

15th Year Consecration Anniversary & New Building Announcement

Introduction

In the Name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit; one God. Amen.

It is with great joy that we congratulate you all on the 15-year anniversary of the Consecration of our Beloved Church in the name of the Great Martyrs, St Rebekah and her Five Children. 15 Years ago, on Sep 19, 2011, HE Metropolitan Youssef and HE Metropolitan Serapion (back then they were both bishops, not metropolitans) came to the church and prayed the overnight Rite of Church Consecration. This is when a building becomes a Church. A table becomes an altar. And a basin becomes a baptismal font.

As we heard during St Rebekah's Feast Revivals, the Church is our Mother, the Church is our Home, the Church is our Joy, and the Church is our Salvation. How many were baptized here? How many times was the sacrament of Confession administered and the Absolution was read and sins were forgiven? How many couples were Crowned before this Altar, who came in as two and walked out as One? How many sermons and Sunday School Lessons and Spiritual Topics? How many tears of repentance were shed within these walls? How many were brought to the knowledge of God? How many were fed - physical food and spiritual food? How many times did the Lord Christ give us His Body and His Blood on this altar? Given for salvation, remission of sins and eternal life to those who partake of Him!

The Consecration of the Church is not just a moment in the history of this building, but it is the life-giving breath of God; the Holy Spirit flowing through the walls and touching the lives of anyone who walks through those doors.

We congratulate you all on this 15-year anniversary of the Consecration, and now we will sing  for our beloved mother and the great martyr, St Rebekah and her five children






Please be seated, my beloved.

On the occasion of the 15-year anniversary of the Consecration, Fr Ephraim, Fr Reweis and I are very excited to announce to you - the beloved members of this blessed church - a new project, and the next chapter in the life of our church.

I remember that before we had this church, we would pray in the plaza on International Drive and we would have Sunday School with a thin curtain separating each class. And you could hear what the other class was talking about. And you could be distracted by a kid in another class. It did not take long for us to outgrow the plaza building.

And the Lord graced us with this beautiful building - Along with the Church and the Chapel, a cry-room, 8 nicely sized Sunday School classrooms, a dedicated office, a large Aghapy Hall, a bookstore, a room to bake the Holy Bread, the Orban.

By God's grace, the Church has continued to grow over these 15 years... Now, we have about 20 Sunday School Classes, the Youth Meetings, BRAVE Men's & Virtuous Women, St Joseph Ministry, Hymns School, Bible Studies. We have several branches of Sports Ministry - Basketball, Soccer, Volleyball, Ping Pong. Besides that, we are serving our community with the Medical Clinic and the Food Bank. We have several catechumens on their way to baptism, and even more inquirers right behind them.

YOU are a big part of that growth - many of you are serving the Church: in cleaning, in the kitchen, in the Orban, in Transportation, in Visiting the sick, in the Board, as Deacons, in the Ministry of the Word.

The service of the Church has grown beyond what we could have imagined 15 years ago, and just as we started to outgrow the plaza building, we have started to outgrow this building.

By the grace of God, who hears your prayers, and by the labor the Board of Deacons (at their head, Fr Ephraim and Fr Reweis), we are very excited to announce the construction of a new building for services and sports.

Now, to help us reflect on these 15 years and to join us in announcing the new building, we will hear a video message from our beloved shepherds HE Metropolitan Youssef and HG Bishop Basil.

Play Video

The Need for a Building

I want to start by emphasizing the need for this building

- Classrooms
 - We currently have **20 Sunday School and youth classes serving 362 children and youth**, but only eight dedicated classrooms. So we use the Aghapy Hall. We use the Chapel. We use the Cry Room. At one point, we even had a class meeting in the Orban room!
- Offices
 - Our fathers need places to meet privately with individuals and families. Our Board members need places to meet with contractors. Our Service Coordinators need places to meet with the servants under their care.
 - We don't have dedicated meeting rooms, and we only have one office!
- Gymnasium

- Our children play outside among the parking areas. When it rains, activities are canceled. When cars are moving through the property, we're naturally concerned about their safety.
- Youth Areas
 - And we want our youth to have a place at their Church; not only a classroom they come into for an hour, but a place where they can study, spend time together, exercise, and build healthy friendships within the Church.
- New Services
 - It's not just about making space for our existing services, but **it's about making room for services that don't exist yet.** There are ministries we want to begin, groups we want to serve, activities we want to offer our children and youth - but today, we simply don't have the space.

God willing, this building will alleviate that pressure and give us the space, facility and flexibility to continue to increase the service.

We will very quickly go through the plans for the building. After that, we will dismiss you and in the Aghapy Hall take any questions or discussions or concerns.

Go through the Plans

- This building will be elevated above the parking lot. That means the bottom will act as a parking garage - similar to the one in Disney Springs.
- First Floor:
 - Gymnasium (Basketball, Volleyball, Pickleball) and Theater with all amenities - Locker Rooms, Changing Rooms, etc.
 - Five Large Classrooms (each one is about the size of St Pishoy classroom or bigger)
 - Medical Clinic, Dental Clinic - we want to continue to serve you all and our community in new ways and address the needs
 - Chapel - will hold 100 congregants comfortably
- Second Floor:
 - Lounge Overlooking the Gymnasium
 - Five more Large Classrooms
 - Two Large Meeting Rooms
 - Two Offices

It's a beautiful building that should be able to meet our needs for many many years to come.

I would like to introduce the Architect who is responsible for the plans - Mr. Jaime Plana (if you could please stand up). Mr. Plana has been working with Ihab Boulos over the last several years to design and architect this building, prepare and submit the plans to the county, make amendments, etc.

Thank you, Mr. Plana

Conclusion

As we pray in Psalm 126, "The Lord has done great things for us, we became joyful." (Psalm 126:3)

Let us rejoice in this day as we celebrate the last 15 years of our Church, and let us look ahead to how the Lord will work in the next 15 years through your prayers and through His new building. Many prayed and labored and sacrificed 15 years ago so that we could inherit this beautiful church. Our children do not even remember the plaza - this is the only home they ever knew. Now the Lord is giving us an opportunity to leave an inheritance for the next generation and continue His work through this blessed Church.

Please always remember this project in your prayers, but also ask questions, share your feedback, give your ideas. In the Aghapy Hall, Fr Ephraim, Fr Reweis, all of the Board Members and Mr. Plana will be available to answer questions, hear your feedback, and share in your excitement.

May the Lord who blessed this Church and caused Her to grow over the last 15 years, continue to bless His work for many generations.

Dismissal

Now may the Love of God the Father, the Grace of His Only-Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion and gift of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Go in peace, may the peace of the Lord be with you.

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