

Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, for whom he served four years as personal representative of the Patriarchate to the World Council of Churches in Geneva. On February 14, 1959, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elected Iakovos as successor to Archbishop Michael, who died July 15, 1958, as Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Americas. He was enthroned April 1, 1959 at Holy Trinity Cathedral, assuming responsibility for what has grown to over 500 parishes in the United States.

Archbishop Iakovos improved parish organizations, upgraded roles of the Archdiocesan Council, the Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress, the Ladies Philoptochos Society and the Orthodox Observer; introduced new Archdiocesan departments including Church and Society, Youth Ministry, and encouraged the expansion of St. Michael's Home for Aged, Saint Basil Academy and St. Photios Shrine. He founded a Major Gifts program for the Archdiocese, today entitled the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Endowment Fund. The Archbishop guided the reorganization of Holy Cross into an institution fully accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in America. He conceived and brought to fruition Hellenic College, an undergraduate school which functions in connection with Holy Cross.

Most importantly, Archbishop Iakovos was a committed and caring pastor to a whole generation of Greek Americans whose hard work, determination and pride in their religious and cultural heritage he embodied.

***The march in Selma, Alabama, will continue to pave the way from which we shall never deviate along with the frontiers of unity and social justice. Ours is a commitment to true Christianity, to true justice, to the liberation of people still oppressed, and to true peace, the one founded upon respect of life and of each other, as we declare in our Pledge of Allegiance....We are called by our Church and country to bravely stand and combat whatever is untrue, dishonest, unchristian or inhuman. So let us march forward, boldly and with definite resolve to win. The moral victory and the new century will be yours.***

—Farewell remarks of Archbishop Iakovos  
Clergy-Laity Grand Banquet July 3, 1996

**Learn more about the ministry and legacy of Archbishop Iakovos online at: <http://www.goarch.org>**

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# ARCHBISHOP IAKOVOS

CHAMPION OF CIVIL RIGHTS,  
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



1911-2005

FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF THE  
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE  
OF  
NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

## A BIOGRAPHY OF ARCHBISHOP IAKOVOS

The enthronement of Archbishop Iakovos on April 1, 1959 at Holy Trinity Cathedral in New York City ushered in a new era for Greek Orthodoxy in America. Deeply respected by all religious leaders in the United States when he retired at the age of 85 on July 29, 1996, Archbishop Iakovos offered 37 years of service which were distinguished by his leadership in furthering religious unity, revitalizing Christian worship and championing human and civil rights.

Known throughout the world as a dynamic participant in the contemporary ecumenical movement for Christian unity, Archbishop Iakovos served for nine years as president of the World Council of Churches, established dialogues with Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Southern Baptists and Black Church leaders and initiated Orthodox Dialogue with Judaism. In a successful effort to promote closer ties among Orthodox jurisdictions, he founded the Standing conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) in 1960.



A champion of civil and human rights, he had the courage to walk hand in hand with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, AL, a historic moment for America which was captured on the cover of LIFE Magazine on March 26, 1965. He vigorously supported the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights legislation exclaiming when the first bill was passed, *"Glory to the Most High! May this mark the beginning of a new age for all humankind, an era when the Word of God charts and guides our lives"*.

In the international arena he spoke out forcefully against the violation of human rights and religious freedom

and, in 1974, initiated a massive campaign to assist Greek Cypriot refugees following the invasion of Cyprus by Turkish armed forces. He opposed the war in Vietnam, while supporting the right of Israelis for peace and secure boundaries, as well as the rights of the Palestinians for a just and humane resolution of their claims.

Friend to nine presidents, and religious and political leaders worldwide, Archbishop Iakovos was the recipient of honorary degrees from some 40 colleges and universities, he was cited in 1979 by both Houses of Congress and paid official tribute in the Congressional Record.



He was the recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civilian honor, bestowed by President Jimmy Carter on June 9, 1980. In 1986 he was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor and was cited by the Academy of Athens, the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Appeal of Conscience, among others.

A United States citizen since 1950, Archbishop Iakovos was an admirable role model for American Greek Orthodox Christians, thoroughly committed to the vital democracy of his adopted country without forfeiting the ageless values of Greek culture or abandoning Greek Orthodoxy's spiritual and ecclesiastical roots in the Church of Constantinople.

Born on the Island of Imvros, Turkey on July 29, 1911 to Maria and Athanasios Coucouzis, he had two sisters Virginia and Chrysanthi and a brother Panagiotis. He enrolled at age 15 in the Ecumenical Patriarchal Theological School at Halki. After graduating with high honors, Demetrios Coucouzis was ordained Deacon in 1934, taking the ecclesiastical name Iakovos. Five years after his ordination, Deacon Iakovos received an invitation to serve as Archdeacon to the late Archbishop Athenagoras, the Primate of North and South America, who later (1949-72) became Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

Ordained to the priesthood in 1940 in Lowell, MA, he served at St. George Church, Hartford, CT, while teaching and serving as assistant dean of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School. In 1941, he was named Preacher at Holy Trinity Cathedral in New York City and in the summer of 1942 served as temporary Dean of St. Nicholas Church in St. Louis, MO. He was appointed Dean of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Boston in 1942 and remained there until 1954. In 1945 he earned a Master of Sacred Theology Degree from Harvard University.

In 1954, he was ordained Bishop of Melita, by his spiritual father and mentor,