

18/11/2022

The Saint Nicholas National Shrine Opening for Worship with Thanksgiving



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

With tremendous gratitude to The Friends of Saint Nicholas for their constancy and their faith, we enter into the Season of Thanksgiving preparing to commence the regular liturgical life of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine on the Feastday of the Wonderworker of Myra. What a cause for thankfulness, that after twenty-two long years, we are now ready to open the doors to the Shrine for all the world to behold our faith, our traditions, and our beauty.

With the presiding priest of the parish, the Reverend Protopresbyter Andreas Vithoukias, together with a small staff and the devoted laypersons of the Parish Council, the Saint Nicholas parish that graced Lower Manhattan with prayer and worship will once again take up its rightful place at Ground Zero. The fully functioning Parish will not only bear witness to our Faith and Traditions, but as the National Shrine provide a vital service of religious presence and intercessory reconciliation at Ground Zero. Where so much destruction was wrought out of hatred, Saint Nicholas will be a sacred place of faith, hope, and love for all people who pass through its doors.

We have traveled a long way to get here, to these days when the Eucharist will be continuously celebrated once again “for the life of the world.” And in the midst of our celebrations, there will always be the story of Saint Nicholas, the Hierarch from Asia Minor whose loving ministry has been acknowledged around the world in different forms, preeminently in the figure of Santa Claus. What a gift we have to give to the world, by teaching and preaching the pure Orthodox Faith on this Hallowed Ground, and bringing the true Saint Nicholas, the “Victory of the People,” to life through our mission and service at the rebuilt World Trade Center.

I pray that as we enter this season of Thanksgiving, and indeed preparation through fasting and prayer for the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Flesh, that we all give birth in our hearts to an intense and urgent desire to serve the world through our Saint Nicholas National Shrine. This is where we have a truly national

and international opportunity to glorify God and share the riches and treasures of our Orthodox Christian Faith.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

†ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

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