



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday, October 6th, we are blessed to celebrate National Church Music Sunday. The date has been chosen because it is closest to the Feast of St. Romanos the Melodist (October 1st), the Orthodox hymnographer, who, after being visited by the Theotokos in a dream, was able to compose and sing beautiful kontakia.

St. Romanos' story demonstrates not only the importance of church music—but also the importance of struggle. St. Romanos was visited by the Virgin Mary because his chanting and reading was ridiculed by some lesser deacons in the Church of Hagia Sophia. Though St. Romanos did not have a beautiful voice, he served out of obedience to the Patriarch, and because his love for God and our Theotokos. His lack of training was obvious, not only to those deacons who mocked him, but also to St. Romanos

himself. He did not wish to be given the gifts of a beautiful voice to achieve worldly fame, he simply humbly wished to serve Christ and Panagia.

We commemorate National Church Music Sunday after the feast of St. Romanos because it is this spirit of humble service that all our parish choirs demonstrate. Our choirs and church musicians are not simply people who like to sing, but rather, they are devoted Christians who have chosen to serve the Lord and His Holy Orthodox Church through music.

The famous Russian Orthodox composer Igor Stravinsky, once said that, “Music praises God. Music is well or better able to praise him than the building of the church and all its decoration; it is the Church's greatest ornament.”

On this Church Music Sunday, I congratulate all our choirs, and National Forum, all of whom have unselfishly offered their time and energy to ensuring the success of this ministry. Our Forum deeply believes in the importance of active and engaged choirs who can encourage Orthodox parishioners throughout the nation and the world, in this greatest form of praise.

Our Creator has truly blessed us with faithful and gifted individuals who are zealous for the Church's greatest ornament. May the Holy Spirit guide and enlighten all those Musicians and Choir Members as they seek to do the will of God, praising Him with joy and gladness.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta