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Patriarch inaugurates reconstructed St Nicholas church at Ground Zero site



The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, led the blessings at the inauguration of the reconstructed St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church which was destroyed in the 11 September, 2001 attacks in New York.

The patriarch, who was accompanied by Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon, blessed religious objects that were recovered from the original church which had been destroyed in the collapse of the South Tower.

He set a relic of St Nicholas from Mouth Athos at the centre of the new church's high altar. He also took off his vestments, signed and donated them to the church.

The Athenian Macedonian News Agency (AMNA) reported that Greek-American coast guard and police officers formed an honorary guard during the service which was attended by leading members of the Greek-American community, as well as US politicians and relatives of the victims of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre.

The new church which was designed by Santiago Calatrava is situated next to

Liberty Park and is close to the 9/11 monument and museum. The work cost $85 million which was largely raised by donations.

The original church was opened in 1922 and was dedicated to St Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors. It was a focal point for Greeks who arrived in New York after being processed on Ellis Island.

The church is the only religious building near the One World Trade Center complex and will be open to people of all religions and sects. Services are set to begin next week.

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