

KEYNOTES



November 2008

Editor's Note

For those who did not contribute articles about their choirs — please be sure to contact leonk@bellsouth.net for the next editions of *Keynotes* or *Notable Notes*, our monthly newsletter, for upcoming events and news from your parish— remembering that the cutoff dates are always the 15th of the month before publication)

We have rented a photo and video site for you to post your media. If you don't send them, they cannot be shared with everyone. **The space is limitless**, so please, please send them to me as you get anything at all that relates. Yes, this includes baby pictures!

Leon

Featured Article

A Vision for the Future of Greek Orthodox Choirs in America

By Father Stavros N. Akrotirianakis

Preface:

I have served as a Greek Orthodox Priest for the past 11 years. Prior to attending the seminary, I went to church at St. Sophia Cathedral in Los Angeles, where the late Frank Desby was the choir director. I am a great admirer of his work and he was someone I enjoyed interacting with. Perhaps the best liturgy I ever attended was when a choir of over 100 voices chanted the liturgy prior to his funeral. While at the seminary, I sang in the choir for a year at the Church of the Annunciation in Newburyport, MA. I also served as the Protopsalti for a year at St. Demetrios in Weston, MA, and was one of the Protopsaltis at the Seminary. I say this, not to build up a resume, but to say that I have experienced the liturgy from the perspective of the choir member, the psalti and the priest. So, I empathize with the perspective of each.

I currently serve as the priest of the Church of St. John the Baptist in Tampa, Florida. We have an excellent choir and an excellent chanter. Fortunately, I have a good working relationship with both of them. While no choir can be

considered problem-free, just like no person is without his faults, I think on many levels, our choir is a model. They practice regularly. They come on time. They learn new music. They rotate the music they know so we don't hear "the same and the same" each Sunday. They put in extra practices before Holy Week and Hierarchical Liturgies, and they are always adequately prepared to sing. They also are eager to embrace new-comers to the choir and have learned to sing a considerable amount of the service in English.

I am also appreciative of the work of those who sing in the choir. Most choir members are volunteers who lovingly give of their time. Many choir members have been giving of their time for decades—they've gotten us to where we are, from a tradition of no choir, to a reality of some pretty good ones. The thesis of this article is where are we going from here? It is said, "without a vision, the people perish." Having been a parish priest, a chanter and a choir member, here's my opinion as to the answer.

In a recent conversation with a priest of a parish in the Southeast United States, the subject of choirs came up. While I eagerly shared with him how much I enjoy working with my choir in Tampa, he did not share the same joy in describing the choir in his church.

The first complaint—they don't practice, consequently they are often not prepared to sing and offer something less than inspiring;

Complaint number two—they don't sing on a consistent basis. Not only do they not sing in the summer, they come in part-way through the Liturgy, they don't sing if not enough of them show up, no one knows on a given Sunday whether there will be choir or not;

Complaint number three—The choir will ONLY sing in Greek; and

Complaint number four—the choir is not very welcoming to new members.

I hope this is not indicative of the choirs in most Greek Orthodox parishes in this country, though there are I'm sure at least one of these four complaints present with most church choirs, if we're honest.



A few months ago, my parish authored its first mission and vision statement. Some of you who work for large corporations or schools are familiar with mission and vision statements. A mission statement defines what your group is doing, while a vision statement outlines the way(s) you will accomplish that mission. A mission statement is usually very brief, one sentence, and is not really something that can be debated. For instance, the mission statement of every professional sports team is “Win games.” There is no debating that. The vision is how the team functions so it wins games—i.e. in baseball you can buy talent like the Yankees, trade for it like the Red Sox, grow it through the minor leagues like the Tampa Rays. In football, the mission is also to win games—the vision might be one that loads up on defense, uses the run and shoot offense, or runs the West Coast offense.

Perhaps it is time to look at choirs in terms of Mission and Vision. The mission of every choir is the same—to lead the congregation in chanting the responses of the services. Isn't that why we have a choir, to lead the congregation in chanting the responses of the services? It isn't to replace the congregation in chanting responses. It's not to relegate the congregation to uninvolved bystanders. Because we all know that the Liturgy, by its very definition, means “the work of the people,” not “a performance or drama between priest and choir.” So if we establish that choirs exist in order to lead the congregation in chanting the responses of the services, then we need to go about setting a vision for where our choirs are going in the future.

We lead by example

When I used to play sports back in the day, the coach used to say “if you don't practice, you don't play.” In the work place, if you don't work, you don't get paid. A person can't be a leader if they are not prepared to lead. A good choir is vigilant in practicing and preparing to lead the congregation in worship. Does that mean a choir should practice every week? It's however much practice the choir needs to chant well at a service. My choir in Tampa practices regularly throughout the year (as did my former choir in Asheville), and adds additional practices before Christmas and Holy Week. An athlete becomes better through practice. You don't see professional athletes who have been playing their sport for 20 years say “we'll just show up for the game, no practice needed.” They are still practicing every day, before and after games, so that when the game comes, they are playing at the highest level possible. Baseball players are practicing even before World Series Games and football players practice even the day of the Superbowl. Taking this to the choirs, it doesn't matter if one has sung in the choir for 20 years and knows all the hymns, the choir is a unit and the unit must practice together so that it is cohesive and united when it is singing. Even if the same unit has been in place for many years, it still needs practice because there is always room

for improvement. To think that there are choirs that never practice and go to the Liturgy unsure of not only the special hymns but even the regular hymns is unconscionable. Choirs should practice on a regular basis. Furthermore, in the Metropolis of Atlanta, the Metropolitan encourages the priests to attend practices to both encourage the choir and so that the “chemistry” between the celebrant priest and choir is continually deepening, which makes the services seamless and more inspiring. I do not attend every choir practice in Tampa, but I stick my head in on many of them. I meet with the choir director on a regular basis to discuss things the choir is learning so that on Sundays, our offering of the liturgy is done with preparation so it can be received by the faithful with inspiration.

