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Friends of St. Nicholas February 2022 Newsletter

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My Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

At the beginning of this month of February, we remembered in the Church the person and ministry of Saint Photios the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople (d. February 6, 891 AD). This brilliant Ecumenical Patriarch is famous for a multitude of reasons, but the one I want to highlight, vis-à-vis our National Shrine, is his commitment to spreading the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. His missionary zeal was truly apostolic, not a proselytizing chauvinism. And it is this spirit that our Saint Nicholas National Shrine will invoke for all who cross its holy threshold.

Our faithful presence, and presence filled with faith at Ground Zero, is an extraordinary opportunity to share the Orthodox Faith of Christ with our neighbors, whomever they may be. Let us remember that the Lord said that after loving God, the greatest commandment was: ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν – you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31).

A neighbor is not someone you choose to associate with, or the friendly family over the fence in your neighborhood, A neighbor is anyone who comes into your presence, and therefore, anyone who walks into our National Shrine, or who finds us on the Internet or Social Media. They are our neighbor. And our call is to love them, and to bring the Good News of God’s love to them.

This is the genuine and apostolic mission of Saint Nicholas. This mission can be the inspiration for every parish across the Archdiocese, as we celebrate the One Hundredth Anniversary of our founding as the premier Eparchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Saint Photios the Great changed the course of human history, by the missionary exploits he sent forth from Constantinople into the Slavic Lands. He manifested the nourishing and caring love of the Mother Church for all people. We can do no less.

And through his holy prayers, I believe that Saint Nicholas will be that beacon of pure and unalloyed Orthodox Christian Faith, that will draw many souls to Christ, and to his safe harbor from the stormy seas of life.

With Love and Blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ,

+ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America

goarch.org