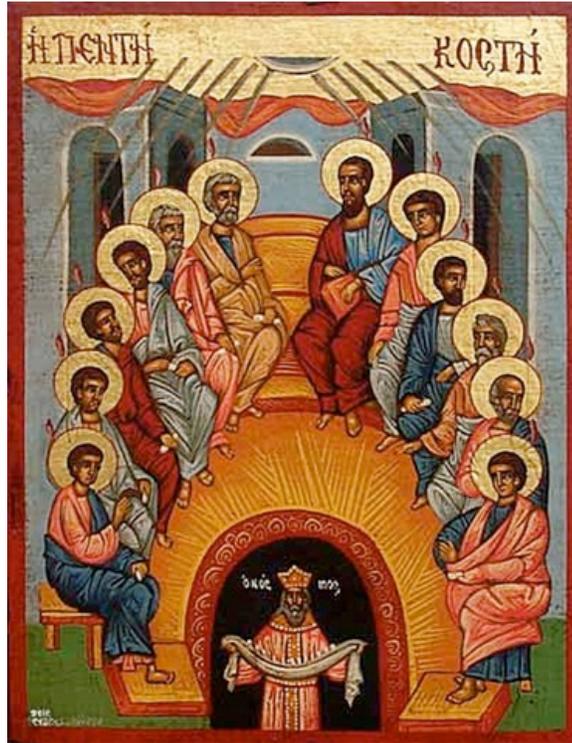


St. Luke Antiochian Orthodox Choir Newsletter

choir notes



Upcoming Events

Rehearsals will continue through the summer. Keep an eye out for sectional rehearsals!

August 22, 2010

Miriam Bourquin's Wedding!!!

Rehearsal Schedule

Mondays at 7:00 PM

Sunday Warmup at 8:15 AM

What is a Liturgical Choir? (A long-winded editorial...)

Most directors that I know in the Antiochian Archdiocese like to refer to their choirs as "liturgical choirs". In many cases, they are making a literal reference to the role that Orthodox choirs play with the clergy in celebrating the Divine Liturgy. That label is also used to distinguish the role of an Orthodox choir from that of other types of Christian choirs. We also use the term "liturgical" to differentiate Orthodox Christian worship from other types of Christian worship. This

stylistic designation is used to describe the elaborate structure of our services.

We're probably all familiar with the origins of our word, "liturgy". It is an English adaptation of the ancient Greek composite word, "leitourgia", which meant, in a very technical sense, "service to the people". In the ancient Greek society, the wealthy were typically burdened by the state with a "leitourgia" in return for which they received honors according to the value of that service.

Isn't it interesting that the Church has adopted a word with such a specific social meaning? By using this word, the Church might be saying that the wealthy among us, not just in a material sense but those rich in talents, have a contractual obligation to use those gifts to serve others. In that context, one might make the case that we are given those gifts not for our own benefit or pleasure, but in order to perform "leitourgia".

(Continued on next page)

A Word from the Fathers:

"In Orthodoxy, which is identical with the ancient Apostolic Church, everything is humble because everything comes from the Gospels, which are humility itself. Everything is simple, unaffected and solemn, as are the Gospels. All the music of our Church is contrition-evoking, not theatrical. Our religion says, Chant with understanding, that is, with wisdom and devoutness." Photios Kontoglou (+1965)



So, what does it mean to be a liturgical choir? I believe we have a choice to make. We can choose to participate exclusively in the Divine Liturgy in our parish on Sundays, and maybe on weekdays and feast days. For the typical, all-volunteer choir, this is a compelling choice. We all have responsibilities. We have families, school, work and other activities that keep us very busy and we already make time for rehearsals, warmups, special feasts, Holy Week services and so forth.

The other choice is to understand that as a choir which sings the Divine Liturgy, we are one of the primary means by which the message of Christ and the theology of the Church are conveyed to the people. As individuals, regardless of level of talent, we are instructed to use our gifts for the glory of God in the service of people. Should we take those talents and use them to proclaim the Gospel of Christ outside the walls of our own parish, in other places and in the service of other people?

Thanks be to God, I believe that the St. Luke Liturgical Choir is making the second choice. We sing for weddings and funerals, where guests and non-Orthodox visitors are present. We've visited the sick and the infirm and in doing so, we also witnessed to the hospital staff. We've taken a little bit of

the Divine Liturgy to members of our own family who cannot come to Church on Sundays. We will sing for the St. Luke open house and, God willing, we will sing for the Sts. Peter & Paul festival later this summer. We do all this willingly and with love in our hearts. We are truly becoming a Liturgical Choir.



Not only are your talents a blessing for the St. Luke Parish, but also to the surrounding community. Thank you so much for your hard work and dedication. May God continue to bless you and your families and may He grant you many years of faithful service to all of His people!

