

# KEYNOTES



May, 2010

## Looking forward to 2010 Conference in New Orleans!!

### On the Schedule for Keynotes

The editor tries to let everyone know several weeks or more when *Keynotes* is coming out. Keynotes needs YOUR input of articles and photos about and of YOUR choir.

Very few respond. Please remember that this publication is for you and that you can add to it regularly, as well as to *Notable Notes*.



### *President's Message*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is risen! Here we are seven weeks away from the Choir Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. This is a conference not to be missed. We are having a CMI on Thursday afternoon to learn how to use and take care of our voices with well known opera singer and voice instructor, Joseph Dupre Quigley, a native of New Orleans. Steven Cardiasmenos will discuss hymn preparation from the choral singer's perspective and Fr. Anthony Stratis will enlighten us on aspects of the Divine Liturgy that will help us internalize this information designed to make us better singers.

Rehearsals start Friday, June 24, at 9 am at the cathedral. If you are able to come a day early or stay an extra day, I recommend it as New Orleans is a very exciting city. In addition to many wonderful restaurants, there are many, many great artists in this area, jewelry, painting, glass blowing, just to mention a few. Much of the art work is very reasonably priced. Friday evening is an open evening and you will be free to wander around the French Quarter, eating and drinking. Stores and galleries are open late, so you can admire their work.

If anyone is interested in running for the position of Secretary on the Executive Board, please let John Mitchell know, [johnpm2@hotmail.com](mailto:johnpm2@hotmail.com).

We understand that some of you must attend Clergy/Laity in Atlanta one week later, but do try to come sing with us. This is a unique opportunity to see how New Orleans has "risen from the ashes".

Truly He has risen!  
Your faithful servant in Christ,  
Margaret M. Sarafoglu  
SFGOCM President



### *2010 Conference Album Ads*

**Barbara Stavis Wolf can accept ads for the conference album at [hellenic2004@yahoo.com](mailto:hellenic2004@yahoo.com) until **May 10, 2010.****



### *St. John's Tampa Choir*

There once was a time when our choir took off for the summer following the Pentecost Service. Now singing in the choir in Tampa has become a year-round commitment to the delight of many of our choir members and parishioners. Our director Artie Palios, has managed to keep choir interesting and challenging by having us prepared to sing the hymns from most of the available Liturgical Music arranged by various composers. When asked which liturgy does your choir sing? We usually respond with "Heinz 57". Our Choir music books are organized so that on any given Sunday, depending on the voices present and strength of the sections, we may be singing Zervos' Doxology, the petition responses from Bogdanos or Petrovitch and the Herouvikon from George Raptis. Memorials are usually reserved for the Kypros Agios and memorial hymns.

We are happy to report that we have increased our number of members to include 2 new altos. Pam Irwin, who is a public school music teacher assigned to a local performing arts school and Jenny Neighbors, who is in the military stationed

at McDill Air Force Base, bringing our total to 29 active members!

We have an open invitation to the area choirs to join us in our current rehearsals which are geared to preparing us for:

The Junior Olympics Youth Event which is Father's Day weekend where we will be singing "The Liturgy of Peace" for Sunday's liturgy.

Choir Conference where we have 14 of our choir members registered to attend.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the Choir Conference in New Orleans.

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### *Keynotes From Tarpon Springs*

*Greetings from the Epiphany City, 2010!*

**Χριστός Ανέστη!** Christ is Risen!

We, here in Tarpon Springs, hope that you all had a glorious and uplifting Pascha. It came so early this year that we barely had time to prepare, but we were blessed with the presence of our beloved Metropolitan Nikita, who is one of our own in Tarpon Springs, and who officiated Holy Friday and at the beautiful Holy Saturday night Resurrection liturgy.

On Easter Sunday afternoon, after the Agape service at the Cathedral, the community had a picnic at Howard Park, complete with lamb on the spit, an Easter egg hunt for the children and a beautiful, sunny day. It was well attended and all had plenty to eat and enjoyed the day.

Our choir performed a Christmas program in the Cathedral on December 13, 2009, with 40 voices under the direction of Dale Terrell, and we sang several beautiful carols as well as hymns.

We sang New Year's Day, and held an Artoclasia for members of the choir, especially those whose nameday falls on New Year's Day, as well as those who have family members who celebrate that nameday.

