



## **THE SIGN OF THE CROSS**

*Hymns from throughout the Liturgical Year*

The Choir of Saints Constantine and Elena Orthodox Church

## **Introduction**

Music is an integral part of worship in the Orthodox Church, serving as a vehicle for the words which enlighten the soul, praise the Living God and call to remembrance the holy ones who have gone before us. It is not simply art for art's sake, rather it is a heightened form of speech, speech befitting the temple of God. The term "choir" is often used in Orthodox writings as a metaphor for those of like mind and kindred spirit, and so it is that, in the Divine Services, we join as one acoustically, intellectually and spiritually when we form a choir and sing together. The musical settings on this recording are drawn from several different traditions and are indicative of the beautiful blending which takes place in our community: English and Romanian, Middle Eastern and Slavic, immigrant and native. Our primary musical expression during services is Byzantine chant as handed down to us in the Romanian tradition. These melodies are sometimes harmonized and arranged for mixed voices but are typically sung simply with an Ison (similar to a drone in Western music). There are also pieces in the Slavic four part tradition and modern compositions as well. They all share a simplicity and prayerfulness that focus the attention and create an atmosphere which is celebratory and reflective, dignified and humble, terrestrial and celestial.

We owe a debt of gratitude to His Eminence Archbishop NATHANIEL and Archimandrite Roman (Braga) for their work in developing and codifying the Romanian American liturgical tradition we enjoy; Archimandrite Joseph (Morris), who so greatly influenced our spiritual and liturgical life; Fr. John Limbeson of blessed memory, who initiated me as an Orthodox cantor and choir director; and to those at St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, PSALM and the Communities of New Skete who write, collect, preserve and publish liturgical music. This humble offering is dedicated to our friends and loved ones of the parish who departed from us before its completion.

*Subdeacon Max Murphy, Director*

## **The Light of the Precious Cross**

The Cross, so central to the Christian gospel and experience, is the great paradox of the world – suffering and joy, surrender and victory, bound together, “a stumbling block and foolishness” to those who have not embraced it in faith, but for the believer, the “power and wisdom of God” (*cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23-24*).

For the Orthodox Christian, this mysterious paradox is made present and real, most sublimely, in the context of worship, through the celebrations of the great Feasts throughout the year, and most especially in the quintessential expression of our connection with the Crucified and Resurrected Christ, the Divine Liturgy. Through her hymns and praises, the Church integrates all the aspects of our life in Christ – and specifically the power of his Cross – into a continual expression of glory and wonder.

This is particularly true for the community of Saints Constantine and Elena parish, because the Cross is closely bound to the story of our patrons: Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, “saw the sign of the Cross in the heavens,” and his mother, Empress Elena, is credited with the finding of the remnants of the True Cross outside Jerusalem. We are reminded of this precious connection most every Sunday when we sing their hymns, and the services of veneration and exaltation of the Cross are essentially dear to us. Indeed, the light of the precious Cross infuses every aspect of worship and life, and illumines us with the radiance of Paschal joy, the hope of life eternal.

Our humble parish celebrates its One Hundredth Anniversary in this year of 2010. In conjunction with our gratitude for God’s mercy and sustenance, we present these hymns as an offering of glory, praise and adoration to Christ our true God; for, “through his Cross, joy has filled the world.”

*Fr. David Wey, Parish Priest*

## **1. Tropar for Saints Constantine and Elena (May 21)**

*Tone 8, Carpatho-Russian chant (New Skete) set by Fr. David Wey*

When he saw the sign of your Cross in the heavens, this apostle among kings saw in it a call straight from you. Like Paul, he turned from his ways and followed you, entrusting the imperial city to your wisdom and power, O Lord. In our day, keep the world in lasting peace, O only lover of mankind, through the prayers of the Theotokos.

## **2. Kontak for Saints Constantine and Elena**

*Tone 3, Byzantine chant set by Max Murphy*

Today, Constantine with his mother Elena brings to light the precious Cross: the shame of unbelievers, the weapon of Orthodox Christians against their enemies, for it is manifest for us as a great and fearful sign in struggle!

## **3. Axion for the Elevation of the Cross (Sept. 14)**

*Tone 8, Byzantine chant (ROEA), arr. Max Murphy*

You are a mystical paradise, O Birthgiver of God, in which Christ blossomed. Through him, the life-bearing wood of the Cross was planted on earth. Now, at its elevation, as we bow in worship before it, we glorify you.

