios Shrine
- Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Founders Fund
- Social Services
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

PLEASE SAVE THE DATES FOR OUR UPCOMING EVENTS!

VASILOPITA BRUNCH:

Sunday, January 7, Following Church Services

GENERAL MEETING:

Tuesday, January 23, 7:30 p.m.

GIRLS' NIGHT OUT / STEWARDSHIP DRIVE: Details TBD

GO RED SUNDAY for WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH AWARENESS:

Sunday, February 4

ST. PHILOTHEA MEMORIAL SERVICE:

Sunday, February 18

ST. PHILOTHEA NAMEDAY LITURGY & ARTOCLASIA

Monday, February 19 – Philoptochos Sponsoring Coffee Hour

ICONS in BLOOM FUNDRAISING EVENT

Friday, February 23 - Sunday, February 25

Dues and private donations help keep our mission going. If you have not yet done so, please submit your annual stewardship dues or donation by one of the following two methods:

- *Mail a check to the Cathedral address, made payable to St. Philothea Philoptochos - Please be sure to include a notation indicating the purpose of your donation; or*
- *Via the Philoptochos page on our Cathedral website - <https://www.stjohntenaflly.org/philoptochos/about-philoptochos> – Please click on the “Donate Now” button and include a notation next to your first name indicating the purpose of your donation (e.g., First name: “Maria Dues” etc.).*

We are truly thankful for everyone who continues to support us!

I wish everyone a happy, healthy, and spirit-filled Christmas and New Year!

With love in Christ,
Maria Kamilaris, President

*** PHILANTHROPY – FELLOWSHIP – FAITH IN ACTION ***

From the PTO!

We have been busy working to support our Greek and Sunday School students as well as our St. John the Theologian Community.

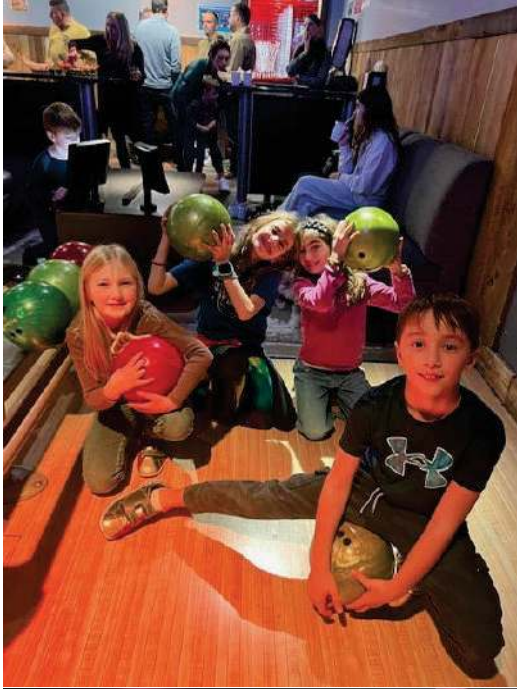


In October, we very much enjoyed watching the children perform their beautiful poems and play during the OXI Day Greek School Program. The PTO was happy to sponsor snacks and drinks during the festivities. We were blessed to celebrate this significant day of our country's history together with the next generation. The PTO was also happy to fund the new WiFi that was installed in the Greek School to help bring more range, stability service and speed to our classrooms.





November rolled in a special bowling night we shared with the children at Humdinger's in Paramus. Our community came together to have some fun time outside of the Greek and Sunday School classrooms. The kids were able to bowl and play games in the arcade while the parents enjoyed each other's company. A big part of the PTO's programming is focused on helping our children cultivate strong bonds and friendships to reinforce their ties to our Greek Orthodox community and culture.



This month, we kicked off the Christmas season with a flurry of activities! The first was a beautiful visit to St. Basil's to join the Academy for their annual Christmas Program. Our PTO families collected toys from the St. Basil's wish list and brought them along for the visit where they enjoyed a lenten lunch and play put on by the children of the Academy. It was a memorable day for all who went. The following weekend, the PTO and GOYA joined forces to celebrate the 1st Annual St. John's Christmas Kalanda. Carolers traveled from various houses and businesses singing both Greek and English songs, spreading musical cheer during the heart of the Christmas season. Thank you to all the carolers who participated and to all the parishioners who opened their doors to our children and helped us raise donations for the St. John's Youth!





On behalf of the entire PTO, we would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year!

We look forward to continuing to support our community and planning more great events for our students throughout the year. Please follow us on Facebook (St. John the Theologian's PTO) and Instagram (@st.johnstenafly_pto) for the latest updates and information.

