
THE DESERT NEWS

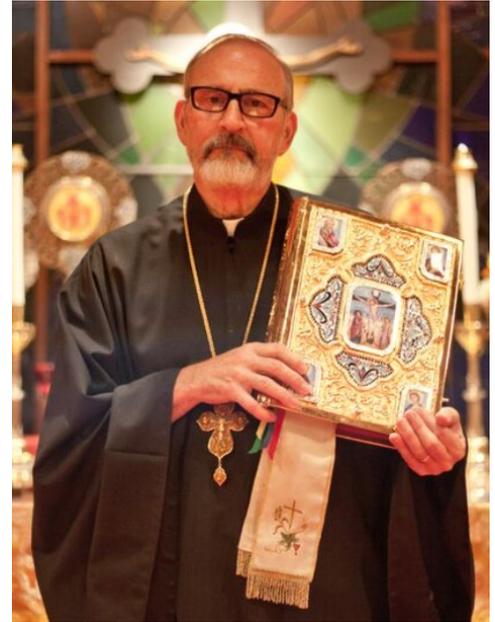
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In memoriam

Our Beloved + Fr. Joseph Allen

It was with deep, deep sadness, but in the hope of the Resurrection, that we heard the news and mourned the falling asleep in the Lord of Father Joseph Allen on August 7, 2020. Our beloved pastor of 53 years, Father Joe was a giant in the Orthodox Church on so many levels. As with any great man, the scores of hearts and minds he touched will mourn with us. May our love and prayers give strength to Kh. Valerie; Phillip and Joseph and their wives Raghda and Kristin; and grandchildren Elizabeth, Julia, Caroline and Joseph. May his memory be eternal!



As Fr. Michael Ibrahim said after Liturgy on the Sunday following Fr. Joe's funeral:

Last week was one of the most painful weeks for the parish with the falling asleep of our beloved Father Joe. If we talk about him for hours, or days, it will never be enough. We ask that the Lord remember him among the just and grant his family many years of health, enabling them to continue to pray for him and for us.

Staying Connected

During difficult times, it's natural to want to reach out to comfort and be comforted. To share stories. To share feelings. To reminisce. To hug. And we didn't get to do that as we mourned Fr. Joseph—nor as we face the day-to-day difficulties of living isolated lives because of COVID.

It's so important to stay connected. Do you know we have a Virtual Zoom Coffee hour after Liturgy every week at 11:30 am? It's a chance to see and hear your St. Anthony family. After you [watch Liturgy online](#), join us!

If you would like to attend liturgy in person, please [register](#). We welcome you following all CDC COVID -19 guidelines.

Desert News has published bimonthly for the past 25 years. **Oasis**, our Digital Parish bulletin, will now be our main communication channel.

In these fast changing time, Robo calls and email can get news out to our parish much more quickly. But we couldn't *not* publish an issue dedicated to the memory of our beloved Fr. Joe.

Look for your weekly edition of *Oasis* in your email inbox.

V. Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Allen

(1943-2020)

Barrett Funeral Home



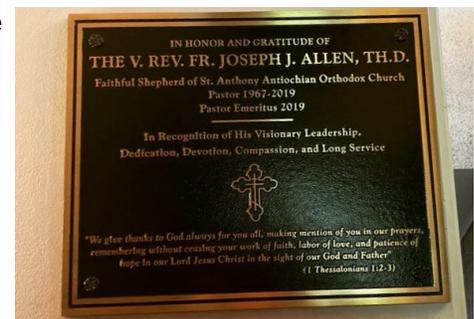
The Very Reverend Dr. Joseph James Allen passed away on August 7, 2020. He was the pastor of St. Anthony Orthodox Church in Bergenfield, New Jersey for 53 years, retiring in December 2019 as Pastor Emeritus. Fr. Joseph held many roles in the Antiochian Archdiocese as the Vicar General, National Chaplain of the Order of St. Ignatius and Co-Editor of *The Word* magazine. He was a renowned theologian and Orthodox scholar and served as the Director of the Antiochian House of Studies, Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ministry and also taught at St. Vladimir's Seminary and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He wrote and edited 13 books and many articles that have been translated and published globally. His dedication to Orthodox education will be felt for generations.

Father Joe was born in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania and grew up in Allentown. He was ordained to the Holy Priesthood at the age of 24 and assigned to St. Anthony, a pan-Orthodox and diverse church. Father Joe brought his love of God to the community and family daily, and we will treasure the wisdom, intellect, wit, humor and Christ-like humility he shared with all. He is survived by his wife Kh. Valerie; sons Phillip and Joseph and their wives Raghda and Kristin; grandchildren Elizabeth, Julia, Caroline and Joseph; and brother Phillip, sister Delores, and a large extended family. May his memory be eternal!

