



“Glory instead of ashes”

Isaiah 61:3



THE
SAINT NICHOLAS
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
AND NATIONAL SHRINE

AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

Genesis of a Resurrection



On September 11, 2001, the thousands who senselessly perished in the terrorist attacks of that day were only the first and most grievous losses to our Nation. In the confused and stormy dark days that followed, even as we all gained some small measure of comfort



Hagia Sophia watercolor by Calatrava

from the extraordinary courage of our Fire and Police heroes, our national sense of security, safety, and even our sense of identity in the wider world was deeply and perhaps forever shattered. In those days when our Archbishop, His Eminence Demetrios of America, ventured to Ground Zero offering prayer and solace to the survivors and rescue workers, the vanished Saint Nicholas Church was already beginning to speak up. There began in the hearts and minds of those sifting through the debris an utterance crying from that sacred ground unto the Lord on behalf of the blood of many brothers and sisters (cf. Genesis 4:10). And that cry became a story and a history – a story of those who were slain that fateful day, and a history yet to be written of the immigrant communities

of lower Manhattan and their dream of America.

The recognition, of the value and significance of the **Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center** is just beginning. Saint Nicholas will be the **only**

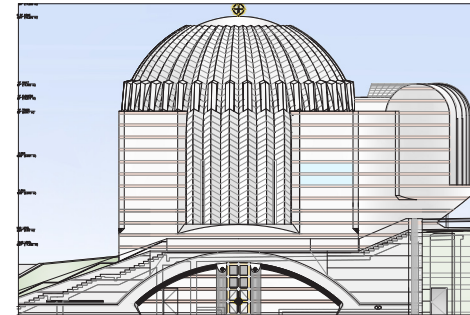
House of Worship in the entire sixteen-acre rebuilt World Trade Center site. In order for this edifice to truly be the National Shrine it is called to be, it must be a National Shrine for everyone. Orthodox and non-Orthodox. Christian and non-Christian. Believer and non-believer.

This does not mean that as an Orthodox House of Worship, it will look or feel any different from any other *Naos*. In fact, the inspirations of the architect are Hagia Sophia, the Church of the Savior in Chora, and the very Walls of Constantinople! The interior of the finished *Naos* will be instantly identifiable as an Orthodox Church with all the accoutrement, furnishing and, of course, plentiful iconography. Saint Nicholas will function

as any other parish with a rich liturgical life centered around the transfiguring cycles of feasts and fast that define every year of the grace of the Lord.

But as transfiguring as the liturgy is for the community that worships and understands what it is saying (cf. Acts 8:30,31), there is a transformative role for Saint Nicholas to play for the Nation and indeed the world.

In a place where the ashes of mourning still fall into the landscape of memory, we are called to bring glory, in fulfillment of the words of the Prophet (Isaiah 61:3). And this is no self-glorification, but a real sense of the transforming, glorious love of God. This a profound responsibility to be shared by every member of our Holy Archdiocese: to uphold the re-building and ministry of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine by prayer, by fasting, by feasting, by material support, by sharing resources, by donations, by telling the story from every housetop (cf. Luke 12:3), and writing a new



North Elevation from Liberty Street

history of human interaction and Divine love.

That is why the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine will rise in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. That is why we will welcome all visitors who come in peace and with

the mutuality of respect that every human being deserves.

Truly, such a National Shrine is worthy of a nation-wide effort and campaign. The entire Archdiocese is taking up this noble and indeed glorious cause. There is no other group of citizens who have this opportunity. No other religious body that has such an obligation, such a duty to all other members of its society. The challenge is ours, and ours alone. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America has been given this solemn charge and this sacred task. We are all called to give our finest and our best to this holy work of the Church. Let us all – each and every one – heed the call and join this journey of faith.

“Upon this rock I will *rebuild* my church.”

Matthew 16:18