05/07/2022

At Saint Nicholas Consecration, Ground Zero “Remains Forever Sacred Ground”



Early this morning, faithful, clergy, and supporters from across the United States gathered at the World Trade Center for the consecration of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine. Nearly 11 years after the harrowing attacks on the Twin Towers, the re-building of the Shrine, the only house of worship destroyed on 9/11, is “an act of faith—faith in God and in the American vision of religious liberty,” said the Friends of St. Nicholas.

The ceremony involved the sealing of the Holy Relics of Saint Nicholas within the altar table and took place within the context of the Divine Liturgy, officiated by Their Eminences Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit and Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, who were joined by the Rev. Protopresbyters of the Ecumenical Throne Alexander Karloutsos and Andreas Vithoulkas.

According to tradition, the presiding bishop signs the altar table once it has been consecrated, but in a moving demonstration of unity, Archbishop Elpidophoros also invited each Metropolitan and Auxiliary Bishop, the two living former Archbishops of America Spyridon and Demetrios, Representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Their Eminences Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon and

Metropolitan Prodromos of Rethymnon, as well as the Rev. Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne Alexander Karloutsos, to sign the consecrated altar.

In his homily, Archbishop Elpidophoros said, "…although it is a Greek Orthodox House of Worship, we welcome all. We invite all. We accept all. And we practice love of others; not prejudice; not rejection; and certainly not hatred. This Shrine will be a place for everyone who comes to the Sacred Ground at the World Trade Center to imagine and envision a world where mercy is inevitable, reconciliation is desirable, and forgiveness is possible." (Full Homily)

Remarks were also delivered by Friends of St. Nicholas Chairman Dennis Mehiel and Vice-Chairman Michael Psaros, who were recognized by Archbishop Elpidophoros as Centennial Honorees.

A Centennial Honorees are recognized for their significant contributions to the life of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. An honoree is a person who has served with distinction; who has given true stewardship of time, talent and treasure the Archdiocese; and who is a true Icon of a faithful member of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Archbishop Elpidophoros also recognized Father Alexander Karloutsos as a Centennial Honoree, presenting him with a gold cross of Hagia Sophia: "When all lost faith, you kept it. When all gave up hope, you hoped all the more. And the love you hold for this Church will be forever recognized in this Shrine, as we shall install in the Narthex of this Church the icon of your patron Saint, the Holy Alexander, Archbishop of Constantinople, as a perpetual memorial to you, your sacrifice, your faith and your love."

In addition to the leadership of the Friends of Saint Nicholas, ecumenical leaders, and officials of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, were also present, among others.

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