Consistency

With the exception of the Sunday of our church festival, the Liturgy in my church always begins at 10:00 a.m. It is very consistent. Those who sing in the choir are expected to be in the choir loft at 9:55 a.m. Again, very consistent. We don't vary the time of the expectation for arrival. It is always the same. If a person who sings in the choir is a leader in worship, the leader has to be there in time to lead the followers. Just like the celebrant priest is the first person in church (can you imagine if the priest arrived after the Doxology, or didn't show up until 10:45 a.m.), the choir needs to be in place prior to the service it is chanting, so that the leadership of worship is in place from the very first word of the service. It helps in my church that the choir “loft” is in front of the church right behind the Bishop's throne. It makes it harder for people to sneak in late. My choir always enters the church together, not in fragmented pieces. This is indicative of how they sing—as a cohesive unit, not fragmented pieces. How many Sundays a year do we celebrate Liturgy? The answer, 52 (or in a leap year, maybe 53). It is certainly not 38, or 25, or three times a month. Yet in many churches, the choir sings on a less than regular basis. In Tampa, the “summer” for the choir has been reduced to six Sundays in summer they don't sing, and the week of the festival. All in all, not bad. That means the faithful can count on the choir chanting 45 out of 52 Sundays in a year, and every Sunday from mid-August until the end of June except for the festival. The attendance in the choir is also fairly stable, about 15-20 each Sunday. While we see a swelling in attendance at Easter (we've had as many as 26 people in the choir), there isn't a nadir or 4 or 5 at other times of the year. Rather it is a pretty consistent 15-20 each Sunday.

Use English—this is America!

It is a fact that throughout the history of the Orthodox Church, the services have been done in the vernacular of the people of the country where the church is. In Greece, the



services are in Greek. In Russia, they are in Slavonic. In the Middle East, they are in Arabic. In the United States, they need to be in English. It is a fact that most people in our congregations do not speak or understand Greek. Thus when it comes to singing along with the choir, most people cannot sing in Greek, and even if they can mumble through the hymns, they will have no clue what they are saying. We need to make an increased effort to incorporate English into our services. Does that mean we don't hear "Kyrie Eleison" or "Christos Anesti" in Greek? Absolutely not. We still sing "I Genisis Sou" on Christmas and "Simeron Kremate" on Holy Thursday in Tampa. Truth be told, there isn't ONE service where Greek is not used. But when a priest says "Peace be with you all," the PEOPLE are to respond, "And with your spirit." They can't respond if they can't say the words "ke to pneumatou sou," and they can't respond with fervor if they don't know what "ke to pneumatou sou" means. If I did the entire liturgy in Greek, gave the sermon only in Greek, spoke on the telephone only in Greek, I'd have no congregation in Tampa. We've moved past the point in church history in America where choirs can continue to chant only in Greek. (By the way, I love chanting in Greek and am equally comfortable chanting in English or Greek. Truth be told, I prefer chanting in Greek. But as a priest, I am here to serve the needs of the people, not my interests or comforts.)

"I like the Greek, it keeps the mystical quality of the service when we don't understand all the words." This argument is offered by many choir members (as well as congregants). Here is my answer to that—there are many words in the services that simply cannot be translated. Take the word "Doxa" in Greek which we translate "glory" in English. What does the word "glory" mean, in the context of the "glory of God"? God's glory is so great that it cannot be described or defined. Same thing goes with His "mercy" and "grace". "Heaven and earth are full of your glory"—we can write the words in English, but we still cannot rationally comprehend them. How many people in the congregation know what the phrase "pliris ouranos ke i gi tis doxis Sou" means? Probably a handful. Singing this phrase in Greek completely "locks out" many people to a beautiful phrase from scripture that has become a powerful hymn in the Church. Translated as "heaven and earth are full of Your glory," there is still plenty of mystery, but at least some comprehension. So even if the service is mostly in English, there is still a mystical quality to it, as many English words describing God cannot fully be understood in a rational and cognitive way. Keeping everything in Greek is not "mystical" or "traditional." The services are Traditional, the language is not. The same liturgy we celebrate in America is celebrated in Russia in Slavonic, in the Middle East in Arabic. It is not any less traditional because it isn't in Greek. In any language, including English, there will always be a "mystical" quality to the services. After all, the sacraments are "mysteries" in whatever languages they are celebrated.

Welcoming new members

"Hi, I'm Sally and I'd like to join the choir. I'm 25 years old, have a musical background, and am a recent convert to Orthodoxy." "Welcome Sally, I'm Yanni, I've been in the choir longer than you've been alive, together with everyone else in our choir. Now that you've joined our church, come learn some Greek so you can sing with us. Because we all have our same seats for the past 25 years, why don't you stand on the end of the back row? I can't stand next to you and help because I always stand next to Vasili in 'our' row." Do you think Sally stuck it out with the choir? With a reception like that, she lasted three weeks. As much as our choirs say they need new members, are they really ready to welcome new members? People like Sally who come to our choirs "haven't been there forever." They feel out of place when everyone already has a place. For someone who has never sung in a choir, they are forced to learn three languages—the language of the music, the Greek language or phonetics, and the language of choir politics—who's connected to who, who sits where, who wears which robe, holds which book, who is helpful and who isn't. That's a lot to handle for anyone, let alone someone who has never sung in the church choir. Choir practices that are dominated by talk of the "good old days," complaints about the priest, or other things that don't include preparation to chant on Sundays are going to be a turn off to new choir members. Rather "old" choir members should mentor new ones with encouragement, not stories regaling the good old days. Mentoring includes fitting a new choir member in between you and your best friend you've sung next to for the past 30 years so that the new person can be helped along if he or she gets lost. Gossip doesn't inspire anyone—it just drags people down. So at choir practice, focus on preparing for the Holy task that you offer each Sunday, preparing to take on the role of the angels in helping to lead people in chanting the responses of the liturgy. Is there any choir whose average age has gone DOWN in the last five years? I would think that the answer universally is NO. Therefore as our choir members age and some begin to die off, it is absolutely incumbent on choirs to recruit and encourage new members and this is done by adding mentoring and eliminating gossip, it is done with increased use of English and being more open minded than "the way we've always done it."