Mariella Kapsaskis & Jennie Ballas



Kali Parea News

Kali Parea started off the Holidays this year with our annual party at Madeleine's Petit Paris on Saturday, November 18th. We had their usual delicious meal, including: appetizers, wine, soup or salad, beef, fish or chicken main course and dessert. We had a DJ playing Greek favorites to which we danced during lunch.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, December 12th. We're planning a Holiday coffee and dessert table, as we sing traditional carols and Christmas songs in Greek and in English.

We also will be showing a very funny video tape featuring Vasili, the Greek-American comedian.

We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy 2024!





AHEPA:

Our AHEPA (American Hellenic Educational and Progressive Association) chapter is called the Bergen Knights Chapter #285. The goals of AHEPA include promoting Hellenism and Philanthropic ideals in our community. We want new members to join and participate to help achieve our goals. Some of the activities we have had this Autumn included;

Fundraising to raise funds for Service Dogs for Veterans with PTSD. Service Dogs have been shown to help lower the suicide rates in veterans with PTSD. In the past few years we have raised funds for three service dogs. This Autumn we were working towards a fourth service dog. We held two events.

We had an Animal Blessing event in the front of St. John the Theologian in November. Many varieties of Dogs, along with their owners, and one cat attended the event. Father Gregory had a blessing service and donations were made towards our Service Dog Fund.

The following weekend, for Veteran's Day, we teamed up with Philoptochos to honor our Veterans. Philoptochos held a ceremony honoring veterans from our parish, the Boy Scouts participated as flag bearers AHEPA offered a breakfast meal with proceeds going towards our Service Dog Fund. The two events raised enough funds for our goal of a fourth Service Dog, which will allow for the full training of the Dog to help lower the anxieties and support a needy Veteran with PTSD.

We would also like to thank everyone that contributed to our Annual Hat and Mitten Christmas Tree. Those items that were donated were delivered to the Bergen Family Center in Englewood by the chairman of the event, Dr Demetrios Bayiokos.

Some other upcoming events including our 2nd Annual Tavli Tournament on Thursday, February 8th. Come join the fun and try to be champion! Sign ups here: <https://bergenknights.org/tavli.html>
Or in person with AHEPA members

On Saturday, February 15th, is the Hellenic History Tournament, which has 3 member teams of students from grades 8-12 competing in Hellenic knowledge competitions, coached by Aspasia and Mark Melis.

Presently we have one full team and 2/3 of another. So, we need one more player. Please contact us if interested.

We have meetings the 2nd Thursday of the month. Please consider becoming an active member and showing your pride of your Greek Heritage. Contact Peter Hilaris at 551-486-7489 or hilarispb@aol.com



GOYA:

The holiday season has officially commenced, and much is happening at St. John the Theologian. Our GOYA enjoyed the annual church lock-in, during which the children of the St. John's community stayed at the cathedral overnight. The children participated in bonding activities, watched *My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3*, and got to know one another. Father Gilbert was kind enough to lead GOYA in prayer, during both the night of the lock-in and during the morning that followed. Father offered his advice and wisdom regarding the Greek Orthodox faith, and created a safe space for the children to speak their minds. Father truly connected our GOYA with this considerable discussion, and the organization hopes to make the lock-in an annual tradition.

In addition to the lock-in, St. John's GOYA recently went ice skating at Wollman Rink in Central Park, NYC. The experience was a magical winter wonderland: our GOYAnS practiced their ice skating skills, got to see the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center, and enjoyed lunch together. Continuing the holiday festivities, the GOYAnS participated in the annual Christmas

kalanda, during which they went from house to house and sang traditional carols.

Our GOYA athletes have finished their volleyball and basketball season, advancing to the semi-finals. We are enormously proud of our GOYAnS, as they all worked their very hardest this season and established team bonds that are bound to last a lifetime. Now that the athletic season has ended, it's time for Greek dance! That's right, the Tenafly GOYA Greek folk dance team is continuing their streak of success and advancing to the Folk Dance Festival this year. More commonly known as FDF, this competition hosts teams from many different states, and is a treasured experience for Greek youth. Tenafly is dancing Pontiakia this year, and the team has been practicing multiple times a week for *months* in preparation. We are wishing the best to our dancers, knowing they will pour their hearts into this performance.

The St. John's community is excited to see what's next for Tenafly GOYA, and is looking forward to a peaceful, holy, holiday season. We send warm regards to all!

By Lianna Gourmos





Scouts:

The Scouts participated in a few events this Fall including performing the Flag Ceremony at this year's Veteran's Day Ceremony. They learned some civic responsibility and how to properly perform a flag ceremony. Some other activities included a five hike in the Tenafly Nature Center, passing the bridges that were made as part of three previous Eagle Projects from Troop 25.

