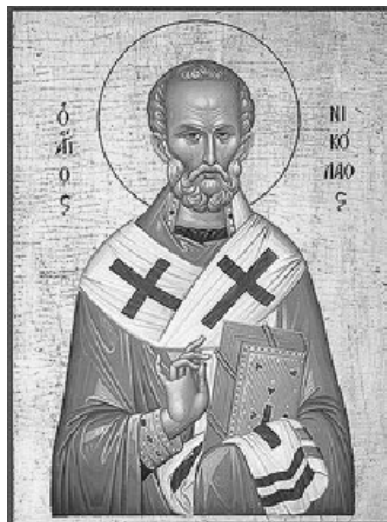


St. Nicholas Orthodox Church Choir



Choir Workshop 2003 Participant Book

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ON THE DUTIES OF A CHOIR SINGER

By Abbess Thaisia of Leushino

Cursed is the man that doeth the work of the Lord carelessly. (Jer. 48:10)

You have begun to sing in the choir; therefore, you glorify the Lord in the image of the heavenly hosts, who ceaselessly sing praise to the glory of their Creator and Lord. How fortunate you are! But do you acknowledge the full sacredness and importance of this godly work, which incomparably more than any other work is worthy to be called “godly work?” If not, then it is not superfluous to remind you of the threatening and terrible words of the Prophet: Cursed is the man that doeth the work of the Lord carelessly (Jer. 48:10). You see to what a terrible accountability those are liable who negligently and carelessly perform the work of serving God. The chanter (or singer) is the “mouth of the Church,” i.e., of the society of believers who are praying in church; while singing prayers and hymns, he pronounces them not only for himself, but in the name of all who are present in church, and as all who are praying pronounce their prayers through the mouths of the singers, these last also are the “mouth of the Church.” Chant unto our God (Ps. 46:7), the Holy Church invites them, but chant ye with understanding (Ps. 46:9). Consider and take heed: of Whom do you sing, to Whom do you pray, before Whom do you stand? You stand before the One before Whom the angelic ranks stand and walk with fear, covering their faces! You sing praises to the One of Whom all the heavenly powers ceaselessly proclaim: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth!” Understand how high the work of the chanter is. Understand and admire the mercy of God, Who allows even earthly sinners to bring praise to Him! This heavenly work is the work of an angel and not of a man “having unclean lips,” as the holy Prophet Isaiah expressed, having heard heavenly singing: Woe is me, for I am pricked to the heart; for being a man, and having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people having unclean lips (Is. 6:5). And you, infirm, weak, and sinful, have been entrusted with such a great work. This talent which has been entrusted to you by the Lord, is a talent which you must bring forth and increase by employing it with understanding. With all humility and fear towards God say mentally to your soul: “Behold, my soul, the Master entrusts thee with a talent: receive His gift with fear”; and “thou hast heard the condemnation of him who hid his talent, O my soul: hide not the word of God, but proclaim, sing of His glory, increase the gifts of grace entrusted to thee, and thou shalt enter into the joy of thy Lord” (Stichera on Lord, I have cried and on Lauds, Great and Holy Tuesday).