Goals without (appropriate) plans are fantasies

If a person or organization has no goals, it won't have much of a future because there is nothing that is being worked toward. The saying goes "if you aren't moving ahead, you are falling behind." So sitting still and maintaining the status quo does not advance the work of the church choir. Goals without plans are fantasies. If I have a goal to lose weight but no plan for how to do that, then my

goal will never be realized, it is just a fantasy. The plan, however, also must be appropriate. For example, if I plan to lose weight by eating ice cream and watching TV all day long, that plan isn't really appropriate to the goal of weight loss. So ask yourself, what are some goals for our choir? Here are some suggestions

- To sound like a heavenly choir of angels
- To encourage the congregation to sing the hymns of the liturgy along with the choir
- To better understand the meaning of what we are singing
- To learn music that will be easy to sing along to, both for the choir and the congregation
- Encourage new people, especially young people, to join the choir.

Now if these are the goals, which plans do you think are most appropriate (more than one answer may be correct):

1. We are more likely to sound like a choir of angels is we:
 - a. Never practice
 - b. Practice often
 - c. Develop our personal prayer life
2. We can encourage the congregation to sing the hymns of the Liturgy along with the choir if we
 - a. Learn very complex arrangements
 - b. Sing everything in Greek
 - c. Learn hymns in English with easier arrangements
 - d. Come late to the liturgy each Sunday
 - e. Come on time, ready to worship, eager to receive Holy Communion
3. We can better understand the meaning of what we are singing if we
 - a. Sing everything in Greek
 - b. Study the theological meaning of hymns
 - c. Learn the theology behind the development of the Liturgy
 - d. Sing hymns in English
4. We can encourage new people to join the choir by
 - a. Telling them about the good old days
 - b. Mentoring them
 - c. Re-arranging our seats so newer people sit in between veterans who can assist if they get lost.
 - d. Doing more in English so they only have to master the music, not the language.

My choir in Tampa is an excellent choir. Like all churches, however, they are aging. Getting new people is also a challenge, though we have had several join in the past few years. I am asked frequently to write something in the *Keynotes* publication and I have written several lengthy articles in the past about the relationships between choirs and chanters, why we sing in the choir and other things. I am a big "fan" of

choirs and a very dedicated student of liturgics as well as Byzantine Music. I have a very good working relationship with my choir director and chanter. They also work well together, which sadly is a rarity. Two observations, constructive criticisms you might call them, that I want to leave you with:

1. My choir regularly participates in choir conferences. I have attended one in the past in Orlando. My impression of the choir conferences is that it is a lot of effort to learn the music of one composer and offer it at the Sunday Divine Liturgy. Lots of effort goes into practicing before the conference and during the conference. Most of the arrangements sung at the conferences are very difficult and can't be sung by a church choir of 15. My question is, how much serious talking is done at choir conferences about the problem of the shrinking and aging choirs in our churches? Would the conferences have longer lasting impacts if choirs learned easier arrangements that can be sung by a choir of 10 or 15, with emphasis on how the congregations can be encouraged to sing along with the choir? Again, I understand that it is very motivating for a large choir to sing a complex liturgical arrangement. It motivates people to learn and inspires them as they leave a conference. I am also a huge fan of choirs and also of organs. I will never say to abolish either. I grew up on the West Coast with Frank Desby as the choir director in my parish. So I know his liturgy is beautiful, though very difficult to sing. But in an era where the very future of choirs is in doubt in many parishes, is it time for a radical change of thinking when it comes to language, choirs, conferences and the like? Just a thought.
2. The second observation is about correct translations and traditional melodies. The tradition of Byzantine music in the Orthodox Church is as old as the church itself. The 8 tones or modes of music come to us from Antiquity, believe it or not. They are older than the church. We have received the tradition of Byzantine Music from the beginning of the church. Is it our right to change it, or make it sound "American" or "Protestant"? The answer is no. There are ways to translate hymns from Greek to English and still retain the flavor of the music. There are also ways to translate words from Greek to English and keep them theologically correct. In examining a more contemporary rendition of the Great Doxology recently, I found a word that was left out when the hymn was translated from Greek to English that changed the entire theological meaning of a phrase in that hymn. This is how heresies start. So, while I encourage the use of English, it has to be done in a

way that is theologically correct, linguistically accurate, and musically traditional.

A church without a choir would be like heaven with no angels. The choir stands around the throne of God (the altar in the church) singing His praises and leading the faithful in worship, just like the angels stand around the throne of God in heaven. Singing in the choir is not a job, or a club, but rather a sacred ministry and a sacred responsibility. Singing in the choir is both joy and sacrifice. I thank those who participate in this sacred ministry, who take upon themselves this awesome responsibility, for the time and sacrifice that you put in. Just as I hope to leave my church (in Tampa, and Orthodoxy in general) better than I found it when it is my time to leave it, I encourage you to think seriously about the future of the choir in your particular parish, and how you can leave a ministry of singing in your parish more active and more vibrant than when you found it. It all starts with understanding the mission of the choir and developing a vision in your parish so that "leading the congregation in singing the responses of the services" (the mission of the choir) can be done successfully and consistently by the choir not only of today, but for years to come.

Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis is the Proistamenos of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church of Tampa, Florida and is the director of St. Stephen's Summer Camp for the Metropolis of Atlanta

Fantastic Conducting CMI in Atlanta!!!