Our choir enjoyed participating in all the excitement of Epiphany on January 6, which included the beautiful liturgy and the march to the Spring Bayou for the cross-throwing service. Archbishop Demetrios officiated at the Epiphany service, as well as many other Metropolitans and priests. Though the weather was cold, it was a day of sunshine and everyone enjoyed the festivities. There were 65-70 divers between the ages of 16 and 18, and the young man who retrieved the cross was 16 year old Dimitrios Kalogiannis of New Port Richey, a first time diver. Effi Coburn, a young member of our choir, was selected to be the dove bearer and performed her duties with reverence and devotion.

Andrea Faklis, daughter of our director, Katie Faklis and husband, George, became the bride of Joseph Kopacz on Saturday, April 10, 2010. The wedding was held in the Cathedral with the reception at our community hall. The bride was beautiful, the groom handsome, and we wish them a long and happy married life. Na Zisoune kali zoe!

I am, again, a yiayia, with the birth of our second granddaughter, Kaitlyn Elizabeth (Katie) on November 23, 2009. She was happily welcomed into our family by her father, Dion, her mother, Amy, and her big sister, Lexi, as well as myself and her doting papou, Kal. She was baptized on Saturday, April 24, 2010. Her godfather is her Uncle Harry, and her godmother is Angelina Christopoulos. We ask the Lord to bless her with a long and healthy life.

The conference in New Orleans this year sounds like it will be a good one and hopefully many of our federation members will attend. It will be a good chance to give New Orleans our support for a successful conference.

***I would like to, again, ask you all to light a candle each Sunday for our military personnel who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan, and many other parts of the world, and pray for their safety during these trying times. Say a special prayer for those who have sustained injuries that require them to adjust their lives and the lives of their families to compensate for those injuries. Also say a very special prayer for those who have given their lives and for their families whom they have left behind. This is the least we can do for them.***

[Click here to a link with many videos that are on the internet for our 2010 Epiphany celebration.](#)

Billie Spirides

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### *Notes From Charlotte, North Carolina*

By Olga Yamalis and Katherine Bartis

*Greetings from Charlotte!*

We are pleased to welcome our newest member to the choir. Maria Nikopoulos has joined the alto section - welcome Maria! We are thrilled to see our choir grow and as always, we encourage anyone who is interested in singing to join.

The Lenten and Pascha season have been busy for the all the choirs. Saturday, March 27th Lazarus Saturday was a Children's Liturgy. The St. John's Koukouzelis Youth Choir chanted in the Cathedral loft which added a special touch to this Liturgy. It was wonderful to hear the beautiful, youth voices fill the church. Angelina Korinis, Kathy Xyrafakis and Olga Yamalis were the chanters for the Lazarus Liturgy and assisted the St. John's Choir in chanting. Having the youth choir in the loft provides a great experience for them to chant our sacred hymns and what a beautiful sound too!

Just in! Here is a picture of Phillip Thevaos' newest baby, Caroline with her big sister, Mary Emma and Yiayia looking on. (Surprise, Phillip!)



The Holy Trinity Choir participated in services throughout Holy Week.

Holy Friday, April 2nd, was especially memorable this year. The Engomia choir consisting of 7th, 8th and 9th graders chanted alternate Lamentation verses with the adult choir in the Cathedral. Great job to Amelia Pantezis, Philip Hinson, Dean O'Keefe, Nick Kakavitsas, Aspen Copsis, and Vickie Poulimenos for their outstanding work for chanting the Lamentations in His Holy Passion and Burial as well as in the procession. Their experience and efforts are to be commended. It is an experience learned and never forgotten.

Stay tuned for more info regarding the youth and adult choirs. May is scheduled to be busy and exciting month of opportunities for both choirs to be chanting together in the loft.

Christos Anesti!



*News from Annunciation Cathedral in Atlanta*

The 40th Clergy -Laity Congress will be held in Atlanta from July 4th through July 8, 2010. This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone in our Metropolis to attend.



The Divine Liturgy will take place at Annunciation Cathedral on Sunday, July 4th. The Liturgy arranged by Kevin Lawrence will be the primary music for the Divine Liturgy. The music will be conducted by Christina Polizos, choir director of the

Annunciation Cathedral Choir. Peter Zervakos will be the organist. Anyone wishing to participate must already know the music of Kevin Lawrence and attend the Mandatory rehearsal on the afternoon of July 3rd at the Cathedral. More details including how to register will be forthcoming after Pascha.

