

The

Orthodox Basis



Assumption Greek Orthodox Church Vol. XXIII, Issue V ~ May 2011

Rev. Andrew Barakos, *Presiding Priest*

Rev. Deacon Drew Maxwell, *Administrative & Pastoral Assistant*

V. Rev. Virgil Suci, *Liturgical Assistant*

www.assumptionaz.org priest@assumptionaz.org office@assumptionaz.org

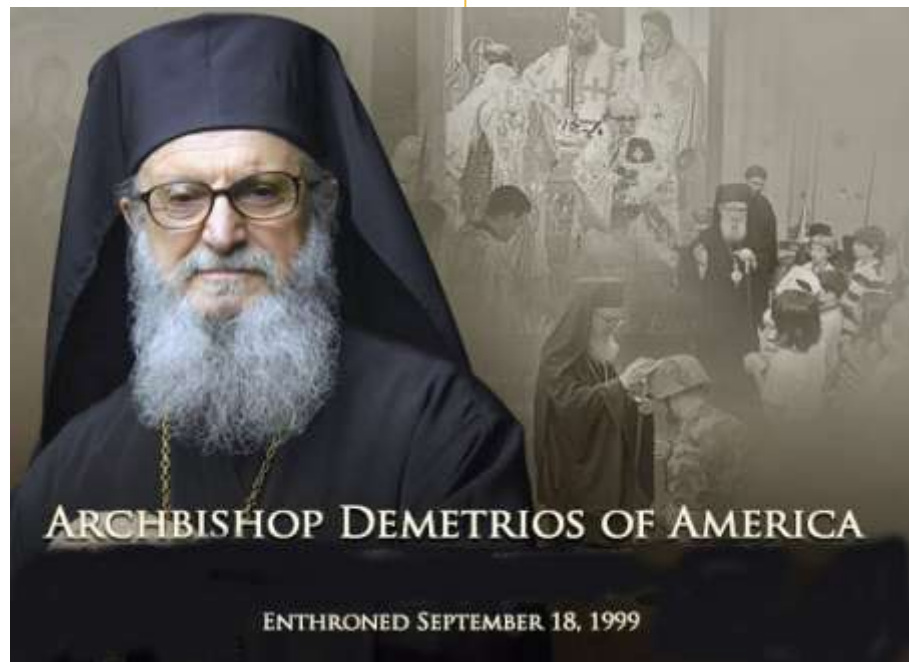
8202 E. Cactus Rd. Scottsdale, AZ 85260 480.991.3009

Consecration Homework

The Consecration of a Church is a once in a life time experience for a community. I am assigning the reading of this article as something beneficial to everyone's participation

An Explanation of The Consecration Services

The following is an explanation of the Consecration Service and a



in the Consecration and part of our collective preparation. This information was adapted from Rev. Alexander Leondis and Rev. Socrates Tsamualtis's publication of the Consecration Service.

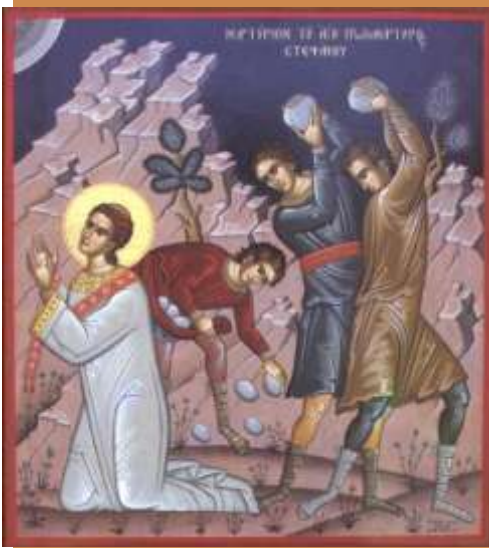
tentative schedule of events. His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos has given his blessing for Archbishop Demetrios to preside over the Consecration festivities. Please pray that our Archbishop may be able to join us.

“*Be renewed, be renewed, New Jerusalem, for the Light has come to you and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. This House was built by the Father. This House was made firm by the Son. This House was renewed by the Holy Spirit, Who enlightens, strengthens, and sanctifies our souls*
(Consecration)



Saturday Evening ~ October 29, 2011

On Saturday evening we will celebrate Great Vespers dedicated to the Martyrs. The service begins with a procession into the Church of the Holy Relics which will be



sealed into the altar table at the Consecration on the next day. The specific Relics that will be placed in our altar table have yet to be determined. The procession will be led by the altar boys, the myrrh-bearers and His Eminence carrying the Relics to the front of the Church. Upon entering the Narthex, His Eminence is received by the area clergy. They enter the Church and the relics are placed on the altar table which is bare with only a single lit vigil lamp. A short service in commemoration of the Martyrs is conducted. This service is followed by the Great Vespers of the Consecration.

Following the Consecration Vespers, a Grand Banquet celebration is being planned.

Michele Genetos is leading the team for the Banquet. If this is an area of interest please contact Michele.

Sunday, October 30, 2011 (times are tentative)

Matins ~7:30 AM

During the Matins service, the usual psalms are read and special hymns for the Consecration are sung.

The Consecration ~ 9:00 AM

The Consecration Service of a Church bears the theme of initiation and renewal. To *consecrate*, means to initiate a *house of God*, into the service of God and to “set it apart” for the exclusive use as a House of Worship. The Church building itself undergoes an actual Baptism and Chrismation and consequently is changed into a *new creation* filled and sanctified with the presence of the Holy Spirit. The building becomes Spirit filled!

The Service of Consecration begins with a solemn procession which circles the exterior of the Church three times. The altar boys, myrrh-bearers, choir, chanters, priests and bishops followed by the entire

congregation leave the Church and circle it three times. Hymns are sung while the procession takes place. The bishop carries the Holy Relics in the procession. The processions around the Church set it apart from all other buildings as a sacred area, which serves to unite man with his Creator. The Church Building becomes God’s abode on earth, the Church now becomes *heaven*.

“Be renewed, be renewed, New Jerusalem, for the Light has come to you and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. This House was built by the Father. This House was made firm by the Son. This House was renewed by the Holy Spirit, Who enlightens, strengthens, and sanctifies our souls (First Hymn of the Consecration).”

At each completion of each circling of the Church, the bishop places the Holy Relics on a table before the “Royal Doors” (front doors of the Church) and a reading

from the epistle and gospel follows. After the third time around the Church, a dialogue (based on Psalm 24) is initiated by the bishop before the Royal Gates of the Church who is representing Christ returning to heaven at the Ascension.



Inside the Church is a priest representing an angel in heaven, who is amazed, for the Son of God, was always present in heaven, even though He took on flesh and became a man. The bishop raps upon the door with his episcopal staff saying:

Bishop: Open Your Gates. Open wide the ancient doors and the King of glory will enter.

Priest (standing inside the church): Who is the King of Glory?

Bishop: The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

The bishop raises the Relics, makes the sign of the Cross, the doors are opened and the angelic hosts receive their Lord into heaven. The Choir sings the Great Doxology as the faithful enter the Church again.

“You have demonstrated the splendor of the firmament above Lord, and the beauty of the holy tabernacle of your glory on earth. Lord, You are the life and resurrection of all people, strengthen this Church forever and accept our prayers which will be perpetually offered to You here, through the intercessions of the Theotokos (Hymn after the Doxology).”



The Deposition of the Holy Relics & Scroll of Names

The bishop enters the sanctuary carrying the Holy Relics to the altar, uncovering the Relics, he places them in a small gold box and deposits them in a cavity in the center of the altar table. He pours Holy Chrism over the Relics. Holy Chrism is a mix of olive oil and aromatics that have been prayed over by the Ecumenical Patriarch in order to convey the mystery of Holy Chrismation or the *Seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit* – our personal participation in Pentecost. Anointing the already mystically sanctified bones of the martyrs with the Holy Spirit is a symbol of Theosis. A Martyr bears witness to something, they are a *sign* of a union having taken place in which a human being has received the fullness of Grace ~ the Holy Spirit. Becoming one with God is the goal of Chrismation and the fruit of a life of repentance. The bishop then prays for the memory of all those who have contributed to the Holy Church.



The bishop says some prayers and then permanently seals the Holy Relics in the altar table along with a scroll with all the names of the “godparents” of the Church. The Relics are sealed with a wax, mastic (plant resin), aloë, incense, myrrh, and laudanum (an ancient form of pain medication). The altar table represents the tomb of the Savior. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus used “aromatic spices” to anoint the body of Jesus. The Relics are thus anointed, bound together with the wax-mastic revealing the unity between Christ and His Martyrs.

(Continued on page 6)

Consecration Service Explained

The Washing of the Altar Table

The bishops pray for the Holy Spirit to come down and bless the table, the people present and the water so that it can be used to sanctify the Holy Table. The bishops proceed to wash with their hands the Altar Table. It finishes with the bishops saying, “Glory to our God forever and ever,” and the people answer, “Amen!”

The Anointing of the Altar Table with Holy Chrism

The bishops sprinkle rose water on the Holy Table and then anoint the Table with Holy Chrism. The priests participate in the anointing by using the *antimensia* (pictured on right) to spread the Chrism over the table. The word *antimensia*, means “in place of the table or altar.” Every divine liturgy needs to be celebrated on a Consecrated Altar. By the 8th C., the use of a consecrated cloth was widely used in the Church which served in place of an actual Consecrated Altar because not all were consecrated. The Bishop signs, dates and notes on the antimensia the name of the Church at which it was consecrated. Four icons of the Evangelists are then fastened to the four corners of the altar table with mastic.



The Vesting of the Altar

The Altar Table is then covered with a white linen shroud called the *Katasarkion*. The shroud remains on the table and is never removed as long as the Church remains standing. As our Lord was placed in the tomb He was wrapped in a linen shroud. Psalm 132 is read, “The Lord has chosen Zion, He has desired it for His resting place forever and ever, “This is my resting place for ever and ever, here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it—I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor I will satisfy with food.” The fulfillment of these verses are linked to the Incarnation. The resting place and habitation of God (**Zion**) is the Church. The Bishops then spread a new altar cloth reflecting the glory of God.



Following this, all of the altar appointments are placed in the altar.

Anointing of the Church

The bishop then goes around the Nave of the Church and anoints the icons and walls with Holy Chrism on a sponge. The important point here is that the entire Church is considered Holy and sanctified not just the altar.

The Lighting of the Vigil Lamp ~ offering oil

At the conclusion of the Liturgy the faithful are invited forward to the Solea and place oil in the Vigil Lamp and

make an offering.

Divine Liturgy: 10:30 AM

After the Consecration Service the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy begins.