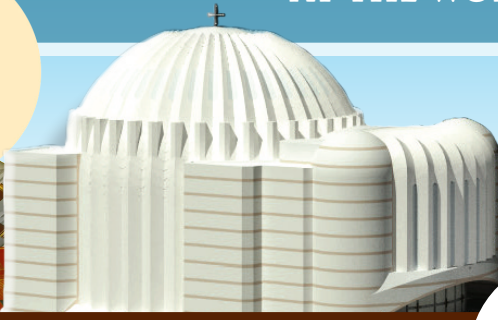


THE
**SAINT NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
 AND NATIONAL SHRINE**
 AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER



December 14, 2016 • #RebuildStNicholas



Tel: 212-774-0227 • rebuildstnicholas@goarch.org

The Dome and the Cross

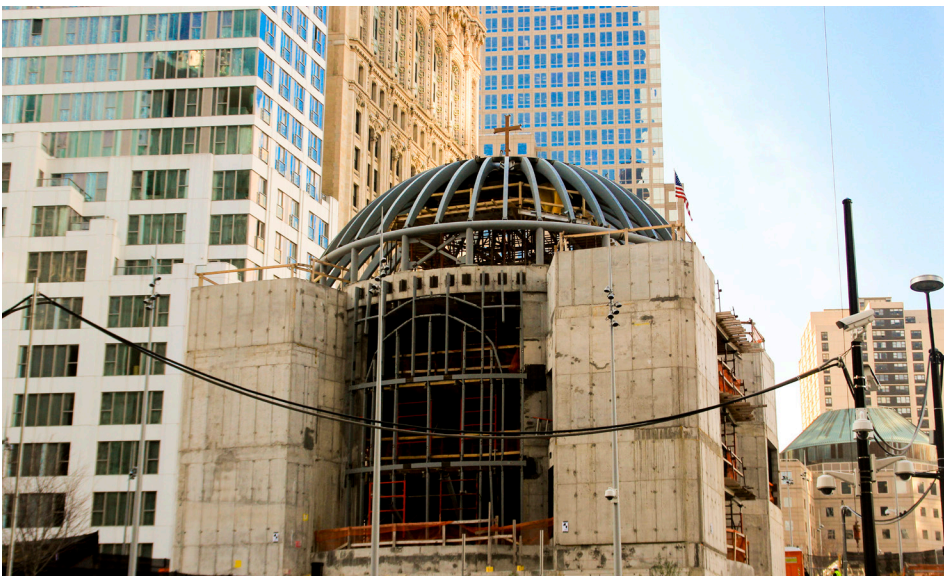
Dear and Beloved Friends of the Saint Nicholas National Shrine,

In the pictures below, you can clearly see the shape of our Saint Nicholas National Shrine emerge at Ground Zero. The dome is finally coming into view, and at the “topping off” ceremony, for the first time a cross adorns the skyline of Ground Zero. Even the President of the United States made mention of St. Nicholas on his recent state visit to Greece:



“If anyone seeks an example of our shared spirit, our resilience, they need look no further than New York City, near Ground Zero, where the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas, once in ruins, is now rising again.”

His Eminence Geron Archbishop Demetrios officiated at a blessing ceremony before the cross was lifted onto the top of the dome. The rituals associated with “topping off” any building are deeply rooted in the cultures of northern Europe. There, because shelter came from the trees of the forest cut down to make homes, the “topping off” was a way of expressing gratitude to nature for the gift of wood. Usually, the highest branch would be saved and placed at the top of the roof, as a sign of thankfulness. We have placed the sign of the holiest Tree the world has ever known: Τὸ Ἐὔλον τῆς ζωῆς – the Tree of life!



Archbishop Demetrios blesses the temporary Cross at the Topping Off Ceremony. Later, Jerry Dimitriou, Pat Foye and Steve Plate, members of the Port Authority, address the media following the Ceremony. (Photos by GOA/Dimitrios Panagos)



Even before the cross was raised, in a marvelous photograph, the image of a cross was captured foreshadowing the triumph we now can see!

The 40 ribs of the dome are now in place! Over the next few weeks more work will be done on the dome structure and steel will be added for the glass and stone rainscreen that will begin next year. These 40 ribs emulate the same design at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The dome made Hagia Sophia the most complex building in antiquity. Forty windows were then set at the dome's base, creating the sensation that the dome actually floated over the church.

Listen to the description of the sixth century poet, Paul the Silentiary, a courtier in the palace of Justinian the Great, the Emperor who rebuilt Hagia Sophia as we know it today:



“Above all rises into the immeasurable air the great helmet of the dome, which, bending over, like the radiant heavens, embraces the church. And at the highest part, at the crown, was the cross, the protector of the city.”

Indeed, Justinian rebuilt Hagia Sophia after a devastating fire, which destroyed the original church. He rebuilt it differently, just as we are re-building Saint Nicholas differently, with a greater and deeper purpose. What a privilege for all of us to be part of this historic and sacred mission. The dome and cross now clearly identify the structure as a church, and a Greek Orthodox church at that. We should expect much more visibility in our culture and society. This is a good beginning to what will be the mission of Saint Nicholas as much more than a simple parish and even a National Greek Orthodox Shrine.

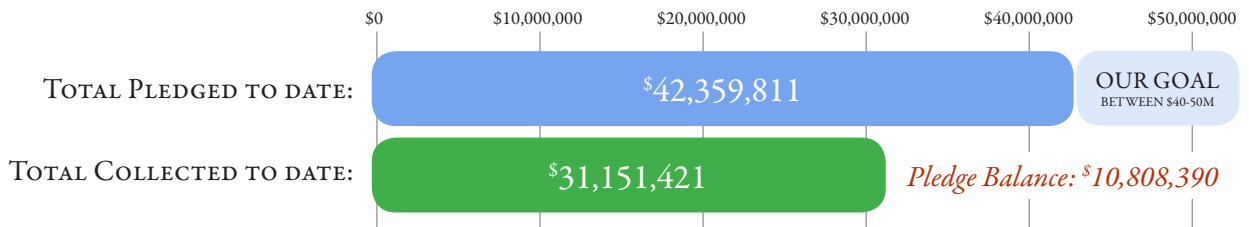


Faithfully,

Father Alexander Karloutsos

Donations to Date

As of December 8, 2016, donations are:



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