

Bishop Irinej overviews finalization of Cathedral Secure & Enclosure Phase



Friday, August 15th, 2020 – His Grace Bishop Irinej paid a visit to his Episcopal See in New York City, the St. Sava Pro-Cathedral, to review the finalization of the first phase of the impressive reconstruction endeavor.

The present Secure & Enclosure undertaking consists of securing the walls, including rebuilding segments of the roof line; installing new roof and floor beams; putting up the roof, all save the final slate layer, that was replaced in the years preceding the fire; pouring the floor, save for the final layer, which is to be determined by other factors, such as heating and finish; framing the doors and windows; and installing temporary fireproof metal doors and plexiglas windows.

Greeting His Grace at the guarded entrance were architects Don Zivkovic, Project Executive, and Brian Connolly; Gerry O'Donoghue, Vice-President, O'Donoghue Contracting Corp, supervisor of the construction effort; and Steven Vlahakis, site superintendent.

Mark Cupkovic, Board of Trustees liaison to the construction team and head of the Building Committee, could not be present due to other obligations. However, he has continued overseeing the entire reconstruction project with twice weekly visitations to the building site given the restart of the work. Due to the coronavirus pandemic at hand, the New York City Department of Buildings ordered all

construction work to cease and desist on March 27th, and by the following Monday, March 30th, construction sites throughout the City were indeed closed. It was only on June 8th that city-wide construction was permitted to restart, including work on our Cathedral.

Wearing the obligatory hard hat, now with an added mask, His Grace proceeded to review the work at hand. It was near overwhelming, according to the Bishop, to enter into the construction site. At present, with the removal of the interior scaffolding underway, to behold, once again, the steep 55 degree pitched roof, which itself soars to the height of almost two stories above the roofline, covering the broad expanse of our magnificent Cathedral that, in and of itself, spans an entire city block, between West 25th and West 26th Streets, off of Broadway, is truly awe-inspiring.

Originally constructed out of three layers of stone, with an Italianate brownstone exterior, roughly hewn black granite slabs in between the exterior stone and the fine hand-dressed French Caen limestone interior, the latter of which, sadly, due to fire damage had to be removed. The true, detailed skill sets of those reconstructing our beloved Cathedral is clearly evidenced in the manner in which the now exposed black granite had to be repaired with bricks. Each individual granite slab had to be hand tested for stability. Bricks were used to replace loose or weak granite, as they have the same compression factor as granite, thereby adding to the equilibrium and stability of the structure. This unique brick patchwork, as it were, is visible on the walls throughout the building and along the roofline.

Having concluded his inspection and informative visitation to the construction site, His Grace met, thereafter, with award winning architect, Don Zivkovic and the rest of his team. It was explained that, which now remains is to fireproof the roof and, as the Saint Sava Cathedral is a national historic landmark, to eventually finish the exterior with a faithful replica of the original slate roof, as mandated by the Landmarks Commission.

The following, interim, phase will consist of specialized work, which will be required by the New York Department of Buildings, in order to take into consideration, allocation of the Cathedral for occasional worship services for the Great Feasts of our Holy Serbian Orthodox Church, i.e., a temporary occupancy permit.

The once lone-standing Cathedral walls, which have endured more than 150 years, imbued with the prayers of many, are now fully secured and incorporated into the rebuilt Cathedral structure, from where they continue to witness to the glory of God in Trinity, and in honor of Saint Sava of Serbia.

Articles which describe the rebuilding effort, from the beginning of the project, can be found on the following link: <https://www.easterndiocese.org/stsavanyc>

In addition to this aforementioned section of the Eastern American Diocesan website, further information on the unique history, architecture, and restoration of St. Sava Pro-Cathedral of New York City is available at: <http://avsc.co/stsava/spc.rs>