



## **Blessing of the cross installed at construction site of a church of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God in Puerto-Rican San German**



In the evening of August 6, 2021, Bishop Nicholas of Manhattan, vicar of the diocese of Eastern America of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, arrived on the Island of Puerto-Rico. The hierarch was met by Archpriest Gregory Justiniano, rector of the Mission of St. John Climacus in San German.

His Eminence Nicholas brought to the island the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God. He was accompanied by Archpriest Peter Jackson, head of the Spanish-speaking mission, and Protodeacon Sergiy Arliyevsky, a cleric of the Convent of the Dormition “Novo-Diveevo”, Nanuet, New York.

On August 8, Bishop Nicholas celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the mission’s Chapel of St. John Climacus. Archpriest Gregory Justiniano, Archpriest Peter Jackson, Protodeacon Sergiy and Deacon Seraphim Justiniano concelebrated.

Among the worshippers was Archpriest George Eldar, who serves in Puerto-Rico, The liturgical hymns were sung by the parish choir conducted by Hierodeacon Daniel (Justiniano), a cleric of the mission. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in Spanish, English and Church Slavonic.

After the service, a procession with the cross proceeded to the construction site of the church of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God. Bishop Nicholas blessed the foundation cross made by parishioners.

Then a festive reception was given in the territory of the parish with traditional dishes of Puerto-Rican cuisine. The engineer and the architect employed by the parish presented various stages of the design of the future church.

Archpriest Gregory Justiniano spoke about the history of the mission and plans for the future, noting in particular, 'The first Divine Liturgy celebrated in San German, Puerto-Rico, took place on Sunday, August 9, 2009. The Orthodox Mission of John Climacus plans to carry out its missionary service not only in a particular city but, with God's help, on the whole island'.

'The work of such a scale will certainly require a home base that, if built on a solid foundation, will ensure the consistency and maturity of missionary work. The Orthodox Mission of St. John Climacus is our home base where we hope to train interpreters, choir precentors, catechisers and local clergy well versed in the theology and traditions of the Church. To this aim, the new church we seek to build will be dedicated to our Lady the Theotokos, to the feast of Her Annunciation. The present chapel of the mission is a small facility that has served us well for 12 years but each Sunday it becomes smaller and smaller for us. The new church will become the first Orthodox church to be built in Puerto-Rico', Father Gregory added.

On August 9, Bishop Nicholas and his party brought the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God back to New York.

*DECR Communication Service*

*with reference to the website of the diocese of Eastern America*