The Lord is not slack concerning His promises (II Peter 3:9), (i.e., will not delay to fulfill them) to come again and exact an account from His slaves, whom He entrusted with His goods, His gifts and talents; take care, that you not hear the dreadful condemnation: Take from her My talent, which she didn’t wish to bring forth with great labor, and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness (cf. Matt. 25:28, 30). The great labor of a chanter consists in this, that all the strengths which have been given to him from the Lord’s talents he unremittingly applies to the glorification of God. Sing to the glory of the name of God, sing not only with lips and voice, but sing with heart, sing with mind, soul, will, desire, zeal—with all your being. This is what it means to chant with understanding. The singing of the chanter passes over to the hearts of those who are praying; if the singing proceeds from the heart, it meets the heart of the listener and so influences him that it is able to rouse him to prayer, to incite reverence even in those minutes when the heart itself is distracted and hard. Often it happens that those who enter the church without any eagerness toward prayer, from compulsion or from propriety, begin to pray fervently and tearfully, and leave the church in quite another frame of mind, in a spirit of tender feeling and repentance. Such a revival is produced in them by the magnificent service and fine singing. And conversely, often it happens that those who enter the church with the intention to pray from the soul, to pour out before the Lord their sorrowful soul, when they hear scattered, careless singing and reading, themselves little by little become distracted, and instead of profit they find harm, they receive no consolation and, having been tempted by the conduct of the singers, involuntarily fall into the sin of condemnation. And as the Lord says about those who cause temptation: Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh; it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea (cf. Matt. 18:6,7 and Luke 17:1,2). If such is the terrible judgment of the Lord against everyone who shall offend one of these little ones (Matt. 18:6 and Mark 9:42), i.e., those who believe, then do not chanters, and generally all those of a clerical office who cause temptation, deserve an even more terrible punishment, who by their vocation ought to serve as a good example for others, and not as a temptation? And so fear lest through tempting behavior on the cliros, through careless singing and dispersed conduct, you pour the poison of temptation into the hearts of those who are praying, and so be subjected to the punishment promised to those who tempt! Fear “to do the work of the Lord carelessly,” in order not to hear that curse which is threatened accordingly! Strive with all your strength to concentrate attentively on the words which you pronounce; pronounce them in such a manner that they come from the depth of your soul, which is singing together with your lips. Then the sounds of the vivifying current of your hymn will pour into the souls of those who hear them, and these souls, being raised from the earthly to the heavenly, having laid aside all earthly care, will receive the King of Glory Who is borne in triumph by the Angelic Hosts.

Will you believe my words if I tell you from the narratives of the Holy Fathers that not only the human soul can be softened and moved by good spiritual singing, but even animals, those speechless creatures, somehow instinctively bow before it?

Have you ever chanced to read the life of the Athonite monk St. John Kukuzelis? There are mentioned the following two events from the life of this great singer. Once he was pasturing the monastery's herds of sheep and goats. (Having entered one of the Athonite desert monasteries, John hid his position in the imperial court, calling himself a simple shepherd, and thus was sent to pasture the monastery's herds in the desert.) While sitting near his flocks at pasture, John began to sing the divine songs he had formerly sung in the imperial choir. His melodious voice flowed in the open desert, and John surrendered his whole soul to the singing, resting in the thought that he was alone in the desert and no one was hearing him. Meanwhile, his sheep and goats left off grazing and surrounded their singing shepherd: as if holding their breath, they stood motionless before him, directing their eyes to him as though fascinated by his angelic singing [1]. Behold deeply spiritual singing, coming forth from the depths of the soul and conscious mind! It is able not only to inspire the rational soul and lift it towards its Creator, but to touch even speechless and irrational animals.

Once, according to custom, John sang the Akathist to the Mother of God together with other singers on the right cliros. After the vigil he sat down in a stall (a monk's seat) in front of the icon before which they sang the Akathist, and being weary he slumbered lightly. Suddenly a gentle, sweet voice woke him with the words: "Rejoice, O John!" John jumped up; before him stood the Mother of God in the radiance of heavenly light. "Sing and do not cease singing," she continued, "and for this I will not forsake you!" At these words the Mother of God placed in John's hand a gold coin and became invisible. Do you see of what great honors those zealous singers are thought worthy while still here on earth, who not only with their lips, but also with heart and mind sing of the Lord and His Most Pure Mother! Indeed, how will we avoid the just judgment of God for our listlessness and laziness and negligence, on account of which we willfully turn even the greatest gifts of God into our own property, which we dispose of as we want, according to our evil will and sinful habits. What a wonderful and great gift—the gift of a voice and the ability to sing! They were given to us for this, that with them we might both glorify the Lord ourselves, and incite others to do the same. And how often we turn these talents to our harm: becoming proud of them, we abase our neighbors who don't have them, we are idle in using them properly to the glory of God, and when we do, we do not use them in a fitting manner, nor as is required by the majesty of these gifts. May the Lord therefore give thee understanding (II Tim 2:7) to apprehend the height of your vocation in the office of singer in the chorus of the Heavenly King. Bring the gift as a sacrifice to its Giver, for what hast thou that thou didst not receive? (I Cor. 4:7). Are not all our talents and abilities from the all-generous God, and will He not require from us an account of their use? Having arrived at the cliros and stood in your place, first of all cross yourself and bring to remembrance that you have come before the invisible face of the King of Glory, Whom at this very moment, as always and ceaselessly, all the heavenly hosts glorify, and that presently your feeble and insignificant voice must join this celestial praise. Impress this upon your consciousness, turn mentally to yourself and say to your self, i.e., to all the powers of your soul: mind, thoughts, heart, will, zeal, and the rest: Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, and let us weep before the Lord Who made us! (Ps. 94:6). The Lord will protect the good free-will actions of your heart, will give you His grace, will renew your powers, and, as the perfume of sweet-smelling incense, your singing will ascend before the Altar of the Most High. For strengthening and consolation remember more frequently the most sweet words of the Mother of God to her wonderful singer John: "Sing and do not cease singing, and for this I will not forsake you!" Believe and hope that the Most Holy Mother of God will not abandon you either in this extremely difficult world, nor in the future blessedness, where she will "vouchsafe crowns of glory unto those who sing hymns of praise" to her. Amen.