Gratitude During a Time of Pain

Each and every member of our church community has a special “FJ” memory. And we feel grateful that we got to share those memories and express our love to Fr. Joe during his glorious retirement weekend celebration just this past December. Few people get to experience such an outpouring of love in their lifetime.

It was a wonderful two-day celebration. We had an elegant Saturday night, a joyful family celebration of Sunday, a wonderful highlight reel of his lifetime of service, and a very personal and wonderful journal which allowed so many who love him to express it.



We worried whether we could pull off this event so close to Christmas and how maybe St. Anthony's day would give us more time. But it snowed and was quite slippery that weekend in January. And if we have waited until the spring...who could have even imagined a global pandemic? So the days before Christmas in a beautifully decorated space was perfect at the time—and even more perfect in retrospect. [Photos from that beautiful weekend, and the tribute video shown, are on our website.](#) And see page 6 for the recap of the weekend that ran in *The Word* magazine.

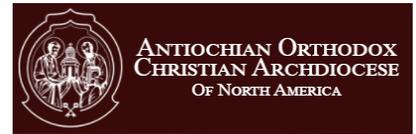
Fr. Joe and the Many Lives He Touched

Of course Fr. Joe was a loving husband, father and Giddu, belonging first to his family. And then to his beloved St. Anthony's family. But he was also a giant in the wider world as an academic and scholar.

The Antiochian Archdiocese announced on its website:

The Very Rev. Fr. Joseph Allen, Th.D., former director of Theological and Pastoral Education of the Antiochian Archdiocese, and founder of the Antiochian House of Studies that has educated thousands of students and clergy in the Orthodox Christian faith, reposed in the Lord on the morning of August 7, 2020.

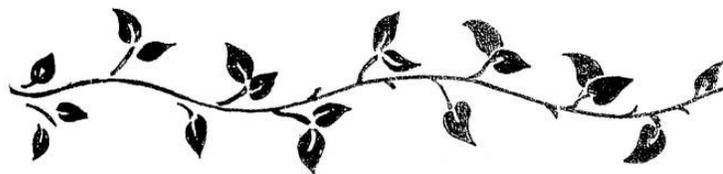
Father Joe, 77, occupied various teaching positions in the field of Pastoral Theology in Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Massachusetts and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York. He authored many books on Orthodox theology. And, in 1966, he had the distinction of being the first man ordained by His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of thrice-blessed memory and eternal repose.



Simultaneously, for more than 50 years, Fr. Joe was also pastor of St. Anthony Church in Bergenfield, New Jersey. He fondly recalled baptizing the children of parishioners he had baptized when they were children. Father Joe retired from all of his ministries in 2019. His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph led the celebrations of Fr. Joe's milestones in December.

Sayidna Joseph asks for prayers to Almighty God for the repose of Fr. Joe and for comfort for his family. May his memory be eternal!

St. Vladimir's Seminary, where Fr. Joe taught for many years, training up two generations of priests, sent an email announcing his passing to their entire community. They, too, spoke of his role as an educator, author and scholar.



Metropolitan JOSEPH Presided Over Special Funeral Service

Fr. Joseph lay in state at St. Anthony's for his wake. Because of COVID, individuals needed to sign in, wear a mask and limit their time in the church. The funeral had, by necessity, limits on attendance, but people tuned in from around the country to watch Fr. Joseph's funeral via live stream.

His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, celebrated the special funeral service for a priest.

He said:

This past December we celebrated the dedicated service and remarkable achievements over the course of Fr. Joseph's 50 years of priesthood. We wished for him a happy retirement. Today, we pray for him a blessed and joyful eternity. Notice I do not say restful eternity. Priests do not rest in eternity; they continue their liturgical service at the throne of the Heavenly Kingdom. Fr. Joseph lays before us fully vested for that eternal Liturgy in the Heavens.

After His Eminence gave his eulogy, he invited Fr. Joe's oldest son Phillip up.

On behalf of the family, thank you all for being with us, whether in person or virtually. These are difficult times for all of us, and we appreciate your love and prayers more than you know.

After the Jubilee celebration a few years ago, my father specifically asked me to deliver my comments from that evening again at his funeral, so I am here to honor his wishes because this is how he wanted to be remembered:

Joe and I have a distinct perspective on Fr. Joe, because we claim him as "father" in multiple senses of the word.

You all knew him as an extraordinary father. We knew him as an extraordinary father, too. But what you may not fully realize, is how little difference there is between what you knew about him as "father" and what we did.

The extraordinary thing about our father, and your father, was at that place where "extra" and "ordinary" come together to make the word extraordinary.

With Fr. Joe, what you saw was what you got. He was extraordinary because he could be so ordinary.