Yours in Christ,
Andy

**HISTORY OF MUSIC IN THE
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA
From 1906-2008**

Michael G. Farrow, Ph.D.
Vice Chairman

EARLY ROOTS

Although the Department of Sacred Music had its official beginning 42 years ago, in 1968, with the appointment by His Eminence, Metropolitan Philip Saliba of it's first Chairman, Father James C. Meena (later Archpriest), it had its root beginning as early as 1906 with the publishing in English, of the

Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church, by Isabel Hapgood, which provided the first, standardized text in English of the major church services, and laid the groundwork for transliterated, translated, and composed music in the English language and allowed the priests and chanters, for the first time, to chant the service in English.

TEXT TRANSLATIONS

In general, the original and present translations of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese in North America were derived from two early 20th century translations of the church services into English: the 1906 Hapgood book, which relied heavily on the language of the then current Anglican Book of Common Prayer; and the 1939 *Service Book* by Seraphim Nassar, a translation of services from throughout the church year. Both of these books are still in print, the Hapgood book in its 1996, 7th edition, and are available from the Archdiocesan bookstore.

MUSIC TRANSLATIONS AND SETTINGS

Based on existing documents, the earliest known musical works to appear were issued by Archbishop Emanuel Abo-Hateb whose 1926 manuscript, donated by his niece, Georgette Abo-Hateb, is still extant at the Antiochian Village Heritage Center Library. Although it is certain that other clergy and musicians must have issued arrangements of music in English,

none are presently known to have survived. By 1936, Archbishop Antony Bashir, sensing the increasing need for English in the music of the church, authorized the use of English in the music of the church and asked a newly ordained convert, Rev. Michael G. H. Gelsinger of St George, Niagara Falls, NY, to put together a book of four part Orthodox music. Fr. Gelsinger was a scholar of Greek and included in his work Byzantine settings in four-part harmony with translations in English based on the meter of the Greek. In addition he included translations and adaptations of Russian choral composers. In the next few years, Fr. Gelsinger's son, John (later, also ordained by Archbishop Antony, formed the first choir of the Archdiocese at St. George's using the then unpublished manuscripts of his father. By 1939, Fr. Gelsinger's work was finished and the first, professionally published music book of the Archdiocese appeared as, *Orthodox Hymns in English*, a collection of four-part Russian and Byzantine melodies still in use today and commonly referred to as the "Blue Book" because of the pale blue color of its cover with its familiar triple bar cross with a flowering lily entwined. This book contains, in addition to the music, a brief description of many of the most common church service books, a description of Byzantine hymnology, a pronouncing glossary of Byzantine musical terms and a pronunciation guide of the transliterated Greek texts. There are 45 musical selections

After the formation of the Archdiocesan youth

organization, SOYO in the 1940s the music came, of necessity, under the auspices of SOYO, which appointed a choir director each year to organize the music for the Archdiocesan annual convention. SOYO became, *de facto*, the "Music Department" and issued, in an informal manner, any new music. This was usually via musical exchanges at the national and regional conventions and through informal gatherings of the musicians at this time. Through SOYO and the national conventions, the music of the Archdiocese became universal throughout the parishes and certain pieces became "standardized". Examples of music which was introduced at that time and are still sung throughout the Archdiocese, even today, are the *Entrance Hymn* by Archpriest Dmitri Razumovsky and the *Hymn to the Theotokos*, by Dmitri Bortniansky.

In the late 1940s, Fr. Michael Simon, serving the parish of St. George, Patterson, NJ (later Little Falls, NJ) was searching for someone who could put the Byzantine chant so familiar to the many immigrants and first generation parishioners, into four-part choral music with a transliterated Arabic text. The task fell to Professor Michael Hilko, choir director of the nearby St. John Carpatho-Russian church in Perth Amboy, NJ.

Professor Hilko wrote down the Byzantine melodies for the two Arabic liturgies by listening to the Rev. Michael G. Simon for the first liturgy and Rev. Wakim Dalaak of St. Nicholas Cathedral, Brooklyn, for the

second and then writing down the notes in Western musical notation and harmonizing in four-parts, the resulting melody. Professor Hilko also added the eight resurrectional tones harmonized in four parts according to Byzantine melodies sung on the 78 rpm record set of Archbishop Samuel David, of Toledo, Ohio as well as additional hymns in Arabic transliteration in four parts including the Paschal Troparion, *Christ is Risen* and the Hymn to the Theotokos from St. Basil's Liturgy, *In Thee Rejoiceth*. He then arranged a third Liturgy, a simple setting based on Russian tones, but entirely in English.

In 1950, Professor Hilko completed his task and Archbishop Bashir, continuing his support of the English language, had Archdiocese publish Professor Hilko's *Three Divine Liturgies*, two in Arabic transliteration and one in English including the resurrectional troparia and other hymns. Although this book, commonly called the "Yellow Book" after its bright yellow cover, has fallen into disuse due to the loss of Arabic in the church services, the English liturgy music is still widely sung throughout the Archdiocese and much of it is standard music, still appearing in our convention and conference music settings. In order not to lose the beautiful Byzantine melodies, the two Arabic liturgies and the 8 resurrectional tones have been combined into one liturgy and have been adapted into English by Michael G. Farrow for future publication.

(To Be Continued...)