08/05/2024

Orthros of Holy Saturday at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at Ground Zero



On Great and Holy Friday evening, May 3, 2024, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America joined Fr. Andreas Vithoulkas and the faithful of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at Ground Zero for the Orthros of Holy Saturday. On this evening the faithful join in chanting the Lamentations, the moving hymns of praise to the Lord which describe His ultimate triumph over death.

Also attending the service was His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York, marking the first time that a NY Roman Catholic Archbishop has attended this service, Minister Makis Voridis, and Consul General Konstantinos Konstantinou.

At St. Nicholas Shrine, the procession of the Epitaphios around the Church is particularly emotional; the Shrine was the only house of worship destroyed on September 11, 2001 and has resurrected with the consecration of the new Church in July 2022.

In his Homily to those in attendance, Archbishop Elpidophoros reminds us that the Lord’s death and resurrection give us hope even in these difficult days, “In this, our

holy Epitaphios Service, we read the prophecy and the vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones, after our chants of eager expectation in the resurrection of the Life in the Tomb – Ἡ Ζωὴ ἐν τάφῳ. We look around our world, and we see dry bones of hopelessness that fill valley after valley of human experience. Continuous wars in Ukraine and in Israel, the continuing suffering and division in our beloved Cyprus, and the poverty and disease that our fellow human beings endure every day. And my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we do not need to look across the oceans. We can look around our own neighborhoods, and see suffering and despair. Dry bones abound in our City, even in the shadow of the rebuilt World Trade Center. We can close our eyes and shut our ears to the pain of others, but their pain is no less real. And finally, my beloved, we are called to look within ourselves. How dry and brittle are our bones? The dry bones of the Prophet Ezekiel's Vision represent the loneliness, the hopelessness, the anguish, and the despondency of death. But the Lord of Hosts is the Conqueror of death. And tonight, in this Epitaphios Service, we proclaim His victory, as we enter the Sabbath of Sabbaths, in this Matins of Holy Saturday. Whatever is lacking in your life this evening. Whatever is dried up, withered and spent, like the fig tree that bore no fruit for our Lord when He was hungry. Whatever gives us no joy or gladness. All of these dry bones that hold no hope and no χαρά for us – they can live again!"

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