

Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden's Homily at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine NYC



Reverend Fr. Andreas,
Dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's service takes place on the eve of the national holiday of Thanksgiving, which may not be a part of the Orthodox Christian festal calendar, however it most appropriately expresses the purpose of each and every Divine Liturgy celebrated in our Church – which is to give thanks to God for all the bountiful earthly and heavenly blessings with which He has endowed us.

The phrase “δόξα τῷ Θεῷ πάντων ἕνεκεν” or “Glory to God for all things” has historically been attributed to St. John Chrysostom, whose memory we celebrated two weeks ago, and very succinctly summarizes the Christian mindset.

As I stand among you today in this beautiful church that grace's Manhattan's lower East Side and shines like a beacon illuminating this entire city and nation, I am

overcome with sentiments of joy and gratitude as I think back to my days of priestly service here in New York at the turn of the 21st century.

It was around that time that our city and the entire world was rocked by the tragic and terrible events associated with the terrorist attacks of 9/11. My parish at that time, Transfiguration Church in Corona, mourned two victims who died at the World Trade Center and we became the first parish in America to raise a monument – a 6-foot tall Byzantine Cross – to honor the fallen victims, while the scenes of the destroyed St. Nicholas Church filled our hearts with sorrow.

And yet, even then, I recall that standing among the rubble were the remnants of the towers' beams, which formed a giant cross, which served as a source of hope and inspiration, reminding us that after the Crucifixion, comes the Resurrection.

As I stand here today, some 23 years later, I give glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the miracle of the reconstruction of this holy house from its ashes.

I use the word miracle literally, because the titanic task of rebuilding this church was no ordinary undertaking. Amidst all the challenges associated with securing of the funding needed to complete such an historic project. Together with the tangible results that we admire today, along with the millions of visitors who pass through here, there is an additional aspect to this miracle – the unification of the Greek-American Community in one mind and heart to support this project, enabling this lofty vision to be realized. In recognition of this efforts, we owe a great thanks to His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America for spearheading this effort and seeing this project through, the fundraisers, and the many donors who contributed.

I extend my warmest wishes to Fr. Andreas for his successful ministry at this parish and to all of you for a Happy Thanksgiving and the upcoming celebration of the patron saint of this church, St. Nicholas of Myra the Wonderworker.

Metropolisofsweden