The Annunciation Cathedral Choir of Atlanta hosted the CMI on November 8, 2008. Twenty-eight participants gathered on this



beautiful fall day, from throughout the Metropolis for this one day

workshop with internationally known choral clinician, Dr. Rodney Eichenberger. This is the fourth Metropolis that Dr. Eichenberger has been invited to as a clinician for a CMI. He shared his expertise as a choral director and also shared his knowledge on what it takes to be a good choral singer. Everyone became an active participant as he took the group through various vocal exercises for particular vocal problems. Through hand gestures and movement he was able to change and reshape the vocal tone color of the "choir" in many different ways. He worked individually with volunteers who took turns conducting the group, taking what they already knew about conducting and enhancing it through his suggestions of different ways to use their hands to reshape the sound. Everyone learned that "less is more." He was AMAZING! Everyone came away with a renewed sense of confidence and energy to take back to their home choirs. It was an excellent CMI and a beautiful day for all who participated!

A delicious lunch was prepared and served by Susan and Michael Lambros, both members of the Cathedral choir. The workshop was chaired by Christina Polizos, Cathedral choir director and Georgia Ekonomou, who has attended other workshops of Dr. Rodney Eichenberger. Accompanist for the workshop was Peter Zervakos, Cathedral organist.



CMI Attendees' Comments

I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed yesterday's workshop. It was such a great learning experience, and I was astounded at some of the things we heard and saw (I don't think I would have believed it if you had just told me opening my hand would change the sound of the choir).

I have a lot of bad habits to "un learn", but am very excited to get to work. Thank you so much for your hard work in putting on the workshop. It was so good to see everyone again, and I look forward to the next time we can do something together.

Sam Waite
Pensacola



"He's unbelievable! What a potential boost to interpretation and the sound of our choirs!"

Margaret Sarafoglu
Miami



I am very pleased with the workshop and appreciate the opportunity to learn. I used many of the techniques on Sunday and had wonderful results. After the Liturgy many of the choir members came to me and said, "You were using your hands differently today." They all thought it was great.



I liked having the workshop as a stand alone event. On a scale of 1 to 5, I rate the workshop as a 4.5. I would definitely encourage others to attend Dr. Eichenberger's workshop. I plan to order one of his tapes.

Thank you to all who were involved in organizing this. I know there was a lot of time and effort put forth.

Regards,

Linda Henley
Jacksonville



Having attended a half day seminar with Professor Eichenberger in Pennsylvania, I was thrilled when it was announced that Atlanta would host a full-day session.

Those four hours in Pennsylvania revolutionized my entire approach to choral directing.

He showed us that we don't have to flail our arms around or give a big distracting windup to the downbeat. He demonstrated how placement of different voices in the loft can make a significant difference, even if you are just changing the position of two people who stand next to each other.

It was truly a seminar for those who are directed, too. Rodney kept making the attendees' jaws drop with his demonstrations of how the smallest movement can have a profound impact on the sound that you get. A singer's interpretation is enhanced by his simple explanations of things that we don't even think of, like whether the director's hand is open to ask (for more sound, like a beggar with a tin cup) or if the director's hand is palm down, meaning to continue as you are (among other things).

It truly was worth the 11 hour drive each way!

Leon Karahalios
Miami



On behalf of the SFGOCM executive board I would like to thank the CMI Committee headed by Mrs. Georgia Ekonomou and Mrs. Christina Polizos for providing us with such a hospitable environment.

The koulourakia at breaks made me feel at home and the luncheon hit the spot.

As you may know, we are encouraged by The National Forum to annually conduct these CMI Workshops which they have budgeted to subsidize - currently \$2,500.00 a year per federation. Their only request is that it be educational and that we have accredited instructors. In addition to the financial report and list of attendees, they would like to know how the attendees viewed the workshop.

Regards,
John

President's Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, CHRIST IS AMONG US! As we enter the busy holiday season, I would like to wish all of you a very Happy Thanksgiving and a Blessed Merry Christmas. We are experiencing historic times with our recent presidential election and no matter who you voted for, we must pray for our President, our leaders, and our country. This is not because of who was elected but because of the state of our country and the economy. I recommend chanting, "Save O Lord Your People", "Soson Kyrie" every day upon arising and each night before retiring.

The board of the federation is still waiting for Fr. Demetri Kangelaris of Winston-Salem, and the conference committee to decide on the dates for the conference. Please bear with us as we are as anxious as you are.

The music selection is in the very capable hands of Dr. Philip Thevaos and his committee, Toulia Chininis, Elias Nicholas, and Mary Alice Kays.

John Mitchell, Joanne Kambouras, and I attended a meeting in Atlanta, of the Education, Hellenic Culture, and Youth Board. Dr. Constantine Kokenes asked why young people, (teenagers and young adults), are not joining the choirs in our metropolis. He wanted to know why no one has done any research on the problem. Therefore, I will be forming a committee to develop a research tool (survey) to gather data on this important topic and see if there are ways to correct this problem. I will keep you posted.

The National Forum and the SFGOCM sponsored a CMI in Atlanta on November 8, 2008, featuring Dr. Rodney Eichenberger, a well know conducting educator. Conductors and choir members attended. First of all, he is very entertaining, and second, it is impossible not to learn something. It is amazing how movement improves pitch, tone, and volume. I wish all of you could have been there.

May the blessing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, be with you and your families during this blessed holiday season.

Your faithful servant in Christ,
Margaret Sarafoglu
President, SFGOCM



Athenagoras Chairman

Feel free to ask anyone you would like to serve on this committee.

Future Athenagoras forms reflect Stan's home address for submitting nominations.

For your reference, Stan's address is:

Stan Evdemon
9216 Estate Cove Circle
Tampa, FL 33569
Phone # 813.246.5002

Notable links

To see our picture albums, [click here!](#) To see [Photos from our conducting CMI in Atlanta in November, 2008](#), click on the underlined link in this paragraph.



