29/11/2021

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Homily at the Consecration of Saint George Greek Orthodox Church



Reverend Fathers,

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

When the Holy King Solomon – a direct ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ – finally completed the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, he stood before this magnificent structure on Temple Mount, and uttered these words:

Εἰ ἀληθῶς κατοικήσει θεὸς μετὰ ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; Εἰ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ οὐκ ἀρκέσουσίν σοι καὶ τίς ὁ οἶκος οὗτος ὃν ᾠκοδόμησα.

But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built! [*]

Such was the astonishment of Solomon the Great and Wise, as he considered how God could be contained even in the most grand and palatial Temple. But now, look into the apse of this magnificent church and into the outstretched arms of the

Theotokos. She is called Πλατυτέρα τῶν Οὐρανῶν,

“She Who is Wider than the Heavens,” for she held God in her holy womb.

God chose to dwell within her ever-virgin womb, as we chant at her Holy Dormition: “ὸ μήτραν οἰκήσας ἀειπάρθενον.” [†] And because God dwelt within her and made of her body a Temple for His Tabernacle in the Flesh, we behold in this church that we consecrate today a living Tabernacle where God lives and meets His People.

The first Tabernacle that Moses built journeyed many centuries, until Solomon secured it upon Temple Mount. And this precious community of Saint George has also journeyed.

You have been carried by your forefathers and foremothers, from Long Branch, Red Bank and Asbury Park – and now to Ocean Township. The other locations where you prayed and held services, baptized children, married spouses, and buried loved ones, will always be held in loving memory.

You have, indeed, journeyed far as a community of Greek Orthodox Christians. But now you have arrived at your own Temple Mount, where, like Solomon, you have constructed this magnificent edific,e which we consecrate unto eternity today.

Our prayers on this day bring full circle all those who have come before you, and we honor their sacrifices, which have made today’s joyous revelation of this Church possible.

As your Archbishop, and as the Patriarchal Vicar of the Metropolis of New Jersey, I commend each and every one of you for your labors.

You have proven to be worthy inheritors of the legacy of Asbury Park, of the legacy of George S. Pappayliou, and of the ever-memorable Father Spyridon Coutras, who pastored this Church for decades.

From the Ground-breaking thirteen years ago, to the Thyranoixia that your celebrated on April 1, 2012, you have progressed step by step as a unified and united community in Christ. Now, the achievement of the Consecration takes place before your eyes. Relics are enshrined in the Holy Altar. Icons receive Holy Chrism. Prayer and praise fill the House of the Lord, and we answer the question posed by Solomon so many centuries ago:

But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?

Indeed, my beloved Christians – the answer is a resounding “Yes!”

The Lord is with us; God is with us – Μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός.

And this House of the Lord, consecrated to the worship of the One True God, Who is worshipped in the Holy Trinity, will abide for generations to come, and who have yet to be born. Your sacrifices, which have made this truly sublime edifice, will reap rewards that none of us alive today can even imagine.

There will be many sacraments, many candles to light and many prayers to be uttered. There will be moments of joy and sorrow, as well as gatherings of community and fellowship.

And in all of your endeavors, God will be with you. That is the essence of this Consecration today.

May you never forget what you see and hear this day.

May you always cherish this special blessing.

And may the Lord, through the prayers of the mighty Saint George – the Great-Martyr and Trophy-bearer – always bestow upon you, your families and loved ones, His Heavenly benediction, and the grace of this Consecration, from this day forward, and unto the ages of ages. Amen!



[*] II Chronicles 6:18.

[†] Kontakion of the Feast of the Dormition.

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