We have a group of Cub and Boy Scouts working on their

religious awards, the Chi Rho and Alpha Omega awards. It involves learning material from workbooks and doing service projects.

We will be participating in a Bowling Day just after Christmas and will be going camping in a cabin in January. We will be getting ready for our annual Klondike competition in the end of January where we compete in First Aid, Cooking and Fire Building, Knots and Lashings, Orienteering, Shelter Building and other events. Later in the winter we will have a Ski/Snowboard trip.



SACRAMENTS:

BAPTISMS:

10/21/23 Panagiotis Michael, son of Constantine and Dimitra (Avgouladakis) George with Nicholas Avgouladakis as Sponsor

10/21/23 Gabriel Artus, son of Socrates and Chloe (Jimenez) Ayvaliotis with Marisa and Dayne Mosconi as Sponsors

11/4/23 Maximos Meyo Apostolou, son of Francisco and Chrysanthi (Apostolou-Vaitsi) Meyo Erosa with Vasilios and Eleni Kaousias as Sponsors

11/5/23 Aleksis Vasilios, son of Marko and Radoslava (Beleva) Halkias with George Papadogiannis as Sponsor

NA ΖΗΣΟΥΝ! CONGRATULATIONS!

WEDDINGS:

11/19/23 Daniel John Garabed and Ourania Karsos with Eleftherios Karsos and Irene Katsaros as Sponsors

12/9/23 LeAlexander Corey and Shannon Lampe with Nicole Corey Lotfalla as Sponsor

NA ΖΗΣΟΥΝ! CONGRATULATIONS!

FUNERALS:

7/2/23 Antonios Patrikios

10/25/23 George Kokkinos

11/2/23 Dimitrios Fotopoulos

11/17/23 Charles Pafitis

12/2/23 Helen Zenghi

12/12/23 Evdoxia Dumas

ΑΙΩΝΙΑ Η ΜΝΗΜΗ ΑΥΤΩΝ! MAY THEIR MEMORY BE ETERNAL!

Peter B. Hilaris, D.P.M.

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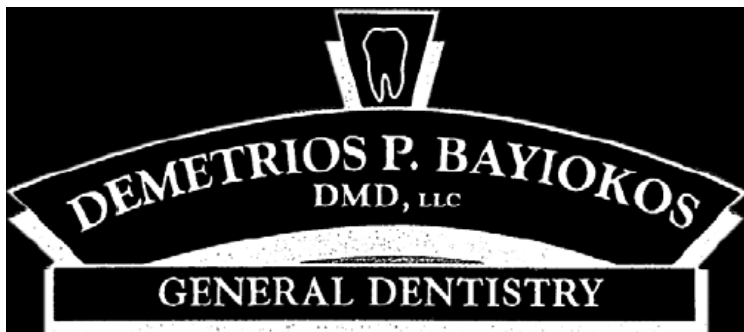
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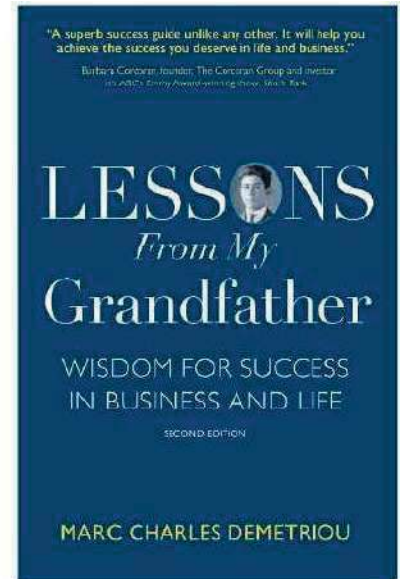
The Mortgage Expert is now an AWARD-WINNING Author

LESSONS FROM MY GRANDFATHER:
Wisdom for Success in Business and Life
By Marc Demetriou

The guiding principles received from an immigrant forbearer illuminate the road to success in this loving tribute from Marc Demetriou. The lessons Demetriou learned at his grandfather's knee are compellingly revealed and explained in the book through Charlie's life story. (Published by Highpoint Life).

"Marc Demetriou has written a superb success guide unlike any other. Based on fifteen universal principles, *Lessons From My Grandfather* will help you achieve the success you deserve in life and business."

– Barbara Corcoran, founder, The Corcoran Group, and investor on ABC's Emmy Award-winning show, *Shark Tank*



How to Contact Marc

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