Anyone who has studied the concept of leadership or has had experience leading—whether in an organization or through being a parent—knows is that a good leader really does have to be all things to all people. A leader has to interact with followers, or children for that matter, according to their needs. Different people

have different needs, so a good leader has to show different faces to different people. Those of you who are parents know what I am talking about: with one child, you may need to take a “soft” approach, using gentle persuasion, to get them to do their homework; with another, you may have to go immediately to firm command, or they will walk all over you.

This leader, this father, knew that lesson, and could express himself differently depending on the needs of his children. Nevertheless—and this is what I mean by “ordinary”—whatever face he showed, Father Joe was always authentic, always exactly what he seemed to be. He was a real, ordinary, human being.

Fr. Joe could be silly and playful. He could be strict and serious. He could be scholarly and intellectual! He could deliver a simple message, or he could take a word like “extraordinary,” pull it into its component combining forms, and deliver a beautiful sermon about it.

But the extraordinary thing about Fr. Joe was that the person you knew, and the person we knew, were so very similar. He wouldn’t hide his faults by putting on some sort of detached, fake persona. He wouldn’t hide his playfulness with your children any more than he hid it from ours. When he was strict or serious with us, he was just as strict or serious with you all.

This was the measure of his love for you over 50 years. You are his children, and just as he was an extraordinarily “real” father in the sense of a parent with us, he was an extraordinarily “real” father in the sense of pastor, for you.

I know how lucky Joe and I were, and I think you know how lucky you all were as well over the last five decades.

He was, in a word, the greatest man I ever knew, and yet the least aware of, or concerned with, his own greatness.

Thank you all; may God rest his soul.

A Message of Appreciation from Kh. Valerie, Phil, Joe and their families.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Meal Train and brought food, had it delivered or sent gift cards. At a time of such loss and confusion, it was wonderful to not have to worry about food.

We also greatly appreciate the gifts of those who have been contributing to the memorial fund to carry on Fr. Joe’s ministry.

We truly feel everyone’s arms wrapped around us at a time in which we have to be socially distant. Your love for Fr. Joe and our family is reflected in your generosity and kind words and prayers.

The Word Magazine: March 2020

The March issue of The Word magazine dedicated its entire Communities in Action section to Fr. Joe's retirement celebration. The extract follows.

Celebrating the Ministry of V. Rev Fr. Joseph Allen upon his Retirement After 53 Years in the Holy Priesthood

It was a glorious two-day celebration as parishioners young and not so young, current and alumni, came out to celebrate Fr. Joseph Allen on his retirement from the Holy Priesthood and as pastor of St. Anthony's after 53 years. We were delighted and honored to have both Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop JOHN with us to celebrate the entire weekend.

The festivities, under the direction of our amazing co-chairs Alice Ziemba and Jim Tweel, began Saturday, December 21, 2019, with an elegant banquet at the Knickerbocker Country Club, which was beautifully decorated for Christmas. (No doubt a family or two will use the "money shot" photo in front of the giant tree as next year's Christmas card!)

A wonderful cocktail reception allowed everyone to have a chance to see one another and catch up as we dined on delicious hors d'oeuvres prepared by our parishioner Ghiath Abdallah. We then moved to the ballroom where we enjoyed dinner and had the opportunity to hear about Fr. Joe's many accomplishments from all aspects of his life.



Co-Masters of Ceremony Ed Assile and Jim Bach introduced the visiting dignitaries, including priests from our surrounding area—and beyond—from every archdiocese, and we heard about the incredibly impressive career of Fr. Joseph. The consummate teacher, he has taught over 5,000 students, both clergy and laity, and written/edited 13 books. Fr. Joseph and was a longtime faculty member at both St. Vladimir and Holy Cross Seminaries and he founded the Antiochian House of Studies, which offers a theological education for Orthodox Christians and others to increase their knowledge of the faith and to acquire practical skills in support of their work in the Church through a unique distance-learning framework--and served as its director for 40 years. We heard of his founding leadership and 25-year ministry as the Chaplain of the Order of St. Ignatius as well as his service to the Archdiocese, including as Vicar General and Co-Editor of *The Word* magazine.

We also heard some fun facts, including that Fr. Joe was the first priest ordained by +Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice Blessed Memory and that when he was named the pastor, at age 24, one of our church founders advised him to grow beard so he would look at least 26 or 27. Fr. Joseph's sons, Phillip and Joe, paid loving tribute to their dad. Fr. Joseph spoke of how, as pastor, he has had five different parishes, as the body of faithful changes every 10 years, because "everything in life changes. Only God is an unchanging constant." It was emotional for all, but he lightened the mood by suggesting, with his new free time, he might throw his hat in the ring for President of the United States.