Endnotes

1. *Athonite Patericon*, 1897, Part II, pp. (Oct. 1).

Taken from *Letters to a Beginner: On Giving One's Life to God*, by Abbess Thaisia (St. Xenia Skete Press, 1993): pp. 50-56.

Fulfilling the High Calling of the Church Singer

by Pauline N. Costianes

Because music was an essential part of all liturgical functions, those who were members of the choir considered their task a high calling; it was truly their highest vocation.

In the Orthodox Church, our music is our worship. It is not merely ornamentation or decoration. Therefore, those who sing in holy services are not just musicians who sing to “set a mood” or to “make the service pretty”; rather, they are leading the congregation in worship with their sung prayer.

Those who were appointed to the special body of singers, the choir, obviously had to be skilled in the art of singing and thoroughly trained in the knowledge of the sacred *leitourgia*. Because music was an essential part of all liturgical functions, those who were members of the choir considered their task a high calling; it was truly their highest vocation. They undertook it with all the seriousness and dignity that the word “vocation” originally conveyed.¹

In the early Church, the singers were among the orders of clergy and were tonsured to set them apart. They stood to the right and left of the altar in special raised areas called *klirosy*, as if to show that they were a step above the faithful, but still a step below the altar. They were to lead the congregation in singing at those times when the congregation was supposed to sing. An Orthodox priest, unlike his Roman Catholic counterpart, may not celebrate the Liturgy by himself. For Christ Himself said, “Where two or three are gathered, there I am also.” There must be at least one other person to sing the responses or the Liturgy cannot take place. As Bishop Basil Essey has said:

*You are as important to the parish as is the holy table itself. As there can be no Liturgy without the holy table, there can be no Liturgy without you. This is not a compliment to increase your pride, but rather to put a little fear and awe in you, so you know what responsibilities are.*²

Thus, being in the choir is not merely a hobby, something fun to do instead of “just being in the con-

gregation,” something you do when you make the time, or when you feel like it. Bishop Basil goes on:

*It is first and foremost a duty, a duty of those to whom God has given musical talents. It is sinful, in my opinion, for someone not to sing who has been given the gift to sing. Sinful! You join the angels and do that which the angels do perpetually. That’s not an interest, avocation, or a hobby; it’s a duty. Angels were created to serve and praise, and you have been given voices for the same purpose.*³

Singers must also see their ministry as part of their personal spirituality. Everything in the Church is a journey, a preparation. The cycles of feasts and fasts demonstrate this. Just as a priest does his *proskomedia* or acts of preparation before the Liturgy, so must we.

We must prepare both spiritually and musically. Not only should we take good care of the instrument that God has given us by keeping ourselves in a good state of health, but we should make sure that our spiritual health is in order too. As always, Satan just loves to throw roadblocks in the way of those who strive to serve God. Three particular sins that come to mind in the context of a music ministry in the Church are: (1) lack of attention during services and rehearsals, (2) lateness at services and rehearsals, and (3) absence from services and rehearsals.

