

“OPERATION PRINCETON”

Building a New Orthodox Church in Princeton NJ

On Saturday, 21 September, approximately 70 people gathered at a construction site located on Cherry Hill Road in Princeton NJ for “OPERATION PRINCETON” to help establish a new place of worship for the Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow Orthodox Christian community. The day was beautiful, the sun shined and the air was filled with the voices of people sharing, laughing, and conversing about their common work effort. The task was simple, the work a great effort! Young and old worked together to separate stone and soil from a large mound resulting from the digging of the foundation for the new temple.



Clergy present included: His Grace, Bishop Michael, along with Father David Fox (Holy Trinity Church, Randolph NJ); Deacon Ted Gregory (Saint Gregory Palamas Church, Glen Gardner NJ); and Father John Cassar (parish Rector). Laity came from a number of New Jersey communities with a significant group from Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Manville NJ.

“When we drove up to OPERATION PRINCETON that Saturday,” said Bishop Michael, “my initial thoughts were of Matthew 17:20, where Jesus said, ‘If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there and it will move. Nothing will be impossible.’ I saw 70 people -- young and old, men and women -- united by one thing: their common Orthodox faith in Christ that brought them to help the community of the Mother of God, the Joy of All Who Sorrow in Princeton to build their new church. I watched them literally with the strength of their faith and the

labor of their hands, separate 14 tons of rocks out of a mountain of dirt, and move the rocks aside so that that dirt could be placed against the foundation of the new temple.”

Father John Cassar stated that he was thrilled with how consistently hard everyone worked throughout the day resulting in a significant result. *“We moved a lot of rock,”* he said. *“Our community really needed help in separating this material. We plan to use the rock in building retaining walls on the church property along with other landscape detailing. Most importantly, everyone appeared to be highly motivated and enjoyed themselves. They caught the spirit of the event! We are making history in establishing a new Orthodox Christian house of worship in Princeton NJ.”*

Reflecting on the incredible efforts and spectacular spirit of the faithful laboring together in mutual love and dedication, His Grace said:

“I was reminded of the story of when Archbishop ANASTASIOS, early on in his reign as the new Primate of the Church in Albania, was serving Liturgy in an open field with his new flock; and non-believers were throwing rocks at them. And he was asked, “What shall we do with these rocks? Shall we throw them back at them?” The gentle and loving archbishop said, “No – save them. We’ll use them to build a church!” The rocks that were being moved in OPERATION PRINCETON will be used to adorn the exterior of that new temple one day.”

“The people who were working just amazed me. From throughout the state of New Jersey, from senior citizens to a two-year-old girl named Anastasia. There was a young student who had biked from Manville to the Operation site. He was lifting the heaviest rocks ... and perhaps the most rocks. And, when it was all over, he biked his way back to Manville. When this temple is finally finished, all of these people will be able to say, ‘I helped to build this church.’”

“I cannot tell you how proud I felt, as the Bishop of this Diocese, to see once again, as in Buffalo and in Oneonta, people coming together to help another parish community – this time, to build a new Orthodox temple. To see that kind of faith in action was an incredible experience.”

“There are no other new churches being built in our Diocese this year, and not all that many new Orthodox churches across the country. OPERATION PRINCETON is history in the making – in this year and in this place.”

If you missed participating in PHASE I of OPERATION PRINCETON you can still assist by joining our next volunteer work session scheduled for Friday, October 25th and Saturday, October 26th. Youth and adults are welcome to participate. Whether you can offer a few hours, one day, two days, or more ... your efforts will be truly appreciated! And, you will have the experience of a lifetime.

“I know that many people would like to be a part of OPERATION PRINCETON,” said Bishop Michael. *“There are other work days coming up -- Friday & Saturday, October 25-26. I know that Father John*