Just last week, on November 12th, the Orthodox Church in America elected a new Metropolitan to head its faithful – Metropolitan Jonah of All America and Canada.

To commemorate this occasion, Dr. Vladimir Morosan has dedicated a program on the Orthodox Christian Network. In the program, he focuses on some of the special hymns that are sung when a bishop celebrates the Divine Liturgy.

While the music is primarily Russian in character, I thought you'd also be interested in the information Vladimir provides about the hymns and changes in the services that occur when a Bishop visits, no matter the Orthodox jurisdiction.

The music comes from Archangel Voices' recent recording, "Master, Bless." Also featured is the Hierarchal Trisagion Hymn from Cappella Romana's CD, "Music for the Fall of Constantinople."

[To listen online, click here!](#)



From Rosemary Hendrix

Having attended many choir conferences, having sung in several different choirs in my lifetime, knowing choir practice is a "way of life", warming up with a conference CD in my car on the way to church I began to notice several things. For one, my choir friends were getting older! My own voice began to change from alto to a "sometimes tenor"! My "girlfriends" voices were also getting lower. Have you begun to notice more female tenors lately? Another thing I noticed, it is harder to get upstairs - I was out of breath before I started the first Kyrie Eleison. At the last SFGOCM Conference in New Port Richey, the elevator to the choir loft was the topic of conversation at every table! To top that one off, we sang downstairs. You think the elevator wouldn't hold us all getting to be the first ones on? Mmmmm - that was a smart move. I also noticed that many of my choir friends are getting a little bit, *ahem...* more robust, more mature, a little more forgetful with names, but never forgetful of the liturgical arrangements we learned ever so many years ago when we were teens. Another thing I noticed, we are

all wearing glasses! Not prescription ones so much, but the ones you get for ~ \$12 - you know the kind - designer magnifiers.

All of this made me think of this proposed article. A profile of choir members. What made us join the choir in the first place? Our talent? We didn't want to "dress up" for church? In our day, we had to wear a hat to church, dress shoes which were worn only on Sundays - you know the bit. Maybe we didn't want to drop our allowance in the collection plate under the watchful eyes of our Dad. In any case, we are here today, still singing, still enjoying friendships, still praising our Lord, still learning new arrangements, now singing the hymns in English in many cases. For the first time, I understood the hymns - "Is that what that means?"

Each month, I will be asking you for information, so we can begin to know our fellow choir members. We do share a wonderful history. We each have a story that needs to be told. We need to read the stories before we cannot read at all. We need to know about the dear friends we see at every conference. I propose - we do it!

Always His Servant,
Rosemary Kromidas Hendrix,
A 61 year choir member

Editor's Note: What a good Idea! How about profiles from all of us? Just forward them to leonk@bellsouth.net. Photos appreciated! Rosemary has provided one which will be the feature in the next issue of Notable Notes.

Federation Members Receive 2008 Archangel Michael Award

Congratulations to the musicians of our Federation who received the Archangel Michael Award presented by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios at the awards banquet in Atlanta on Saturday November 8, 2008.

The 2008 musicians were:

South Florida Conference: Constance Kosiara, Choir Member, Fort Myers, FL; Costas Papandreopoulos, Choir Director, Fort Pierce, FL; Thespo G. Portafekas, Choir Member, Miami, FL; Electra V. Spilliss, Choir Member, Miami (Kendall), FL.

North Florida Conference: Dialekti Pappas, Choir Organist, Jacksonville, FL; Efstratios Komon, Choir Member, Melbourne, FL;

Western Conference: Lia Roussos Tsounis, Youth Choir Director, Mobile, AL; Chris Charalambous, Chanter, Baton

Rouge, LA; Michael Yatsko, Chanter, Panama City, FL; Sarah Elizabeth Hunt, Choir Member / Chanter, Fort Walton Beach, FL.

Central Conference: Presbytera Christine Salzman, Choir Member, Athens, GA; John Sophocleus, Choir Member, Columbus, GA; Evangeline Becky Butler, Choir Member, Peachtree City, GA; Douglas Cumuze, Jr., Choir Member, Montgomery, AL.

Coastal Conference: Aphrodite Stevens Pappas, Choir Member, Charleston, SC; Alexia Zecopoulos, Youth Choir Member, Charleston, SC; Sophia Athans Costas, Choir Member, Florence, SC.

North East Conference: John G. Peroulas, Chanter, Charlotte, NC; John Stonestreet, Youth Choir Coordinator, Durham, NC; Emmanuel Miliotis, Chanter, Wilmington, NC; Vasilios D. Fallis, Chanter, Winston Salem, NC; Eleni Dorothea (Doris) Klonaris, Choir Member, Knoxville, TN.

Parish Notes



From the choir of Annunciation Cathedral, Atlanta, GA

Annunciation Cathedral Choir News



Greetings from the Annunciation Cathedral Choir of Atlanta. We have had a busy fall season. We began our rehearsals in August. This year one of our choir members, Leon Melissas started a Men's Choir. The

Men's choir rehearses every other week. They sang the Divine Liturgy in September and are preparing to sing again on November 23rd. They have brought another exciting dimension to our Choir family along with some new members as well. In September we prepared for our Greek Festival concerts which took place on October 3rd and 4th in the Cathedral. The choir sang a variety of our church hymns. Each hymn was introduced by Dr. Constantine Kokenes, who gave a brief history of the hymn and also tied it into the history of our church.

In October we began to prepare for our annual Christmas Dinner Concert with the Cathedral Orchestra, under the direction of Peter Zervakos. This annual event will take place on December 21st at 6:00 PM in the Hellenic Center. The Cathedral Orchestra will open the concert with a selection of Holiday Music, followed by the Cathedral Choir under the direction of Christina Polizos and accompanied by Kay

Nastopoulos, which will present a selection of Christmas Carols. The Men's choir will debut this year as well, under the direction of Leon Melissas. The finale is always "O Holy Night" accompanied by the Cathedral Orchestra.

