14/10/2024

Archbishop Elpidophoros Consecrates St. George Orthodox Church in Yonkers, NY

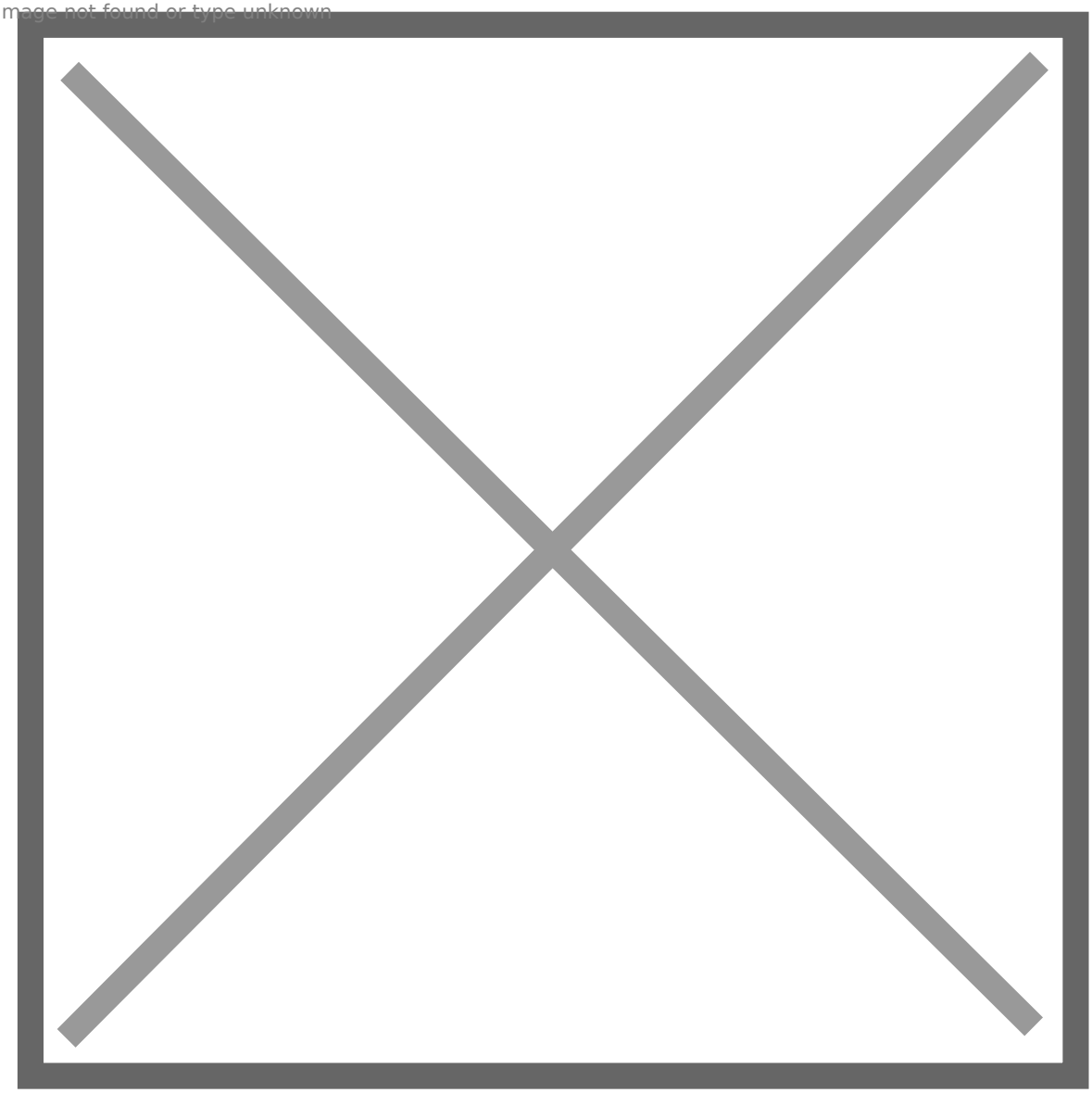


In Yonkers, New York, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America presided over the Divine Liturgy of Consecration at St. George Orthodox Church, a parish belonging to the Vicariate for the Palestinian/Jordanian Orthodox Christian Communities.



His Eminence gifted the parish with a silver censer and a relic of their patron saint, St. George, one of the rarest relics of Christendom. The parishioners marked the auspicious occasion with bagpipes and zaghrouta ululations, greeting His Eminence with warmth, enthusiasm, and traditional Jordanian gifts including coffee, dates, and a keffiyeh scarf which he wore at the consecration banquet.

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At the Great Vespers that began the sacred rites of Consecration, Bishop Athenagoras deposited the Precious and Holy Relics of New Martyrs Michael, George, Emmanuel, Theodoros, and a second George upon the Holy Altar, where they were interred today during the Divine Liturgy. Celebrating alongside His Eminence today were His Grace Bishop Athenagoras of Nazianzos, His Grace Bishop Nektarios of Diokleia, Rev. Protopresbyter Elias Villis, Rev. Protopresbyter Gregory Stamkopoulos, and parish priest Rev. Protopresbyter Soterios Baroody, and also in attendance was Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud.



