

Dear Fr. Demetri,

We know that our mother's passing has come as a shock to our Saint Nicholas family so we want to share with you all the blessings we have experienced as a family over the last week.

Mom suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhagic stroke while on vacation in Mytilene, Greece visiting family with our dad. She was operated on to reduce the pressure on her brain and spent the next four days in an induced coma to see if her brain would heal. She showed incredible signs of progress over the first three days which gave us so much hope. She started breathing on her own, swallowing, and even responded to stimuli on her left side which was assumed to be paralyzed. The doctors believe she then suffered additional hemorrhages and slowly deteriorated from there. We were told to prepare ourselves for the worst and on Monday, August 28, 2017, our mom passed away.

When we received the news of Mom's stroke, the three of us flew to Mytilene to help with her care and to be with our dad. Our spouses unselfishly sent us off to be with our parents and supported us through prayer, managing the home front, and guiding our kids through the roller coaster of emotions. Our kids gave us great strength by praying, texting, making cards, and recording voicemails for us to play in Yiayia's ear. Our Theia Froso lovingly ministered to our mom when she started not feeling well. Our cousin Marianthi took care of our dad as they raced to the hospital, waited through mom's surgery and supported him until we arrived.

We felt the presence of God every day. The news of a packed Paraklesis service for Mom at St. Nicholas gave us hope and a strong sense of connection to all the people that love her. The spontaneous visit of our cousin Varvara (mom's clone) from Thessaloniki buoyed us through the first half of the week. Through the truly Christian help of a family friend Efterpi who works at the hospital, and the wonderful visit from a priest Fr. Eleftherios who arrived the day before Mom died and administered to her and our needs until the day after Mom died, we truly felt that God's hand was guiding us through Mom's last days.

On the day Mom died, soon after we got word that she only had a matter of hours, we saw a beautiful white dove outside the hospital. It hung out with us for quite a while and eventually flew up into a palm tree and watched us. We felt as though Mom's spirit was watching over us and it gave us a sense of peace.

The three of us and Dad gained strength from each other and from loved ones in Greece and at home. We cried, laughed, prayed, and shared stories about Mom. Looking through her things we found her seven page prayer list. Many of you sitting here today are on that list. She even included "John from Lufthansa" who was "so helpful" on the phone prior to their flights. That was our mother. While it seems like our prayers were not answered the way we had hoped, we see God's hand in everything that happened. Mom always lived with the hope of salvation and we know she is surrounded by God's grace and love.

In the end, we asked the doctors to remember Mom. They emphatically said they would. They told us she was a fighter and that they will remember her because of the close family that they saw around her. We're sad, but we also feel blessed. Mom was blessed. We will miss our mom, wife of 51 years and beloved Yiayia. May her memory be eternal.