On November 8th, we hosted the CMI with Rodney Eichenberger (please see the separate article). Dr. Eichenberger also attended our regular choir rehearsal on Thursday night, November 6th and worked with our choir. Our choir members were so enthused with all that he had to teach us about choral singing techniques. A wine and cheese reception followed.

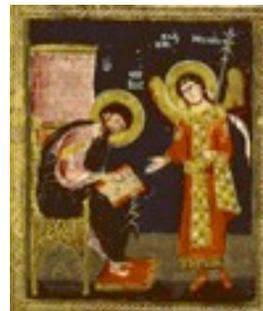
On November 9th, Metropolis Archangel Michael Sunday, our Youth Choir sang most of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with the Adult Choir filling in for certain hymns and joining the Youth Choir for others. The Youth Choir under the direction of Celeste Alexander and Kay Nastopoulos, sings on a regular basis for Liturgies at our church.

We wish everyone a blessed Christmas Season and a Happy and Healthy New Year 2009!

Christina Polizos



From the Choir Loft at Saint Mark Greek Orthodox Church, Boca Raton Florida



We are currently beginning to work on some Christmas music that we will be singing to accompany our Sunday School Christmas Pageant. Our choir continues to sing the music of Kevin Lawrence. We are very excited that on December 7th at 4 pm we will be hosting the Nova Singers for a Christmas concert in our sanctuary.

Tickets will be \$10 at the door and it promises to be an amazing concert. If you are in the area please consider joining us!

Our only other piece of exciting news is that we now have a youth choir which is being led by Mrs. Virginia Barnes. Under her direction the children sang Ayios O Theos on Church Musicians Sunday. It was a joy to hear their angelic voices. We pray that everyone has a blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Sophia Christakis
Choir Director



From the Choir Loft at Holy Trinity Charlotte, NC:

Hello from the Choir Loft!

Our return from “Summer Break” was busy with preparations for the Yiasou Festival. Each year it is our pleasure to bring the sounds of our liturgy to the people of Charlotte. Our choir sang on Saturday evening in the Cathedral to nearly a full house. The program consisted of sampling of the hymns sung throughout the year for all of the holidays.



Our choir family is growing! On September 21, soprano Cathy Karnazes was married to Angelo Tsoulos. We wish them all the happiness from the choir.

Also this year, soprano Katerina Vastis married George Bakogiannis. Even though she will be living a couple of hours away, we hope she will continue to sing with us for holidays.

On October 12 we celebrated National Church Music Sunday. It occurs each year in the month of the feast day of St. Romanos the Melodist. We recognize women, men and youth who have heard and responded to the Lord’s invitation to be church musicians, that is, parish chanters and choir singers. Church musicians represent the laity in the liturgical dialogue of our worship services. Their commitment to learning the hymns of our Orthodox faith, understanding the sequence of our liturgical worship, and actively offering their prayers in song, is done to enhance the beauty of our worship.

The program began with a prayer service with the Psalti chanting the Hymn of St. Romanos. The Children’s Choir, led by Olga Yamalis, did a WONDERFUL job singing the responses.

Each choir member and chanter was recognized for their years of service to the church music ministry. The children received a pendant with St. John Koukouzelis, the Patron Saint of the children’s choir and another musician/ saint.

As a token of appreciation for her unwavering support of the choir, Presbytera Kathryn Constantinides received a re-issue of the 1988 Choir Conference recording, with our beloved Fr. “C”, of blessed memory, as the celebrant. This CD will be on sale in the Holy Trinity Hosanna Bookstore for the holiday season.

The Archbishop Iakovos Distinguished Service Awards were presented to all of our past choir directors. Many of the families of the past directors were present. Holy Trinity Cathedral has been blessed with many talented and dedicated directors, and organists during its 80+ years. Mrs. Natalia Millions first began a choir in the late 1920s, followed by Mrs. Euterpe Michaels who served from the 1930s into the 1950s. Chris Pappas, Tony Emmanuel, Steve A. Pappas, Sophie Costas

and Joanna Pappas provided leadership until the arrival of John Paul who was subsequently ordained to the priesthood. Gus Nixon served during most of the 1960s and 1970s followed by Bill Davis who served as director until 1982. Joanna Cavalaris (served from 1982-1991 & 1993-1999) and Celeste Andrews Alexander (served from 1991-1993) expanded the music ministry to include youth choirs. Beginning in 1986, Anna Pitsikoulis followed by Gerry Clonaris led a second choir dedicated primarily to singing the Church Hymnology in English. This group is now led by Toni Karnazes. A new Youth Music Program was begun in 2008 and is directed by Olga Yamalis. Dr. Philip Thevaos accepted the position of Cathedral Music Director in 1999. Irina Monzolevskaya faithfully serves as Cathedral Organist.



Church Music Sunday provided the perfect opportunity for our Organ Dedication. Our exciting new instrument was delivered and installed this month by the Allen Organ Company. The choir presented a check for \$10,000 of collected funds to Mr. John Malatras, our parish president. The 38-stop, 3-manual organ is a welcomed addition to our choir, and we especially look forward to having it for our Christmas Program this year. Mark your calendars for Sunday, December 14!

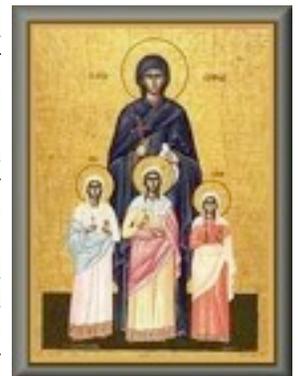
Katherine Kleto



From the Choir Loft at St. Sofia, Miami, Florida:

St. Sofia’s choir got an early start this year when they reconvened on August 24 to chant for the 3 year mimosino of the mother of this humble editor.

