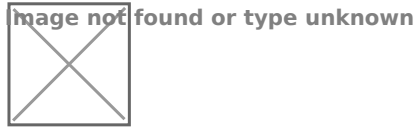


26/01/2023

Welcoming and Closing Remarks At the Ecumenical Prayer Service For the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church & National Shrine



Welcoming and Closing Remarks
By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America
At the Ecumenical Prayer Service
For the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church & National Shrine
New York, New York
January 24, 2023

(Welcoming Remarks)

Beloved sisters and brothers in the Lord,

Today, it is my great joy to welcome all of you to the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine, which was completed just last year by God's grace, and by the intercessions of the Wonderworking Hierarch of Myra, for whom it is named.

As you know, the original Church was destroyed on 9/11 when the South Tower fell. It was a tiny island of faith and devotion in a sea of commerce and industry. Today, it stands in the rebuilt World Trade Center as that same island of faith, but it is also much more.

As a Shrine for the Nation, built from the same marble as the Parthenon of Athens, and completely illuminated by the genius of an Athonite iconographer – the only Church in the Western Hemisphere to be so adorned – this place is surely a fitting setting for our communal and ecumenical prayers.

For we are gathered at Ground Zero – the epicenter for the history of the Twenty-First Century – where a crime of unspeakable destruction and hatred changed the course of human events in our time. If 9/11 has taught us anything, it is that the objectification of the “other” leads to the most inhuman of consequences.

Our prayers this evening reflect our common aspiration as Christians to “do good,” and to “seek justice,” in accordance with the Prophetic calling that is our theme.

Standing here, in a place where such monstrous evil was perpetrated, and where thousands of our fellow citizens – of every race, religion and ethnicity – were denied their humanity and justice, summons us to answer that call of the Prophet.

It is clear to all, that Christian unity is needed now more than ever, especially as we see racism on the rise in our land. As leaders of faith communities – especially communities that bear the name of Christ – we shoulder the responsibility to make common witness known to the world, that we will never cease from pursuing what is right and just, and practicing the good.

Therefore, you are all welcome – as is every person regardless of their creed – in this place of memory, where those who gave their last full measure by courageous and selfless acts of heroism are remembered in the very walls.

May our prayers be united by their memory, and may we ever strive to grow in faith and fellowship with one another – not just in this octave of

days, but in every time and place –so as to bear witness that we are, in truth, His Disciples.

Welcome, dear family in Christ.

(Closing Remarks)

My dear friends,

Before we depart in peace – to manifest the unity for which we have prayed, and for which our beloved brother, Cardinal Dolan, has gifted us such inspirational words – kindly allow me a point of personal privilege.

Bishop Andrew Dietsche, is completing the tenure of his Archpastoral ministry as the Episcopal Bishop of New York. On behalf of all the brothers and sisters gathered here today, I would like to express our profound gratitude to you, brother Andrew,

for your devoted service to New York and to the cause of true ecumenical endeavors.

Please come forward and receive this icon of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, as a small token of our appreciation for your many gifts and offerings.

“Nicholas” literally means – “the victory of the people.” And with this sign of our esteem, we wish you every success and prosperity from above as you go from faith to faith in your life of love and service.*

Thank you, my dear brother, and may the Lord ever bless you.

* Cf. Romans 1:17.

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