Christina Polizos, Annunciation Cathedral Choir Director



*From the Choir Loft at Holy Trinity in Raleigh, NC:*

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen! We have been especially blessed this past ecclesiastical year with some new voices in our choir. We now have two tenors, Andrew La Roche and Jim Riley. We also welcome the occasional and super bass voice of Dean Johns from Charlotte, as well as the very talented soprano Jeannie

Diamandas, who is our third singer migrating down from New Jersey. They have certainly added a new dimension of depth and quality to our choir and we are very fortunate to have these great folks singing with us.

For Holy Week, we premiered a men's choir which sang a four part male chorus of the Troparion of Kassiane as parishioners were venerating the Holy Icon at the conclusion of the Bridegroom Service. We plan to do more with our men's choir in the future with perhaps learning a male singing arrangement of the Divine Liturgy.



We are taking a small break now and will be gearing up for the summer and fall with workshops to learn a new Liturgical arrangement to compliment what we currently use. We shall premier this new arrangement for Choir Music Sunday in the fall.

Hoping to see many friends in New Orleans at this year's conference.

In His Service,

Elia Nicholas  
Director of Choirs  
Holy Trinity Church  
Raleigh, NC



*From Saint Sophia Cathedral in Miami, Florida*

We have started rehearsing for the 2010 Conference in New Orleans. Although many of us have done it in conference before, there are several new folks and it has been 13 years since we did most parts of it. It is such a wonderful change of pace!



After a long warm fall, winter hit us with a bang and stayed. We had two consecutive nights of freezing in January, which burned all of the tender tropical plants, making Miami look like it had suffered a near hit from a bomb. However, the rough winter is making for a beautiful, if late, spring. Our Pascha was one of the most beautiful, serene and meaningful that any of us can remember.

Please remember - if you are in the area, stop by St. Sophia and “crash” our choir. We warm up at 9:30 in a classroom in the community center on Sunday mornings until Pentecost.

Don't you love surprises? A young gentleman appeared one day and asked if he could sing with us. He is a baritone with a feel for the tenor parts and has sung in California for a few years but cut his teeth in Raleigh! Welcome, John. We hope you like it here, because you are never going to be permitted to leave. Now we just have to figure out how to get Lucy back from her temporary loan to Charlotte.

We are planning a South Florida district rehearsal for the Cardiasmenos Liturgy on May 22 at 10:30 at St. Sophia. Please email [leonk@bellsouth.net](mailto:leonk@bellsouth.net) if you are planning to come. *Even if you don't mail me, please come anyway!*

Leon Karahalis

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#### *District Supervisors*

There are seven conferences, each with a District Supervisor. **At present, we still need a Supervisor for the Western Conference.**

Northeast	Elia Nicholas
Coastal	Mary Koutroulias
Central	Kay Nastopoulos
Western	Suzy Balasis (until a supervisor is appointed)
North Florida	Jim Kouchalacos
Tampa Bay	Marilyn Neyland
South Florida	Leon Karahalis

PLEASE try to have district and area rehearsals before the conference.

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#### *Photo and Video Feature*

It seems as if only one person other than myself is using the photo site which is for all of you to use. If you have any pictures or videos, please send them on to [leonk@bellsouth.net](mailto:leonk@bellsouth.net) and I'll upload them onto your choir's own albums on the site. **To view them and many other photos, especially from the 2009 Conference in Winston-Salem, please visit it by clicking on**

**[this link to our photo site.](#)** Again, your choir can have its own album as can any special events simply by letting Leon Karahalis know. *Please full advantage of this site!*

St. Sophia has placed two of its Holy Week hymns as video links at <http://video.fotki.com/SFGOCM/> - *Simeron Kremate* and the *Troparion of Kassiani*. This was simply made by putting a regular digital camera in front of us and letting it record. Almost any relatively new digital camera can do this. You can do this with any of your relevant videos, whether musical or not. Just send them or a link to them to <mailto:leonk@bellsouth.net>. It is easiest if you post them on **youtube** first.

Also, here is a link to a song, albeit not liturgical, which most of us will find very moving. The video accompanying it has a history of Greek immigration to the United states and many of us will be profoundly affected by it. Click on the link that follows: **[Greek American Immigration](#)**



***What do your children or grandchildren do with their spare time?***

How often do they sit at the TV channel surfing? How about dry-eyed at the computer, possibly playing games or otherwise frittering away time?