The choir numbered 21, which is more than we have ever assembled in my 13 years here. We even got a visiting Cuban Catholic who volunteered! We wish he’d come back — he was great and read the transliteration like a pro. I was extremely moved by my choir family’s turnout as were family members who made the trip to Miami for the occasion.



Our Tess Portafekas was honored as an Archangel Michael Award recipient. *Axia* to our Tireless Tess!



As we look towards Christmas, we are conscious of choir members' family needs and this year many will be out of town. In order to tighten things up, we're planning extra rehearsals.

+Father Stavroforos has been given the commission to

organize the South Florida Pan-Orthodox Choir in a more planned manner. We had a very successful rehearsal at St. Demetrius in Fort Lauderdale in preparation for our annual Epiphany in West Palm Beach. Jackson King, from St. George Antiochian in Coral Gables, shall once again be directing the Epiphany choir.

Leon Karahalis

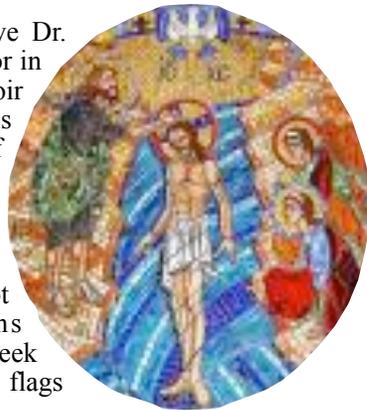


Greetings from Tarpon Springs, Florida, the Epiphany City!

Greetings from the Epiphany City!

We had a very uplifting conference in New Port Richey, FL last July. Conference Chairman, Tina Wilson and her committee along with the host community gave us a warm and gracious welcome. Congratulations to you all for a job well done.

We were privileged to have Dr. G. Philip Thevaos, choir director in Charlotte, NC, directing our choir of 80+ at the conference. His mother, Artemisia Theovas, of Augusta, GA, was the guest organist. The Zervos liturgy was sung both in Greek and English, which was a new and interesting concept. We will not soon forget Philip's signs indicating whether to sing in Greek or English with the respective flags of each country in display.



St. Nicholas Choir wishes to congratulate the three Patriarch Athenagoras Medals award members: Peter Zervakos of Annunciation Cathedral in Atlanta, GA, and Mary Zervos of Holy Trinity in Charleston, SC. We especially wish to congratulate Artie Palios from St. John's in Tampa, our Tampa

Bay area recipient. They are worthy recipients who give much to the Church and to the Federation.

A sad note from our choir: a very dear and devout member of our choir, Andriana Eliades, passed away in June. She was looking forward to participating in the conference. She had a zest for life and a wonderful outlook. She is very much missed for her warmth and enthusiasm.

New Years and Epiphany, as always, are on our calendar of events. We sing on New Years Day and have an Artoclasia for the living choir members and their families.

Epiphany will be celebrated on January 6, and a great many people are expected to attend. The liturgy will end with the parade to Spring Bayou and the tossing of the cross into the water to be retrieved by one of many young Greek boys who participate. These events mark the end of our holiday season and the beginning of the New Year, which we hope will be happy, healthy and prosperous for all.

With the holidays soon to be upon us, let us take a moment from our busy schedules and preparations to remember the men and women who are laying down their lives for us to be able to enjoy peaceful, joyous holidays. When you join your loved ones at your Thanksgiving and Christmas tables, say a prayer for those who are fighting in a foreign land, and for those who have sustained injuries that will require them to adjust their lives to compensate for those injuries. Give a special prayer to those who have given the ultimate sacrifice and the families they have left behind. This is the least we can do for them.

The St. Nicholas Cathedral choir wishes you and yours a Happy and Healthy Christmas and a joyful and peaceful New Year. May the Lord's blessing be with you and your family throughout the year.

Kal Spirides



From Holy Trinity, Raleigh, North Carolina

After enjoying a restful reprieve this summer, Holy Trinity Raleigh opened up our new Ecclesiastical Year with the ordination of our new Associate Priest, Father Theodore Roupas, a Durham native. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios Celebrated the Divine Liturgy, with several priests and deacons also participating. The combined choirs of Holy Trinity Raleigh and Saint Barbara of Durham led the musical worship to a



truly inspiring day in our church. Parishioners from across the state of North Carolina were present to join us in the unique celebration of the day. We look forward to having Fr. Theodore join Father Paul, Father George, and Deacon Gavriilo in celebrating the Divine Liturgy with us on Sundays.

Currently, the choirs of Holy Trinity are busy preparing for this year's annual Christmas Choral Program, to be presented on Sunday, December 14. We are excited for the first time to have a TEEN Choir in addition to the youth and adult choirs. Each group will be presenting two songs on a separate theme of Christmas, and all choirs will sing the finale dual arrangement of "Isayia Horeve" (Lawrence and Nicholas).

If you are in the Triangle area, please come and join us on Sunday mornings. With our expanded Choir Loft, we now have room for our Southeastern Federation friends to sing!

Wishing all of you a blessed and joyous Christmas and New Year,
Elia Nicholas



Holy Trinity Church of Greater Orlando

We are very pleased to announce that Stacey Norton has accepted the position of director of our choir. Stacey has been our organist for many years and is currently filling both positions until a new organist can be located. Stacey accepted the position in August and has been hard at work with many new ideas.

We are currently organizing a new hymnal for our church. The basic liturgy is that of Demetrios Pappas and will incorporate more English.

Due primarily to the efforts of our choir president Tina Stoumbos we have five new members in the choir; two sopranos and three basses.

Stacey is doing something new with regard to rehearsals. One Saturday each month we are having a "CHOIR CAMP". This is an afternoon rehearsal of about three hours of concentrated effort. This is in addition to other evening rehearsals. This new Saturday practice allows many of our members who cannot drive at night to continue to attend rehearsals.