## **4. We Bow Low**

*Tone 1, Chant of New Skete (©Monks of New Skete)*

*First kathisma tropar from Matins for the Elevation of the Cross*

We bow low before the wood of your Cross, O you who love mankind, for on it, you, the Life of All were nailed. You opened paradise to the thief who turned to you in faith, O Savior, counting him worthy of blessedness for confessing your divinity. As you accepted him, accept us also. Though we have all sinned, O Lord, in your mercy do not despise us.

## **5. We Have No Help**

*Kontak for The Joy of All Who Sorrow (Oct. 24), B. Ledkovsky (©SVS Press)*

We have no help, no other help than you; we have no hope, no other hope than you, O Lady Theotokos. Swiftly come to help us. We have set our hope on you. We exult in you alone, for we are your servants. Let us not be put to shame.

## **6. Axion for the Nativity of our Lord (Dec. 25)**

*Tone 1, Byzantine Chant (ROEA), arr. Max Murphy*

Magnify, O my soul, her who is greater in honor and more glorious than the hosts on high. I see a strange and wonderful mystery: the cave is heaven; the Virgin is the cherubimic throne; the manger is the dwelling in which Christ God, whom nothing can contain, laid himself. Let us praise and glorify him forever.

## **7. Preparatory Kontak for the Nativity of our Lord**

*Tone 3, Byzantine Chant (©AOCA), arr. F. Karam*

The Virgin cometh today to the cave to give birth, ineffably to bring forth the Word Eternal. Therefore, rejoice, O earth at the message. With the angels and shepherds give glory to him who shall appear by his own will as a young child, he who is from eternity God.

## **8. Exapostilar for the Nativity of our Lord**

*Tone 3, Byzantine Chant, arr. Max Murphy*

Our Saviour, the Dayspring from the east, has visited us from on high, and we who were in darkness and shadow have found the truth: for the Lord is born of the Virgin.

## **9. By the Waters of Babylon (Psalm 136)**

*Matins of the 2nd and 3rd Sundays of the Lenten Triodion, Kievan Chant, ed. Max Murphy*

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. Alleluia. On the willows there, on the willows there we hung up our harps, we hung up our harps. Alleluia. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? Alleluia. If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither, let my right hand wither. Alleluia. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy. Alleluia.

## **10. Come, Bless the Lord (Psalm 133)**

*Mikha'il Ippolitov-Ivanov (©SVS Press)*

Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God: lift up your hands to the Holy Place and bless the Lord! May the Lord bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth.

*11-13. Veneration of the Holy Cross at Matins of the third Sunday of Great Lent*

## **11. Trisagion**

*Tone 5, Byzantine Chant (ROEA) arr. Max Murphy*

(The Cross is carried on a tray to the center of the nave at the final "Holy God.")

Holy God, Holy Might, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us (3x). Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. Holy God, Holy Might, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

## **12. Tropar of the Holy Cross**

*Tone 1 Byzantine Chant (ROEA)*

*Sung first by the priest, then by the cantor in Romanian, and then the choir.*

O Lord, save your people and bless your heritage, give victory to Orthodox Christians over the enemy, and preserve your people by your Cross.

### **13. Before Your Cross**

*Tone 6, Obikhod (©SVS Press)*

Before your Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master; and your holy Resurrection, we glorify.

### **14. Festal Sticheron of Palm Sunday**

*Tone 6, Holy Trinity/St. Sergius*

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together, and we all take up your Cross and say: Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

### **15. The Wise Thief**

*Fr. Sergei Glagolev (©PSALM)*

*Exapostilar for Great and Holy Friday*

The wise thief, at this same hour, Thou didst make worthy of Paradise, O Lord. Enlighten Thou me as well by the Tree of the Cross and save me!

### **16. Receive Me Today**

*Adapted and arr. F. Karam (©AOCA), Alleluias added by Max Murphy*

Receive me today, O Son of God, as partaker of Thy mystical supper: for I will not speak, for I will not speak of Thy Mystery to Thine enemies, neither will I give Thee a kiss as did Judas; but like the thief will I confess Thee: remember me, O Lord, remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom. Alleluia.

### **17. The Paschal Tropar**

*Romanian Melody, Sung in English and Romanian*

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

## **18. We Have Seen Christ's Resurrection**

*Tone 6, Chant of New Skete based on Znamennyi Themes (©Monks of New Skete)*

We have seen Christ's resurrection! In adoration let us fall before the holy lord Jesus, for he alone has never sinned. Your cross, O Christ, do we honor, and we glorify your resurrection! For you alone are really God: Your name is ever on our lips. Let us all fall down in worship; let us adore his third-day rising from the dead! Through his cross, joy has filled the world: A blessing for the Lord be ever on our lips; the praise and glory of his rising ever be our song! By bearing all the sufferings of the cross, a death-blow has he dealt to death!

