

Deacon Charles J. Pinajian
November 6, 1926 - May 14, 2017



Deacon Charles was born to two orphaned Armenian Genocide Survivors and grew up in Paterson, New Jersey. After receiving a BBA degree from Pace Institute in 1948 in only two and a half years, he pursued a career in accounting. In 1954, he married the love of his life, Grace, and joined his father's dry cleaning business, expanding it to multiple locations, later diversifying into real estate and the stock market. Charles' true life-long passion was his commitment to the Armenian Church. From the age of 16 he served in the church choir and was selected to be trained as a deacon. Charles served as Senior Deacon up until 2 weeks prior to his passing. When asked by his family to skip any given Sunday, his response was, "You don't understand. It's not that they need me. It's that I need them".

As a pillar of the St. Leon Armenian Church community, Charles not only served as a role model to his contemporaries, but as a teacher and mentor to all who followed him, from the young altar servers in training to parents raising children in their community. When the parish decided to move to Fair Lawn in the early 60s, Charles volunteered to be one of the co-signers for the construction of the church. Thus it was no surprise to those who knew Charles well, when it was announced that he and his wife Grace had made the lead donation providing the cornerstone for the construction of the Charles & Grace Pinajian Youth Center on the St. Leon Armenian Church campus.

Charles' philanthropy did not begin or end there. Over the years he and his wife supported many projects including the Armenian Eye Care Project, the Armenian Tree Project, and a variety of charities following the 1988 Earthquake in Armenia to help rebuild his ancestral homeland. On a personal level, Charles and Grace became godparents to an eighteen-year-old Armenian Earthquake victim in order to help her receive the medical care she needed in order to lead an independent life, then provided a stable financial footing for her and her family to thrive in an ever-changing economy.

After retiring in June of 1999, Charles could fully focus on his cultural passions of the Armenian Church and classical music. He fine-tuned his voice through voice lessons for many years and was a 25-year member of the ARS Musica Chorale, with whom he traveled internationally and performed on the world-renowned Carnegie Hall stage on 6 different occasions.

Over his lifetime, Charles was recognized for his accomplishments, generosity and commitment to the Armenian Church and community. He was the recipient of several medals and encyclicals from the Catholicos of All Armenians, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, and the St. Vartan Award for his dedication and commitment to the Armenian church and community.

He leaves behind his wife of 63 years, Grace; his son Paul; his daughter and son-in-law, Lynn and Arthur Beylerian, and his granddaughters, Aline and Christine. Charles touched the lives of many and will be remembered by one and all.