Again this year our choir is sponsoring the annual Church Christmas Card. This has been a very successful program for several years. The proceeds will be returned to the church in the form of special projects chosen by the choir or used for the material needs of the choir.

Our church festival was held on the first weekend in October. As in past years the choir participated in the program in the church where we chanted some representative hymns as

part of the lecture on the teachings, history and traditions of the church.

Since the festival took place on the same weekend as Church Musician's Sunday our choir is being honored on Sunday November 9th.

Jim Kouchalakos



From Holy Trinity in the Holy City, Charleston, South Carolina

On Saturday, October 4, our Father Nicholas Christ Trivelas fell asleep in the Lord. Father Nick served Holy Trinity parish from 1948 to 1993 and later as an interim priest. Father Nick's passion for music was evident throughout his life. Prior to coming to Charleston, he taught Byzantine music at Holy Cross in Brookline, Massachusetts. After his arrival in Charleston, Father Nick organized the Holy Trinity mixed voice choir as well as a male and children's choirs. The mixed choir sang the Liturgy prior to his funeral and during the funeral. May his memory be eternal!

Ross Magoulas, our choir director, will be directing several performances of "The Mikado" at Opera Converse in Spartanburg, S. C. during the month of November. Bravo to our talented director.

Our mixed, male and youth choirs continue to alternate singing on Sundays.

We are all looking forward to celebrating the centennial anniversary of Holy Trinity Church in 2010. Many events are being planned and a reunion choir will have a concert to celebrate the anniversary.

Lucy Spell

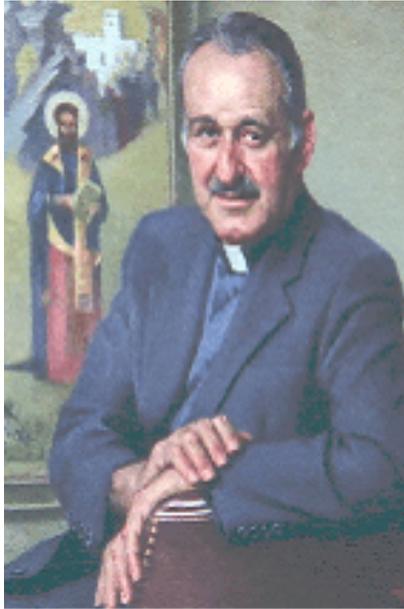
The Reverend Father Nicholas Christ Trivelas, 87, fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday, October 4, 2008, in Charleston, SC. Father Trivelas served as priest of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church from 1948 to 1993. He retired in 1993 and continued to serve Holy Trinity as priest emeritus. From 1994 to 2005, he also served as itinerant priest of Holy Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church in Hilton Head, SC.

Son of the late Christ and Kalliopi Trivelas, Father Trivelas was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania, on February 19, 1921. He graduated from the Holy Cross Theological Seminary in Pomfret, CT in 1944 and was ordained into the priesthood in 1945. For the next three years, he served as pastor of the Greek Orthodox Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen in Webster, MA and, at the same time, he taught Byzantine music at Holy Cross in Brookline, MA. Father



Trivelas arrived in Charleston on Mother's Day 1948, and he remained in Charleston to serve his beloved Holy Trinity for the rest of his life.

Father Trivelas served the spiritual and educational needs of the Greek Orthodox community with love and dedication. Led by his magnificent baritone voice, generations of choir members learned to chant the beautiful Byzantine hymns of the Orthodox church in mixed-voice choirs, male choirs, and children's choirs that he organized over the years. In addition, generations of parishioners remember going to Afternoon Greek School where "Pater" (Greek word for Father) was always a presence teaching them Greek, instructing them about their faith, practicing hymns with them, or playing sports with them at recess. Pater was a born teacher, and his love for his faith and his heritage was contagious. Now as adults, parishioners remember their Greek School days with fond memories. And Pater's greatest pleasure over the years was watching the children of his parish become dedicated adults who practice their faith with love and who preserve the traditions of Orthodoxy for future generations.



During his 47 year ministry, Father Trivelas was instrumental in ensuring that the sanctuary of Holy Trinity included authentic Byzantine iconography. He helped commission iconographer Photis Kontoglou who is recognized as the greatest master of Byzantine Art in the modern world, and Kontoglou's collaborators, George Gliatas, John Terzis, and Emmanuel Tsirtzilakis. As a result, Holy Trinity has the largest collection of Kontoglou icons outside of Greece.

Father Trivelas is survived by his beloved wife, Despina Ross Trivelas; daughter Kalliopi and her husband George Michale of Kansas City, MO; daughter Faye and her husband Larry Zoeller of Darnestown, MD; son Chris Trivelas and his wife Diane of River Forest, IL; son Nick Trivelas and his wife Peggy of Aiken, SC; sisters Presvytera Stavroula Hondras of Clearwater, FL; Mia Pappas of Raleigh, NC; and Sia (Andrew) Callas of Chicago, IL; grandchildren Justin Zoeller, Megan Trivelas, Mark Trivelas, Nicholas Trivelas, and Alexandra

Trivelas. He was preceded in death by his brother Angelo Trivelas of Bellevue, WA.

Editor's Note:

Father Nick was also the pastor for the Orthodox Worship Group at the Citadel, which I attended for 2 years. He and his family made every Orthodox kid at the Citadel feel at home, always having enough food for Sunday dinner after church for at least 2 more homesick Orthodox kids.

Father Andrew Maginas of St. Catherine's in West Palm Beach and I were classmates and choir members at Holy Trinity during those days.

Although I had known of the other branches of Orthodoxy, I had never met Russians, Serbs or Syrian Orthodox people before. Suddenly, we were suddenly brothers at the Citadel.

May his memory be eternal.