Leon Karahalis

*Editor, Notable Notes and Keynotes*

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***Not too early for a worthy student to apply for the Scholarship 100 for 2010!***

**[Click here for the Scholarship 100 Application form!](#)**

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***A sad notice from Saint Barbara in Sarasota***

+Dr. Leonidas Sarakatsannis, Choir Director of Saint Barbara in Sarasota, fell asleep in the Lord in early April and was interred in Cincinnati, OH.

May his memory be eternal.

Liz Beahm

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# Hymns that Teach Us

By Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis



+Father Stavros Akrotirianakis

In the Orthodox Church, we rely heavily on our senses when it comes to worship. There is the smell of the incense; the taste of Holy Communion, Antidoron, etc.; the touch of venerating an icon; the sight of icons, vestments, and liturgical appointments; and the hearing of hymns and prayers. Taken all together, this is how we learn about and sustain our faith. Living in an age where I have all the files of my six year ministry stored on a flash drive the size of my thumb, where we get up to the minute updates on sports on our Blackberrys, and where we now send pictures with a click of a button instead of a trip to the photo store, we forget that it was not too long ago that we didn't have electricity, and that most people could not read. For the overwhelming majority of the history of the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox faithful did not own Bibles, very few could read, and the "learning" of the faith was done almost exclusively at church. I.e. no one could read a theology book at home.

So, how did people learn the faith? Through the "sensual" experience of the Orthodox Church. As an example, our icons tell stories. Study an icon of the Nativity and you have the entire story: We see the cave, with the manger. We see Mary and the Christ-child. We see the shepherds and the magi. The angels worship above. The animals stand near the cave. The star is over the cave. Joseph sits at a distance pondering these things. But on closer examination, there is deeper meaning. The cave is not a barn, something built by human hands. Rather the cave is part of the creation that the Creator Himself made. The manger is not made of wood and filled with straw—it looks like a tomb, reminding us that the Lord descends from heaven at the Incarnation to redeem mankind through the Cross and the Tomb. The shepherds and the magi represent humanity—both the poor and the powerful. The angels represent heaven, while the animals represent the earth. The star represents the universe. The theme of the Incarnation is the Creator coming to live in His creation, and in the icon of the Nativity, all of Creation—angels, stars, shepherds (poor), magi (mighty), animals and the earth itself (the cave), all come to worship the Creator in its midst. This explanation doesn't even do justice to the icon—much more could be written about this icon and the many others in our churches. The point is that we learn visually from the icons in the church, the same way our children learn visually from picture books. Before a child learns how to read or spell, he or she will know his or her shapes, colors, numbers, animals and many other things by looking at pictures over and over again.

Which brings us now to music—There is no better sound on earth than the sound of the human voice singing. There is something so beautiful about singing that makes it even more powerful and special than the speaking voice. Think of the difference between saying "happy birthday" to someone and a large group of people serenading the birthday person by singing it. Or the difference between saying "Merry Christmas" and singing a Christmas carol, or the difference between saying "Christos Anesti" and singing it. Singing has an "angelic" quality to it. For the angels of God we are told, do not praise God by speaking, but by singing.

The overwhelming majority of the Orthodox worship experience is based on singing and chanting. In fact, in some Orthodox traditions, NOTHING in church is not sung, including the scripture readings and prayers. There are some churches that still intone the Psalms, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, where other than the sermon, not a word will be spoken. All will be sung. Even in the Greek Orthodox Church, where we have Psalms and prayers read, take an inventory of how much time in church is spent singing, and it is still the overwhelming majority.

Orthodox hymns seek to do three things—they praise God, they supplicate God (ask Him for something) and they teach us. Some hymns intertwine all three things while others focus on only one or two.

