

## **Feast Day of Saint Demetrios the New Monastery in Middletown, New York, 2020**



Despite being persecuted in Romania, Saint Demetrios the New was commemorated in the diaspora, at the only monastery and church with this Patron, Saint Demetrios the New Monastery in Middletown, New York, Saturday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of October. His Eminence Nicolae, the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan of the Americas, arrived at the monastery on the eve of the feast day and completed the Vespers with the Litya, together with the residing clergy and Romanian priests from parishes around.

The complete celebration was accomplished next day, with not less than 9 priests and deacons gathered around His Eminence, of whom we mention: the Dean of New York, New England, and East USA, Fr. Daniel Ene; Fr. Marius Daniel Dumitrescu, from St. Nicholas parish in Queens, NY; Fr. Ștefan Drăgoi from the St. Mary Mission in Norfolk, Virginia; Fr. Mircea Schirta from St. Sophia parish in Bayonne, New Jersey; Fr. Ioan Proteasa from St. Andrew parish in Queens, NY; and Fr. Mihai Faur, who will soon take over a mission in our Metropolia.

At the beginning of the service, the atmosphere was cloudy, and a few drops of rain fell. Slowly, the atmosphere cleared up and all worshipers rejoiced from a sunny and warm autumn day, unusual for this period of the year, which allowed that God's blessing be felt by all those present.

His Eminence Nicolae, in his sermon, after speaking about the life and virtues of

Saint Demetrios the New, made references to the unrest through which the world has been passing the last few months, to the Covid-19 pandemic, underlining the fact that it is not for us to know when this trial is over, but for God. We have the responsibility to do what we can, as Christians, in our journey towards the Kingdom of Heaven, the eternity towards we have been called: *"It is not by our will, but after God's will. When God decides, then we will pass from this life. What we need to do is prepare. Remember the parable of the man whose land brought forth harvest, and instead of thinking about being merciful, he thought of how he can enlarge his barns. And what did he hear? 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' (Luke 12: 20 ) He departed poor because in this life he only thought of himself and his material wealth. He didn't take anything with him. And today, when we commemorate St. Demetrios, it is proper to remember and to place greater care towards our soul, rather than this world which will not be accompanying us there, but will remain here, just as we know it: with many problems."*

Given this feast day, the monastery transitioned to a new beginning through the seating as abbot of Fr. Ieremia Berbec, who came from Putna Monastery. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence Nicolae conducted the ceremony of investiture as abbot, offering to Fr. Ieremia the formal document of investiture as abbot, a blessings cross, symbolic of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of the Lord as the only way to follow in a Christian life, and the staff of the abbot, which to help him keep everything in good order. The installation of Fr. Ieremia was done with the blessing of Archimandrite Melchisedec, the abbot of Putna Monastery, as well as the late Archbishop Pimen and His Eminence Calinic, the new Archbishop of Suceava and Rădăuților.

Metropolitan Nicolae, in his words after the installation ceremony, said that the mission which Fr. Ieremia is called to is noble and challenging at the same time, a heavy cross, but fulfilling. His Eminence assured him that he can always count on the help of the priests and faithful of the Metropolia, and on the help and guidance of himself, to help him have a flourishing monastery as in Romania, with a spiritual life, and a missionary life too, with the purpose of taking care of the faithful seeking God and salvation. The mission that began that day is not an easy one, so it needs a lot of prayer to bring fruit.

The new abbot said a few words towards those present, thanking everyone for the effort made to make it to the monastery, especially in times are troubling as today's. He thanked His Eminence for his effort to bring an abbot to the monastery in Middletown, which has been complete after many years of persistence. He also asked for forgiveness for the postponement which he took before accepting his

new mission. This postponement was determined by the difficulty of the answering the question: *“Can a man full of sin, full of passions, full of himself, become a servant of God, a servant that fulfills God’s will and not his own?”* Father Ieremia underlined that his experience, until now, taught him that, despite the answer to the question, humanly speaking, is negative, through the work of God the question can be answered positively. God’s work can fundamentally change things, can transform the weak into strong, the unworthy into worthy, the unclean into pure. That is why hope is only in Him: *“We, for our part, with your and His Eminence’s prayers, put everything to work, but we are aware that it is impossible and that only God’s work can do something here. Therefore, we wait. We have reasons to hope that God will work, will bring fruition. He knows. We need to have patience, to sacrifice ourselves, and to be servants of God.”* The abbot also expressed his wish of living in an authentic monastery. And the signs of authenticity are: obedience and everything done with a blessing. *“This is what I desire: for me to be in obedience and blessing”*, he said as he finished his thoughts after being installed as abbot.

Fr. Vincențiu Temirov, at the end of his mission on American soil, received from His Eminence the *American metropolitan cross* as a sign of gratitude and appreciation for the pastoral and administrative work done at the monastery St. Demetrios the New.

Fr. Ieremia also recalled St. John Maximovici, a contemporary saint (1896-1966) loved by many Romanians, who has complete relics for worship at the *Joy of all who sorrow* Cathedral in San Francisco, California. Two weeks ago, after an official letter from His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae, St. Demetrios the New monastery received a fragment of St. John’s holy, unspoiled relics. The reliquary was incorporated into an icon of St. John that was put forth for worship on the feast day. This way, all the faithful present that day rejoiced, blessed by St. Demetrios and wonderworking St. John Maximovici.

It was a Christian and Romanian celebration, with a spirit of communion and warmth granted by the grace of the service and the blessings of the saints.

Protosynghellos Ieremia Berbec

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