06/12/2021

# His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Homily at the Divine Liturgy




Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

What a joyous day this is for you – the faithful of our wonderful parish here in West Babylon. Following the unfortunate fire six years ago, you have come back stronger than ever, especially with the new Community Center that will officially be opened today.

And the fact that we are celebrating this wonderful opening on the eve of the feast of your heavenly Patron – the Holy Bishop Nicholas and Wonderworker of Myra – is a powerful symbol of the Saint’s blessing upon your labors.

In this month of December, when Christmas preparations and decorations are popping up all around us, here in your community, you know the blessing of Saint Nicholas – the figure who becomes Santa Claus in world culture – all year round. Saint Nicholas, who lived seventeen hundred years ago, and who was in attendance at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, which gave us the Symbol of our Faith – the Creed that we recite every Sunday – has truly been a source of spiritual wealth and blessing throughout the ages to all people.

But especially in the parishes that bear his name; you have a special relationship with the Wonderworker of Myra. His name, as you all know, means: “the victory of the people.” And he is cause for you overcoming every kind of obstacle in your lives, just as you overcame the fire of 1967, and that of 2015.

We seek his intercessions, because he proved to be full of the Spirit’s energy during his lifetime. He defended the poor. He was an advocate for women, whose rights so many centuries ago were often threatened by the societal norms of the day. He championed those imprisoned, particularly those whose lives were threatened. And he was the constant and steadfast intercessor for all who journeyed, especially upon the sea.

Not only in the confines of the Empire, but across the mountains in the Slavic lands and in all of Western Europe, his fame and name were well known. Through the centuries, his miracles have time and again been recorded around the world, so much so that Saint Nicholas has suffused nearly every Western culture in one form or another. Our God is truly glorified in His Saints!

Today, we give thanks to the Lord of All, for bringing this community – through your hard work and many labors – to this most significant milestone of officially opening your Community Center. All along, Saint Nicholas’ intercessions have been working miracles– inspiring generosity; bringing the clergy and lay leadership necessary; and paving the way for a successful conclusion to your endeavor.

My beloved Christians: Never doubt that Saint Nicholas is with you – both in good times and in bad.

He is your protector and your intercessor before the Throne of God. He – like our Panagia, is ὁ ἐν πρεσβείαις ἀκοίμητος – “sleepless in his intercessions[*].”

Saint Nicholas watches over this community that has graced the South Shore of Long Island for generations. He has been with you from the beginning, and he will remain your protector forevermore.

Therefore, as you embrace this Season of Christmas – with all the cultural associations that originate from Myra of Lycia in Asia Minor – make certain that you hold the memory and meaning of Saint Nicholas in your hearts and minds. He is not just the origin story of Santa Claus. He is the great Saint and Miracle-Worker, whose life and story demonstrates the love of God for this world. For God glorified Saint Nicholas after his lifetime of service and love. God empowered the Saint to perform miracles that cannot be numbered. And God will keep this holy one in your parish, your homes, and your lives, so that you, too, may learn to be generous as he was. Righteous as he was. And ultimately, holy as he was.

May the Lord, through the powerful intercessions of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, always keep you, your families, and your precious parish in his loving care and presence. Amen.

[*] Cf. Kontakion of the Dormition.

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