

## First responders honored at inaugural Beacon of Hope Dinner



His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew concluded his day by attending the inaugural Beacon of Hope Dinner, hosted by St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine.

With Anthoula Katsimatides serving as Master of Ceremonies, the event awarded the Beacon of Hope Award to individuals who “have been a light in times of darkness.” This year’s awardees were FDNY Commissioner Robert Tucker, joined by Former Commissioner Salvatore Cassone; NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch, joined by Ann Stafiliadis; and PAPD Superintendent Edward Cetnar, joined by Lieutenant Liam Huczko.

These individuals represented the “Heroes and First Responders of the FDNY, NYPD, and PAPD in recognition of their unwavering bravery, selfless sacrifice, and steadfast service on September 11, 2001, and in the days that followed.”

Remarks were given by Michael G. Psaros, Vice Chairman of the St. Nicholas Board of Trustees, and His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, both of whom

expressed great pride in the Shrine and the vast number of faithful and visitors it serves.

"People from all around the world ... understand that the National Shrine is a symbol of light over darkness, of good over evil, of love over hate, and of resurrection over death," said Psaros. "St. Nicholas is the beacon of hope."

His All-Holiness expressed pride in the Shrine, comparing its role as a beacon of light to that of the Phanar, whose name means "lighthouse."

He also paid tribute to "the courageous men and women who braved to enter the fated Twin Towers," reflecting that "They shine as the stars in the heavens ... We shall invariably look to these stellar beacons of hope for inspiration and the moral compass for our lives."

Video presentations focused on the community and journey of St. Nicholas Shrine, the inaugural Beacon of Hope honorees, and the environmentalist work of His All-Holiness.

Photo by Orthodox Observer/Brittainy Newman

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