## **19. Paschal Axion: The Angel Cried**

*Valaam Chant, M. Balakirev (©SVS Press)*

The angel cried to the Lady Full of Grace: Rejoice, rejoice, O pure Virgin! Again I say rejoice! Your Son is risen from his three days in the tomb, with him-self he has raised all the dead. Rejoice, rejoice, O ye people! Shine! Shine! Shine, O new Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone on you. Exult now, exult and be glad, O Zion. Be radiant, O pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection, the Resurrection of your Son.

## **20. The Lord's Prayer**

*N. Kedrov, Sr. (©SVS Press)*

Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

## **21. Doxastikon at “Lord, I have called” for the Dormition of the Mother of God (Aug. 15)**

*Sung in all Eight Byzantine Tones, set by Max Murphy*

(Tone 1) Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. By the royal command of God, the divinely inspired Apostles were caught up from over all the world into the clouds on high. (Tone 5) Reaching your immaculate body, the source of life, they saluted it with mighty honor. (Tone 2) The highest powers of heaven stood by with their own Master. (Tone 6) Seized with dread, they accompanied your immaculate body that had held God, and they went on high before you, crying, unseen, to the hierarchies above: ‘Lo, the Queen, the Queen of all, the Maid of God is nigh. (Tone 3) Open wide the gates and receive above the world the Mother of the everlasting Light. (Tone 7) For through her the salvation of all mankind has come. We have not the strength to look upon her, and are unable to render honors worthy of her. (Tone 4) For her excellence is past all understanding.’ (Tone 8) Therefore, O most pure Theotokos, who livest for ever with your Son, the King who brings life, pray without ceasing that your newborn people be guarded on every side and saved from all adverse assault: for we are under your protection. (Tone 1) And we bless you in beauty and light unto all ages.

## **22. It Is Truly Right**

*Tone 4 (ROEA), arr. Fr. L. Lazar, adapted for four voices by Max Murphy*

It is truly right to call you blessed, O Birthgiver of God. Ever blessed and most pure and Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim; who without loss of virginity gave birth to God the Word. True Birthgiver of God, we praise you.

### **23. Cherubic Hymn**

*“Streletskaia,” S. Smolensky (©SVS Press)*

Let us who mystically represent the cherubim and who sing the thrice holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity; now lay aside all earthly care. Amen. That we may receive the King of All who comes invisibly upborne by the angelic host. Alleluia.

### **24. I Lift Up My Eyes (Ps. 121: 1,2,7,8)**

*“Ridica-Voi,” Romanian Priceasna arr. by Max Murphy*

I lift up my eyes to the heavens, from where my help comes and salvation will come. My help comes from the Lord, my help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. May the Lord keep you from all evil. The Lord is your shelter at your right hand. The Lord will keep your coming and going from now and for ever. Amen. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, glory to you, O Lord.

### **25. Trupul Lui Hristos**

*Tone 8, Romanian*

Receive the Body of Christ, taste the Fountain of Immortality. Alleluia

### **26. Receive the Body of Christ**

*E. Azeev (©SVS Press)*

Receive the Body of Christ, taste the Fountain of Immortality. Alleluia.

## **27. What Shall I Render to the Lord (Ps. 115: 12-14, 17-19)**

*Fr. J. Erikson (©SVS Press)*

What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people. I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

## **28-29. We Have Seen the True Light**

*Tone 4 (ROEA)*

*Sung in English and Romanian*

We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith, therefore, let us worship the undivided Trinity, who has saved us!

## **30. O Virgin Theotokos**

*Znamennyi Chant, Rachmaninov (©Monks of New Skete)*

O Virgin Theotokos, rejoice; O Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb; for you have borne the Savior of our souls.



## THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

*The Choir of Sts. Constantine  
and Elena Orthodox Church*

### Sopranos

Lorrie Clevenger  
Kathryn Wilson  
Jennifer Zimmerman

### Altos

Julia Beck  
Patricia Evans  
Jacquelyn Murphy

### Tenors

Max Murphy  
Jonathan Wey

### Basses

Daniel Clevenger  
Mark Clevenger  
Randy Evans

### Men's ensemble

Jonathan Wey  
Fr. David Wey  
Max Murphy  
Randy Evans  
Mark Clevenger



Mixed Choir recorded in the nave of Sts. Constantine  
and Elena Church in November 2007. Men's selections  
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Photographs: Timothy Richardson and Daniel Wilson  
[www.saintsconstantineandelena.org](http://www.saintsconstantineandelena.org)