



October 6, 2024

10/004

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

My Beloved Children in the Lord,

On this third annual Church Musician Sunday, we once again honor our Church's singers, choir directors, composers, arrangers, chanters, readers, bell-ringers, hymnologists, translators, hymnographers, and all who help our parishes and their congregations to make a "joyful noise to the Lord" (Ps. 99:1).

Despite a proliferation of musical resources—printed music books, online scores, web-based tutorials and distance trainings, new on-site programs at our institutions—in many places, our parishes and missions are struggling musically. Qualified choir directors are often difficult to find; ensembles are routinely short on voices; and, both outside our choirs and within them, there is an increasing unfamiliarity with the basics of Orthodox church singing.

This reminds us that, even though we devote this Sunday to honoring musical "specialists," in fact, church music is the responsibility of the entire Orthodox Christian community. "Let us sing to the Lord, for gloriously has he been glorified," the holy prophet and God-seer Moses exhorts us. "Bless the Lord, O children of men; let Israel bless the Lord," sang the Three Holy Children, calling us to join them in praise. The Psalmist, too, commands us: "Praise the Lord, for a psalm is good" (Ps. 146:1); "Sing unto the Lord a new song, his praise in the church of the saints" (Ps. 150:1).

In the same way that we share responsibility for our temples' visual beauty, making sure that they are clean, neat, radiantly adorned with holy images, so do we share responsibility for the beauty of our church music. St. Tikhon of Moscow once reminded his flock that, when we truly wish to honor someone's deeds, we must do so with more than kind feelings: rather, we must do as that person did, as that person would wish us to do. "If you love me, keep my commandments," says the Lord (Jn. 14:15).

Therefore, today, in order to honor our church musicians, let us—all of us—redouble our own commitment to our community's life of sacred song and worship. Can we join the choir? Can we use an online tutorial from the Department of Liturgical Music to hone our skills? Can we encourage our

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children, grandchildren, godchildren, nieces, or nephews to sing? Do we support compensation for our choir directors and funding for choir activities? Has our community supplied itself with honorable Orthodox liturgical bells, and have we encouraged bell-ringers to learn how to use them? Do we sing at home—"Our Father," "O heavenly King," "Christ is risen," the troparia for the great feasts? And this is but a short list of suggestions concerning what we, each of us, could do to support an abundance of musical vocations and the flourishing of sacred music in the Church.

Let me conclude then with this challenge: as we celebrate this Church Musician Sunday, I encourage each parish or mission community, each family, and each individual to find one new way to support our common life of music and worship in the year to come. Sacred song is a major part of our Church's holy Tradition, one of the most important expressions of our timeless Orthodox faith, and it is up to all of us to preserve and propagate ecclesiastical music for the edification and salvation of generations to come.

To all our Church's singers, choir directors, composers, arrangers, chanters, readers, bell-ringers, hymnologists, translators, hymnographers, and to all who support the liturgical and musical life of our holy Church: my primatial blessing and many years!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada