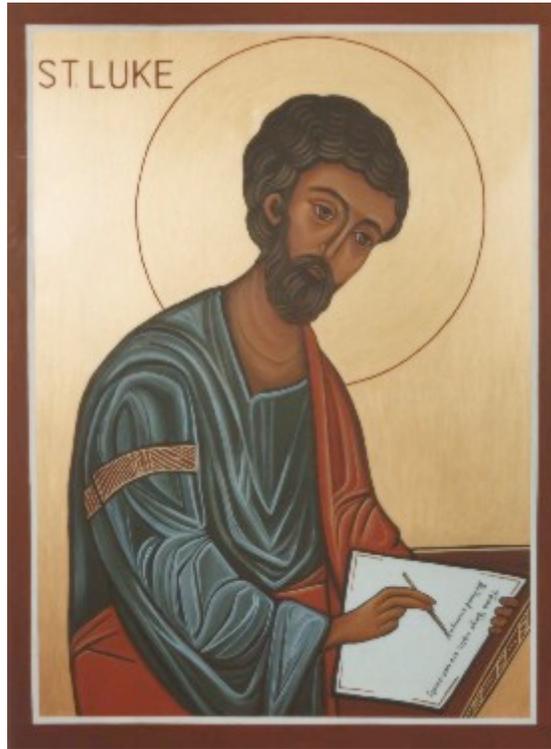


# choir notes



### Upcoming Events

Oct. 11-Choir Sunday  
 Oct. 17-Michelle & Lou's  
 Wedding

### Rehearsal Schedule

Mondays at 7:00 PM  
 Sunday Warmup at 8:15 AM

## Welcome to the first issue of the St. Luke Orthodox Choir Newsletter!!!

I've been studying and collecting information for quite some time now on Orthodox liturgical choir singing and the musical traditions in our North American Antiochian Archdiocese. We are fortunate that there is so much that has been documented about the history of music and singing in our Archdiocese. I hope that this newsletter will give us a greater sense of the rich and diverse musical tradition of which we at St. Luke are a part.

You can expect to see articles and excerpts from the Church Fathers as well as the musical authorities in the Antiochian Archdiocese--hierarchs, clergy, scholars, choir directors and chanters. The topics will range from the common to the arcane and will include history, liturgics, rubrics, hymns, feasts, Saints and even some trivia.

I've also adopted a patron saint for our choir--St. Romanos the Melodist. You can see his Icon and read Part I of his story on Page 2. If

you have any special requests, please let me know and I'll do some research.

As always, I am thankful for your dedication to this sacramental ministry. Please pray for our choir and especially for me.

-Andy

### In This Issue

The Story of St. Romanos (Part 1) 2  
 Words of Wisdom from Bp. BASIL 2

**DID YOU KNOW???** Many of the alleluias in our hymns were made into triples because the hymn was originally sung antiphonally 3 times with verses. Over the years, the verses were dropped and the hymn sung only once but the triple alleluias "stuck". A good example of this is the three alleluias at the end of our Entrance Hymn, "Come Let Us Worship..."

## Saint Romanos the Melodist, A Syrian Poet

Excerpts from Michael G. Farrow, Ph.D.  
Vice Chairman, Dept. Sacred Music



St. Romanos depicted in Deacon's Vestments

"The hymnologists of the Orthodox Church are Christians of virtue and great faith, having been endowed with musical talent as well as the power of religious inspiration. Their creations have enriched our worship services and have helped turn our souls towards God. Perhaps the greatest of all hymnologists is St. Romanos the Melodist. Many other hymnologists have written ecclesiastical hymns, but none of them inspired the Christians as much as St. Romanos." This statement, issued by the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians concisely states the reverence, appreciation and feeling *all* Orthodox Christians have for St. Romanos.

### Romanos' Background

Romanos, a Syrian Christian, born in Edessa (Homs), Syria, lived in the beginning of the 6th century. Relying on scanty information about Romanos' life, and based on the fact that his work contains a large segment of Semitic expressions, the

fact that he never attacks Jews, and on a later anonymous kontakion stating that as "God's Orator" he is "from the race of Hebrews", it is generally thought by most scholars that he was a convert from Judaism. Romanos was ordained a deacon and served in the Church of the Resurrection in Berytus (Beirut). Most sources agree that he went to Constantinople during the reign of the Emperor Anastasius I (491-518).

### Church Legend

Church legend has it that during this time, Romanos' voice was quite harsh and rasping and he was also tone deaf. It is said that the congregation cringed at hearing his voice. It was in the Church of the Most Holy Theotokos in the Blachernae quarter of Constantinople, that he received the gift of sacred poetry. After a religious retreat there, in his sleep on Christmas eve, he saw a vision of the Most Holy Theotokos who told him not to despair. Blessing him with her right hand, she held forth a scroll with her left hand, saying, "Take the scroll and eat it". The saint, in his dream, opened his mouth and swallowed the parchment. It was Christmas Day, and immediately he awakened and marveled and glorified God. According to an account by Poulos, the service commenced as usual and when it came time for the voice of Romanos to be heard, the participants braced themselves for the accustomed cacophony that would ensue. Then, mounting the pulpit in the church, Romanos began the strains of his kontakion: *Today the Virgin gives birth to the one who is above all living things.* But when the tone rolled across the church like the sound of a heavenly angel, the

stunned listeners stood transfixed. When he had finished, the confused priest signaled him to continue and once again the resonant voice reverberated in the house of God. Then it dawned on one and all that a miracle had occurred. He was now hailed as the "Melodist".



(The following excerpts are taken from the newsletter PSALM: Pan-Orthodox Society for the Advancement of Liturgical Music, Spring 1996, written by Bishop BASIL)

### The Ministry of Church Singers (Part 1)

There are few ministries of the Church that require the devotion and the dedication that church singing does. You who lead the singing as well as you who follow the leader are precious gifts to your parishes. You are as important to the parish as is the holy table itself. As there can be no liturgy without the holy table, there can be no liturgy without you. This is not to compliment you or increase your pride, but rather to put a little fear and awe in you, so you know what your responsibilities are.

Church singing is not a hobby. Being a choir director is not something one does for personal fulfillment. It is first and foremost a duty, a duty of those to whom God has given musical talents. It is sinful, in my opinion, for someone not to sing who has been given the gift to sing. Sinful! You join the angels, and do that which the angels do perpetually. That's not an interest, avocation, or a hobby; it is a duty. Angels were created to serve and to praise, and you have been given voices for that same purpose.