Lack of attention

Yes, we are only human, and yes, our senses lead us astray with silly little things (read C. S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*, which nails this on the head perfectly). But nothing in this world is easy. We have to work for everything in this life, and attaining the Kingdom of God is the work of eternity, unlike all other work we do here on earth. We need to strive earnestly to focus on this heavenly task. Mark Bailey notes that:

Worship . . . is not simply a prescribed religious gathering that happens week after week, where some things change and some remain the same. It is a cycle, a progression—indeed, a journey. And Great Lent is the season within that journey, by design, that helps remove us from our daily distractions and preoccupations, as well as from those things that have become routine.⁴

Whereas, in this particular article, Mr. Bailey was focusing on the journey to Pascha, our whole church year is a journey to Pascha, with every service we do being special and deserving of our utmost attention and care. We cannot rush into church five minutes before Liturgy, having raced all the way, and expect that we can leave the world and enter the Eternal Liturgy with any kind of attention. One needs a period of time for preparation and quietness, to be able to properly focus on the task at hand. Most choir directors have a period of “warm-up” prior to any service. Not only does this help prepare your physical instrument, your voice, but it also reminds you that you are about to join the angels, who constantly sing around the throne of God. If the choir members are acting as leaders in worship, they must set an example of creating a prayerful atmosphere of worship, by keeping an attitude of reverence and humility from the moment they awake on Sunday morning until the Liturgy is finished.

Lateness

Except for that unexpected emergency such as car trouble, construction you weren’t aware of, or the kid/cat/dog getting sick while you are getting ready, there is no excuse for being late. It is terribly disrespectful to your fellow singers, your choir director, and your priest, and dare I say that it is a blasphemy to God and all those who are singing the ongoing heavenly Liturgy? There are consequences for arriving late to work (you eventually get fired), to a doctor’s appointment (make another appointment or pay for the missed appointment), or to a movie or play (the glares from the people you’re pushing past to get to your seat). What do you suppose the consequences are for not being on time for the “work of eternity”? Bishop Basil Essey states:

We should give thanks that God has been pleased to call us who were created from the dust of this earth to participate in the heavenly Liturgy and to offer up praises with His angels to join in the perpetual hymn of “Holy, Holy, Holy.” We jump in [to the eternal Liturgy] and we jump out. Some of us jump in on time and some of

us jump in . . . late. In my opinion, being in church for that first “Amen” is a sign, an indication of one’s virtue. And where humility is, indeed, a virtue, its opposite is a sin. The sin is not disturbing other people. The other people in the church are not the object of our worship. It is rude, but not necessarily sinful, to disturb other people. But it is sinful to be presumptuous and prideful that one can jump in and sing with thousands of archangels and ten thousands of angels at one’s own whim.⁵

Those who are habitually late need to repent of this sin and make an effort to (1) understand why they are always late, and (2) do what is required to change that behavior. In most cases, it is a matter of getting out of the house 15 to 20 minutes earlier. That’s not such a huge sacrifice.

Absences

We cannot take our calling seriously if we are only “Sunday Christians.”

All members of the choir should consider it their duty to be present at all the services of the Church . . . it is clear that church singers must be zealous lovers of the Church and its sacred services. They must develop a sense of values in which the Church is first and highest and most precious, so that they are able to lay aside all other considerations and be present on every Lord’s Day, at every Vigil or Great Vespers, and every Great Feast. If this is “unrealistic,” then the question must be asked, why was it possible for Orthodox believers in cultures where working hours were much longer and the word “leisure” was unknown, to come to every Saturday evening Vigil, every Sunday Liturgy, and every Great Feast? The problem in our culture is surely not time, but values.⁶

Rehearsals prepare us for those holy services, and should be taken just as seriously. Really learning and internalizing the words of the hymns helps to free us up from merely reading the music and words, so that we are able to pray them.

Singers need to prepare repeatedly for their task if it is to be fruitful and worthy. It is a great mistake for those who have sung in church choirs for many years to assume that by virtue of “tenure” they need no rehearsals, or that they need not prepare themselves spiritually. Every work, if it is to be a fulfillment, requires preparatory effort.⁷

As we can see from the previous pages, the Church herself and her leaders give us all the background instructions for our duties as church musicians. All

If the choir members are acting as leaders in worship, they must set an example of creating a prayerful atmosphere of worship, by keeping an attitude of reverence and humility from the moment they awake on Sunday morning until the Liturgy is finished.

choir members should be given a set of rules and guidelines for their ministry. Even more than any secular singing group, those of us in this sacred music ministry need guidelines and structure, so that there are clear boundaries, clear expectations, and no misunderstandings. Thus freed from any ambiguity, we can all move forward in our work for the Lord. And it goes without saying that any guidelines for choir membership need the full sup-

port of the parish priest. (See below for a sample set of guidelines.) †

- 1 *Sacred Music: The Choir—Tract II*, Department of Liturgical Music of the OCA, 1977.
- 2 *The Ministry of Church Singers—A Lecture Given by His Grace Bishop Basil Essey*, 1995.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *A Lenten Look at Liturgical Music*—from the St. Vladimir's Seminary website, Mark Bailey, 2000.
- 5 Bishop Basil, *op. cit.*
- 6 *Sacred Music: The Choir*.
- 7 *Ibid.*

Guidelines for Membership in the (Parish Name) Church Choir

Some
parishes will
have a Choir
Appreciation
Sunday, in
which the choir
is blessed for
another year's
service—
usually around
October 1,
St. Romanos'
Day.

- † If you have chosen to accept the calling to be a church singer, you must be willing to accept that this is, indeed, a ministry. Unlike any other volunteer job in the parish, including the Parish Council, this responsibility must take priority over other parish responsibilities.
- † Those who are interested in choir membership need to approach the choir director. A singer in the music ministry must be able to match pitch, and an ability to read music is very helpful. Any visitors must approach the choir director prior to services if they wish to sing. Choir members must direct any inquiring singer to the attention of the director. Please do not invite people to “join in and sing” on your own.
- † The choir director is the choir master—the master of the choir. This is not said to be dictatorial in any way. A choir is not a democracy. The Church has a hierarchy, and as the choir is part of the Church, it does too. In order for things to run “decently and in good order,” as St. Paul says, the choir must have one leader, and that leader is the director.
- † Lateness is not acceptable behavior in the choir. If there is an emergency of some sort on occasion, that is understandable. Warm-ups are a half-hour prior to the service, and you are expected to be present at those in order to prepare spiritually and physically.
- † Attendance at rehearsals and services is not optional. It is not for you to decide whether or not you “need” to be at rehearsal. Your presence supports the other singers and contributes to the net effect. If you are going to be absent from service or rehearsal, please either call or e-mail the choir director. He/she deserves to be notified, as it may affect what is rehearsed at that particular practice. It is a sign of respect for your director and the other singers, and of your seriousness about your ministry.
- † In order to be considered a member of the choir, you must attend 75 percent of the rehearsals and services. If there is a problem with work or something else that prevents you from attending at least that much, perhaps you need to take a leave of absence from the choir until your situation is resolved and you can participate fully and responsibly.
- † As would be expected according to the seriousness of the calling of a music minister, choir members will conduct themselves in a respectful and prayerful way while in church. Talking during the service should be restricted to any question about the service itself. Socializing during the service, especially during the Epistle, Gospel, or sermon, is not acceptable; please save this for the coffee hour. Remember where you are.
- † “When Mother Nature calls, there is no wrong number.” Except for these calls, choir members are expected to be present from the opening exclamation to the closing “Amen.” Flitting in and out of the choir is distracting and disrespectful for all involved. When you are singing in a choir loft, your behavior should be no different than if you were right up in the front of the church, in view of the entire congregation.
- † While it is wonderful and necessary to “train up a child in the way he/she should go,” the choir is not a playroom. Children who are actively involved in learning to sing the service or who are able to sit quietly are, of course, welcome in the choir. Children who require constant parental supervision are, unfortunately, a distraction to the choir and therefore to the worship. They should sit during the service with a grandparent, godparent, relative, or friend. †

Some Quotes From the Holy Fathers About Singing/Chanting

The following quotations on prayerful chanting have been taken from the writings of the Saints and Holy Fathers of the Church, and various other sources.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish each other in all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs."

LXXV Canon, Synod in Trullo (691-692)

"Prayer with musical chants and melodies, loudly voiced tumult and shouting is heard by men; but before God our Maker, the prayer which proceeds from a man's conscience and God-imbued intellect stands before God a welcome guest, while the former is cast out."

St. Meletios the Confessor

"Psalmody with an altogether unforced voice."

St. Theoleptos of Philadelphia

"At the church services chant with solemnity and devoutness, and not with disorderly vociferations."

St. Simon, founder of Simonpetra

"The psalmody which takes place in the church is an entreaty to God. Now he who makes an entreaty and prays must be in a state of humility and contrition; whereas an unduly loud voice manifests audacity and irreverence."

St. Nikodemos, the Hagiorite

"Cantors should psalmody in a reverent and orderly manner, with fear of God, piety and contrition."

St. Nikodemos, the Hagiorite

"Pray gently and calmly, sing with understanding and rhythm; then you will soar like a young eagle high in the heavens."

St. Evagrius, the Solitary

"...he (the Reader) should read without hurrying and without dragging, and he should pronounce the words clearly and distinctly. He should read simply and reverently in a monotone without expressing his feelings by modulations and changes of voice. Let us leave the holy prayers to act on the listeners by their own spiritual power. The desire to convey to the bystanders one's own feelings is a sign of vanity and pride."

Blessed Bishop Ignaty (Brianchaninov)

"If they ask you to act as the canonarch of the choir, do not act carelessly or lazily, but thoughtfully and with great attention, as though you were spreading with your voice and hand the divine words to your brethren in front of the King of all, Christ."

St. Symeon the New Theologian

"When through continuous prayer the words of the psalms are brought down into the heart, then the heart like good soil begins to produce by itself various flowers: roses, the vision of incorporeal realities; lilies the luminosity of corporeal realities; and violets, the many judgements of God, difficult to understand."

St. Elias, the Presbyter

"Ancient chants must be especially preserved in monasteries and communities without any innovations which are incompatible with the simplicity and compunction that are especially proper for monastic services. The use

of compositions of lay composers, which imbue the services with a worldly spirit, is prohibited. It is desirable to re-establish, as far as possible, the ancient tradition of antiphonal chanting by two choirs, with canonarchs."

Regulation #43 for monasteries of the ROCA, 30 Oct., 1959.

(Seide, Monasteries and Convents of the ROCA, p. 185.)

"We wish those who attend church for purpose of chanting neither to employ disorderly cries and to force nature to cry out aloud, nor to foist in anything that is not becoming and proper to a church; but, on the contrary, to offer such psalmodies with much attentiveness and contriteness to God, Who sees directly into everything that is hidden from our sight. For the sons of Israel shall be reverent (Lev. 15:30), the sacred word has taught us. (Interpretation: The chanting, or psalmody, that is done in churches is in the nature of begging God to be appeased for our sins. Whoever begs and prayerfully supplicates must have a humble and contrite manner; but to cry out manifests a manner that is audacious and irreverent. On this account the present Canon commands that those who chant in the churches refrain from forcing their nature to yell, but also from saying anything else that is unsuitable for the church. But what are the things that are unsuitable for the church? The expositor Zonaras replies that they are womanish members and warblings [which is the same as saying trills, and an excessive variation or modulation in melodies which inclines towards the songs sung by harlots]. The present Canon, therefore, commands that all these things be eliminated from the Church, and that those who chant therein shall offer their psalmodies with great care to God, who looks into the hidden recesses of the heart, i.e. into the psalmody and prayer that are framed mentally in the heart rather than uttered in external cries. For the sacred word of Leviticus teaches us sons of Israel to be reverent to God. That is why divine Chrysostom... says that these things [meaningless utterances] are natural, not to those engaged in doxologising God, but to those playing, and mingling the sports of demons with angelic doxology. By means of many arguments he teaches that we ought to offer up doxologies to God with fear and a contrite heart, in order that they may be welcome, like fragrant incense.)"

Canon LXXV, The Rudder.

First of all, care should be taken that the words to be sung are clearly and thoroughly understood. For the Chant ought not to weaken but to improve the sense of the words.