Consecration comes less than a year after a fire destroyed much of the church building on December 12, 2023, just a week before its original opening date. Prior to the original building of the church, the community of St. George held services at the Greek Orthodox Church of Our Saviour in Rye, New York, where Fr. Elias serves as Proistamenos.

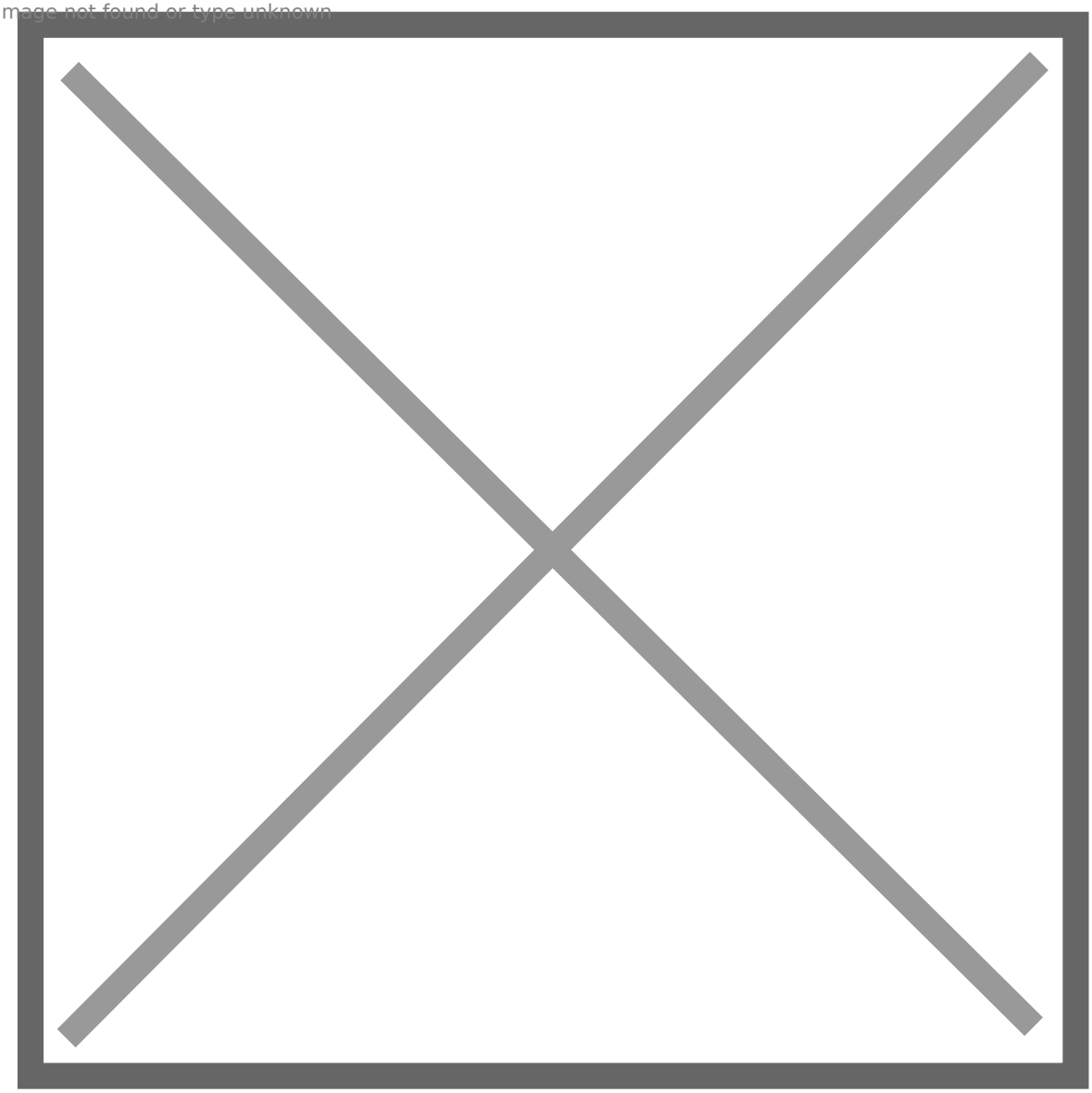


In his homily , His Eminence remarked at the perseverance of the parish community: “You have built [this church] by the sweat of your brows, and even when tragedy and disaster came calling and ruined some of your labors, you demonstrated your faith and you love in the most exceptional way – by redoubling your efforts to build this community.” Find His Eminence’s full homily here.



Reflecting on the fire’s destruction, parish priest Fr. Soterios marveled that though the roof above it collapsed, the fire stopped short of destroying the wooden altar – the same altar consecrated today. He attributes this protection of the altar and parish faithful – none of whom were harmed – to the community’s patron St. George the Great-Martyr and Trophy-bearer, relating that an icon of St. George was hung on an insubstantial door that “miraculously” stopped the fire from spreading further.

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When asked how the parish was able to rebuild and complete the church’s iconography in just over ten months, Fr. Soterios emphasized his community’s will and determination before affectionately joking that his faithful are simply “super people.”

Corinna Robinson

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos.

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