The most important part of the Divine Liturgy is the Anaphora. This is the time of the service when the Holy Gifts are consecrated. There are three hymns during this part of the Liturgy—“Agios, Agios”; “Se Imnumen”; and “Axion Esti”. These hymns praise God. While the priest is supplicating the Lord to consecrate bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, the response of the people is to praise God for this great thing that He is doing for us. Hence we sing:

*Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are filled with Your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*

*We praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You, and we pray to You, Lord our God.*

*It is truly right to call you blessed, Theotokos, you the ever blessed one and all blameless one and the Mother of our God. Greater in honor than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim. You who without corruption gave birth to God the Logos, and are truly Theotokos, you do we magnify.*

Right before receiving Communion, as we are praying to be able to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, the hymn is also one of praise:

*Praise the Lord from the heavens. Alleluia.*

As we conclude the Liturgy, we continue to praise God in thanksgiving:

*May the name of the Lord be blessed from this time forth, and forever and to all ages.*

Throughout the Liturgy, there are hymns that supplicate the Lord, or ask Him for His help and intercession. The most often used hymn is also one of the most simple: Lord, have mercy. We chant “Lord, have mercy” at least 30 times in the Divine Liturgy, in respond to petitions offered by the priest for God’s help and mercy in many areas of our lives.

At the beginning of the Liturgy, we sing hymns of Intercession to both the Virgin Mary and to the Lord:

*Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Savior save us.*

*Save us, o Son of God, who rose from the dead, to You we sing Alleluia.*

The Trisagion Hymn is also a hymn of supplication:

*Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.*

The overwhelming majority of hymns in the Orthodox Church, however, are hymns that TEACH us. We have several of these in the Liturgy. For instance, the Cherubic Hymn, as we prepare for the Great Entrance where the Holy Gifts are offered on the altar, prepares us by teaching us:

*We who mystically represent the Cherubim, sing the thrice-holy hymn to the Life-giving Trinity. Let us lay aside all the cares of this life that we may receive the King of all; invisibly escorted by the angelic hosts. Alleluia.*

Following Holy Communion, there is one remaining hymn of instruction:

*We have seen the Light, the True Light and have received the heavenly spirit. We have found the true faith by our worshipping the undivided Trinity who has saved us.*

Outside of the Liturgy, the number of hymns that teach us, versus the number of hymns praising and supplicating God, is even more profound. Take our recently completed Holy Week experience. If you look at the Holy Week Book, this is a book of Orthodox theology. It teaches just about everything we

need to know about being an Orthodox Christian. Holy Week, is in essence, a refresher course in Orthodox Theology. Certainly, we praise God and supplicate Him throughout the week. But more than that, we relearn and reaffirm what it is we believe as Orthodox Christians. Some highlights:

### ***Palm Sunday Evening—Hymn of the Bridegroom***

*Behold the Bridegroom comes in the midst of the night and blessed is the servant whom He shall find vigilant. Again unworthy is the one whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore o my soul, lest you be born down with sleep, lest you be given up to death and lest you be shut out from the kingdom. Wherefore raise yourself and cry out: Holy, Holy, Holy are You, our God, through the Theotokos, have mercy on us.*

This hymn, based on the Parable of the Ten Maidens, in Matthew 25:1-13, reminds us to be vigilant, waiting patiently for the coming our Christ, our Bridegroom.

### ***Holy Tuesday Evening—Hymn of Kassiane***

*The woman who had fallen into many sins, perceiving Your Divinity, O Lord, assumes the role of a myrrh-bearer; and lamenting, she brings the myrrh before Your burial. “Woe to me!” she said, “for me, night is an ecstasy of excess, dark and moonless, and full of sinful desire. Receive the sources of my tears, You, Who gathers into clouds the water of the sea. Incline to the groaning of my heart, You, Who in Your ineffable condescension, bowed down the Heavens. I will embrace and kiss Your sacred Feet, and wipe them again with the tresses of the hair of my head. Your Feet, at whose sound Eve hid herself in fear, when she heard Your footsteps while You were walking in Paradise in the twilight. O my Savior and Soul-Saver! Who can ever track down the multitude of my sins, and the depths of Your judgment? Do not disregard me Your servant, Whose mercy is boundless.*

This hymn tells a story of a sinful woman, and is really the story of all humanity, a humanity mired in sin which is desperate for God’s forgiveness and mercy. Yet, we get so caught up in the perceived difficulty or challenge of chanting this hymn, or become pleased with ourselves when we “carry it off” well, that most people have no idea about its deep meaning. This is a hymn that I challenge choirs to learn in English—I have never heard it in English, and while it is musically appealing to me, to hear the plea of a sinful woman in English would be much more profound in its meaning than hearing it in Greek. (As an aside, I have nothing against chanting in Greek. I chant in both languages equally well. I find that when I chant in Greek, my focus is on performance and execution as I do not understand all the words in Greek. Chanting this hymn in English will allow us to reflect on its deeper meaning as we hear it, rather than scanning our Holy Week Books to read the English while we have the Greek chanting going on in the background. Let’s be honest, that’s what most people do.)