Metropolitan JOSEPH spoke of Fr. Joe's ministry—devoting over half a century of his life to St. Anthony and the archdiocese, as he officiated at marriages, christenings and burials, and served as father confessor and provided pastoral care, for two full generations.

Metropolitan JOSEPH also reinforced that the Pan-Orthodox nature of St. Anthony's was a jewel and would not change. Fr. Joseph was bestowed the title of *Pastor Emeritus* and our church hall has been renamed in his honor.

A special element of the night was a Commemorative Journal, designed by Arlene and Ed Assile with a special assist from their daughter, Robyn Ziembra. In full color, with photos from long ago to present, parishioners had the opportunity to write special memories of their relationship with Fr. Joe. We read of a young man picking up a copy of "Inner Way" from his college library only to be surprised to drive down our little side street and see the author's name in front of the church. We also read about a marriage of over 20 years that was born by Fr. Joe encouraging a cup of coffee together. Our own Archdeacon Peter Boulukos visited St. Anthony's from his then home in Long Island to tape the Liturgy so his parish could learn to chant in English. The thread that ran through every memory was how Fr. Joe has been there through the most joyous celebrations and darkest hours for his parish family and how he warmly welcomed every person who came through the door.

On Sunday, December 22, the altar was full as Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop JOHN, and many visiting priests and deacons, celebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. And it was to our delight that Peter Thomsen and John McMinn, who have served the altar and St. Anthony's since they were children, were tonsured Subdeacons and new members were inducted into the Order of St. Ignatius.

The family luncheon in the church hall was packed and a joyful celebration, which included the Church School children singing two Christmas songs with special lyrics, Angels We Have Heard of High and Jingle Bell Rock were recast as "We love Fr. Joe" and "Fr. Joe Rocks." The very talented duo of Dana and Jared Lindbloom serenaded Fr. Joseph with "Dream," and Fr. Joe's original Teen SOYO singing group from the 1970s got back together for a reprisal of a Godspell song that they had performed more than 40 years ago. We saw a beautiful video, put together by George Tewfik, that was a mix of photos from across 50+ years and personal reflections, a giant photo display from across the decades put together by Pete and Thelma Dacales and their son Jeff, and Fr. Joe's four grandchildren spoke about their "Giddu."

Fr. Joe then was presented gifts from the various organizations: a beautiful photo blanket of Church School Students in front of the altar, a gift to Fr. Joe and Kh. Valerie of the Waterford Angel Grace and 2 cherubs from the Women's Guild, a framed all-parish photo, a beautiful bronze plaque commemorating his service to St. Anthony and the gift to come: a wall icon of Joseph the Betrothed in his honor. This joyous two-day celebration ended with Fr. Joe's favorite activity: All of us singing Christmas carols together. We are abundantly grateful that Fr. Joseph Allen was our pastor these past 53 years. We pray for his good health and long life, and are so happy to welcome Fr. Michael Ibrahim, who has been our assistant pastor for the past 2 years, as our new pastor.

It's bittersweet to re-read this. We celebrate and feel grateful that we had that weekend—and yet feel sorrowful that our dear Fr. Joseph did not get the long happy retirement we wished for him.



St. Anthony Orthodox Church

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A CHURCH OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
ARCHDIOCESE

PASTOR:	Rev. Michael Ibrahim
PASTOR'S ASSISTANT:	Archdeacon Peter Boulukos
CHURCH SECRETARY:	Alice Ziemba
CATECHIST/LIBRARIAN:	Nicholas Nagorny
CHOIR DIRECTOR and PROTOPSALTES:	Stratos Mandalakis
CHURCH SCHOOL:	Ghiath Abdallah/Nike Bach/Pamela Scarpa
CHURCH SCHOOL SECRETARY:	Joanna Zampas
FELLOWSHIP:	Stratos Mandalakis
HOUSE and GROUNDS:	Michael McMinn and Helen Chimel
HALL RENTAL:	John Ziemba Sr.
INREACH/OUTREACH:	Nike Bach and Stratos Mandalakis
PARISH COUNCIL:	Chairperson: John Gakos Vice Chairperson: Nike Bach
STEWARDSHIP/MEMBERSHIP:	Jim Tweel and Alice Ziemba
TEEN SOYO ADVISORS:	Daria and Joe Incorvaia/John McMinn/Maria Pantagis
WOMEN'S GUILD:	Betty Gakos, President
YOUNG AT HEART	Ray Takla, President

Electronic Communications

It's hard to know what our "new normal" will be—and when we will get back to it.

Please expect more Robocalls and emails as a way to receive communication. If you know someone who does not have a computer and needs a different method of contact, please let us know.

**Did you move?
Are you using a new email address?
A new phone number?
Please keep your contact information up to date.
See Stewardship/Membership Co-Chair Alice Ziemba.**