In all texts, whether of lessons, psalmody or chants, the accent and rhythm of the word are to be observed as far as possible, for thus it is, that the meaning of the text is best brought out.

Moreover, great care must be taken not to spoil the sacred melodies by unevenness in the singing. No neum or note should ever be unduly shortened or prolonged. The singing must be uniform, and the singers should listen to one another, making the pauses well together. When the musical movement is slower, the pause must be lengthened. In order that all the voices may be one, which is most essential, each singer should attempt in all modesty to allow his own voice to become merged in the volume of sound of the choir as a whole. Neither are those to be imitated who hurry to Chant thoughtlessly or who drag out the syllables heavily. But every melody, whether it be sung slowly or quickly, must be executed with fluency, roundness and in a melodious manner.

The above rules have been drawn from the holy Fathers, some of whom learnt the way of singing from the Angels, while others received it from the teaching of the Holy Spirit speaking to their hearts in contemplation. If we set ourselves to practice these principles with diligence, we too shall appreciate the subtle charm of the Chant, singing to God in our heart and spirit and mind.

Moreover, those whose duty it is to sing in the Church of God must also be well instructed in the rubrics of their office."

xiv. Liber Usualis Rules for the proper execution and interpretation of Gregorian Chant.

"Only brothers, let us please God by singing with attention and a mind wide awake, undistracted by idle talk. For so the psalm invites us: 'Sing ye wisely for God is the King of all the earth' (Psalm 46:8). That is, we must sing with our intelligence; not only with the spirit (in the sense of the sound of our voice) but also with our

mind. We must think about what we are singing, lest we lose by distracting talk and extraneous thoughts the fruit of our effort. The sound and melody of our singing must be suitably religious. It must not be melodramatic, but a revelation of the true Christianity within. It must have nothing theatrical about it, but should move us to sorrow for our sins.

Of course, you must all sing in harmony, without discordant notes. One of you should not linger unreasonably on the notes, while his neighbor is going too fast; nor should one of you sing too low while another is raising his voice. Each one should be asked to contribute his part in humility to the volume of the choir as a whole. No one should sing unbecomingly louder or slower than the rest, as though for vain ostentation or out of human respect. The whole service must be carried out in the presence of God, not with a view of pleasing men. In regard to the harmony of voices we have a model and example in the three blessed boys of whom the Prophet Daniel tells us: 'Then these three, as with one mouth, praised and glorified and blessed God in the furnace, saying: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers.(Daniel 3:51,52). You see that it was for our instruction that we are told that the three boys humbly and holily praised God with one voice. Therefore, let us sing all together, as with one voice, and let all of us modulate our voices in the same way. If one cannot sing in tune with the others, it is better to sing in a low voice rather than drown the others. In this way, he will take his part in the service without interfering with the community singing. Not everyone, of course, has a flexible and musical voice. St. Cyprian is said to have invited his friend, Donatus, whom he knew to be a good singer, to join him in the office: 'Let us pass the day in joy, so that not one hour of the feast will be without some heavenly grace. Let the feast be loud with songs, since you have a full memory and a musical voice. Come to this duty regularly. You will feed your beloved friends if you give us something spiritual to listen to. There is something alluring about religious sweetness; and those who sing well have a special grace to attract to religion those who listen to them.' And if our voice is without harshness and in tune with the notes of well-played cymbals, it will be a joy to ourselves and a source of edification to those who hear us. And 'God Who maketh men of our manner to dwell in His House' (Psalm 67:7) will find united praise agreeable to Him.'"

Nicetas of Remeisana

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

Photios Kontoglou

"Those whose office it is to chant in the churches... offer the psalmody to God, Who is the observer of secrets, with great attention and contrition"

LXXV Canon. Synod in Trullo (691-692)

Additional Things for Choir Singers to Remember

1. Watch the conductor
2. Pay Attention!
3. Breathe correctly
4. Eliminate: excessive vibrato, drama and emotion, muddy singing, etc.
5. Sing quietly and let the words sing loudly
6. Listen
7. Sing with one voice
8. When singing text or in small uncondacted groups, follow the leader
9. At all times maintain a prayerful attitude while on the Kliros
10. Never Stop Singing!