### ***Holy Thursday Evening—Simeron Kremate***

*Today is hung upon the Cross, He Who suspended the land in the midst of the waters. A crown of thorns crowns Him who is the King of Angels. He, Who wrapped the Heavens in clouds, is clothed with the purple of mockery. He, who freed Adam in the Jordan, received buffeting. He was transfixed with nails, Who is the bridegroom of the Church. He was pierced with a lance, Who is the Son of the Virgin. We worship Your Passion, O Christ. Show us also, Your glorious Resurrection.*

This hymn is the announcement of the Crucifixion. As the priest exits the altar holding the Estavromenos, he announces with great reverence and solemnity: “Today is hung upon the Cross, He Who suspended the land in the midst of the water.” As the cross is carried around the church, the significance of the crucifixion, the Son of God, incarnate of the Virgin, made man for our salvation, is told in hymn

### **Good Friday—The Lamentations**

These hymns praise and thank God for dying for us. They ask God to watch over us and also INFORM US about the glorious mystery of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Some samples:

*I Zoi en Tafo—O Christ, the Life, You were laid in the tomb and the ranks of angels were amazed, glorifying Your condescension.*

*Axion Esti—It is fitting to magnify You, the Giver of Life; You Who extended Your Hands upon the Cross, and shattered the power of the enemy.*

*Ai geneai Pasai—All Generations offer a hymn to Your burial o Christ.*

*Eranan ton tafo—The Myrrh-bearing women, came early in the morning, and sprinkles the tomb with myrrh.*

This is the first verse of each stanza and the verse when the priest sprinkles the myrrh over the congregation. So even the most “well known” verses of the Lamentations are hymns of information and teaching.

### **The Anastasis—The Service of the Resurrection**

*Defte Lavete Fos—Come receive the Light, from the everlasting Light and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead.*

This is a hymn of direction to us the faithful. The long Lenten journey has ended and now it is time to approach and relight the spiritual fire of our souls with the Light of the Resurrected Christ. Which brings us to the most important and well known hymn of the church year, “Christos Anesti”:

*Christ is Risen from the dead, by death trampling down death and to those in the tombs He has bestowed life.*

Many people who are not Orthodox have wondered, how can the most joyful hymn of the church year consist of 21 words, of which four are “dead,” “death” and “tombs”? This hymn explains, very succinctly, what is the whole point of believing in Jesus Christ—that Christ rose from the dead and by doing so, He trampled down death, and to those who die and lay in a grave, who believe in Him, He bestows upon them everlasting life. “Christos Anesti” is a hymn that just about everyone knows in one language or another. We sing it so many times that for many of us, it plays over and over in our heads throughout the Paschal season. This is good. Hopefully it penetrates not only our minds but our souls and affects our lives in a positive manner. The next time someone asks you, what is it that you believe about death and eternal life, you need look no further than the words of “Christos Anesti” to find the answer.

There are thousands of hymns in the anthology of Orthodox liturgical music. I’ve highlighted some of the more well-known hymns of Holy Week. Look at the Apolytikion of just about every saint—it tells a story of that saint’s life and beseeches God for intercessions from that saint. Take the hymn of St. Demetrios as an example:

*The world has found in you a great champion, in danger a victor, who could turn the nations back. As you restrained Lialius in the arena, you also inspired Nestor to courage. Therefore Holy Great Martyr Demetrios, entreat Christ our God to grant us great mercy!*

This hymn, in a few words, gives the highlights of the life of this great Saint of the church. Again, the majority of hymns of the Orthodox church fall into the teaching category. This is why we celebrate Orthros services, because the hymns of the Orthros teach us the life of the saint of that day we are offering the Orthros. The funeral service is also a teaching service, it’s hymns not only plea for rest for our departed loved one, but they also teach us that “all things in life are vain, they have no being after

death,” that we must repent and be faithful followers in this life so that we may enjoy eternal rest in the life to come.

