

Orthodox Church in Glen Gardner Celebrates Consecration of Church and Altar

A momentous occasion took place in Northern Hunterdon County on Sunday, June 2nd: the consecration of the altar and church building of St Gregory Palamas Orthodox Church in Glen Gardner, NJ. After more than thirty years of worshipping in a variety of temporary locations, the community of St Gregory Palamas, a parish of the Orthodox Church in America made up of Orthodox Christians of all backgrounds, successfully paid off the mortgage on their property last year, a former Methodist church dating to the mid-19th century. With a church home financially secured, the parish under the leadership of acting rector Hieromonk Kilian (Sprecher) was able to petition His Grace Bishop Michael (Dahulich), Bishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, to come and consecrate the church building and the new altar and holy vessels.

Taking as a pattern the consecration of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness in the Book of Exodus, and the consecration of the Temple built by King Solomon, the Orthodox Church's service for the consecration of an altar and church is lengthy, lasting some two hours before the celebration of the hierarchical liturgy (similar to the Roman pontifical Mass). The altar table is washed by the bishop and concelebrating priests with holy water, red wine, and rose water; then relics of saints martyred for their faith are paraded in procession around the church building and brought triumphantly into the altar area, where the bishop seals them into the very altar with holy wax mixed with fragrant spices. The relics are sealed with holy chrism oil, then the holy table is anointed, and all the coverings and furnishings for the altar are blessed with holy water. The inner and outer walls of the church are sprinkled thoroughly with holy water, and the inner walls also anointed with holy chrism—in effect, the church and the altar are “baptized” just as are the faithful as they become members of the Church, and are set aside for all eternity as a place of worship and healing.

A rare, once-in-a-lifetime experience for parishioners, the consecration was full of joy and gladness, all the more so since it was celebrated on the fifth Sunday of Eastertide in the Orthodox Church, on which day the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well is commemorated (cf. Jn. 4:5–32). Following the consecration and the Divine Liturgy was a festive banquet held at the Beaver Brook Country Club in Annandale, NJ, with guests from all eras of the parish's existence, as well as community friends.

All are welcome to visit the newly consecrated Church of St Gregory Palamas in Glen Gardner. Vespers are served every Saturday at 5 PM, with Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at 9 AM, and feast days as announced. More information, is available on our website -- stgreg.oca.org -- or by calling the acting rector, Fr Kilian, at (914) 364–0090.