Three more closing notes about the hymnology of the church:

1. The emotion of the church is found in the hymns of the church. Prayers and scripture readings reach us on a cognitive level. The chanting reaches us on an emotional level. When do people get emotional during Holy Week? It is not during the reading of the Gospel, or during the reading of the Psalms. It is during the chanting of the hymns. “Simeron Kremate” makes us cry in sadness. “Christos Anesti” makes us cry in joy. These hymns evoke an emotional response. This is why it is so important that hymns be chanted well during Holy Week, and throughout the year because emotions are what help us to deepen our belief and enhance our relationship with God through worship.
2. Hymns must be sung in such a way that the congregation may join in chanting along. When one chants with the choir or the chanter, one feels connected, his or her own sense of belonging, or “owning” the worship. When one does not participate in the service, he is reduced to the role of spectator and doesn’t get the fullest expression of worship. When choirs or chanters offer renditions of hymns that are not easy to follow, they reduce the congregation to the role of spectator or audience and the worship becomes a performance. The purpose of the choir is not to perform, or WOW the congregation with its abilities. The purpose of the choir is to lead the congregation in worship, to engage the congregation in singing along with the choir. Which brings me to my final point:
3. We must chant in a language that people understand. How many people in our church can translate the Hymn of Kassiane? How many people in the choirs of our churches sing hymns, that while beautiful, are totally not understood by even the people who are singing them. It’s hard to derive joy and meaning out of things you don’t understand. The use of English, while growing steadily, needs to keep doing so. Choirs who have sung the same hymn of Kassiane for 30 years in Greek, need to learn a new rendition in English. If the beautiful voices of the choir inspire people, imagine how much MORE SO people will be inspired if the language of those voices is a language people can understand! I commend people like Fr. Seraphim Dedes for translating the hymns of every Orthros and Liturgy into metered music that can be easily sung. One of the most beautiful things about our Metropolis summer camp program, in which both Fr. Seraphim and I participate, is that the campers sing together, as one community. It’s wonderful to stand at the altar and hear every teenager singing the responses of the service, to hear an entire church alive with music, not just the choir loft!

I am most thankful to my choir in Tampa for their continued hard work and diligence. Most people who sing in choirs do so as volunteers. This is a beautiful ministry of the church in which you are engaged. So, on behalf of priests all over our Metropolis, thank you to the faithful choir members who bring emotion and meaning to our worship services.

*Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis is the Proistamenos of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa, FL and is the co-director of the St. Stephen’s Summer Camp Program of the Metropolis of Atlanta.*

## Choir Federation Elections to be held in June, 2010

Nominations for the officers of the Southeastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Choirs and Musicians for 2010-2011 are now being accepted. Elections will be held at the annual business meeting on June 25, 2010 at the choir conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. Nominations will be accepted by June 18, 2010 and also at the annual business meeting,

Please submit your nominations for the Offices of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer to John Mitchell Chairman of the Nominating Committee, at 813.962.0551 or by email at [johnpm2@hotmail.com](mailto:johnpm2@hotmail.com) and provide the following information on the nominees you are submitting:

Nominee Name, Parish, Parish City  
Previous Federation Involvement:  
Church Leadership Experience

The current 2009-2010 officers are:

President Margaret Sarafoglu of Miami, Florida,  
Vice President Suzy Balasis of St. Petersburg, Florida,  
Secretary Lucy Zapsas, of Charlotte, North Carolina, and  
Treasurer Nick Mermigas of Charlotte, North Carolina.

John Mitchell, Immediate Past President  
Chairman of the Nominating Committee



St. Romanos the Melodist

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Membership renewal time for the Southeast Federation of Greek Orthodox Choirs and Musicians (SFGOCM) is here again. Your membership helps support our annual Federation choir conference and other events that enhance the spiritual journey of your choir members.

Annual dues for 2010 are **\$100 for choirs** and a **minimum of \$10 for individuals**. If your choir is an active member of the SFGOCM, you do not need an individual membership. Individual memberships are for those who do not belong to a member choir, but wish to be involved and updated on Federation happenings.

This year our annual conference will be held in **New Orleans, LA** on **June 25-27, 2010**. Your executive board will be meeting soon to finalize plans. Guest conductors will be announced in Keynotes. Be sure to mark your calendar and make plans to attend this exciting conference. In order to participate in the annual conference, you or your choir must have paid the current dues.

In order to better serve you, the federation board has compiled the enclosed survey. Please submit your completed survey and dues with a **check payable to SFGOCM** by December 31, 2009, and mail to me at:

Suzy Balasis  
SFGOCM Vice President  
PO Box 47755  
St. Petersburg, FL 33743

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

In His Service,

Suzy Balasis

cc: Executive Board

