

Our Hymnology Program

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church --- Indianapolis, Indiana

One of the goals of the Catechetical Program at Holy Trinity is to prepare our young children for participation in the Divine Liturgy and other services of our Church. In addition to our Church School curriculum and special events, we also have a strong HYMNOLOGY PROGRAM that teaches our children about our Orthodox hymns – their words, their melodies, and most important, their Orthodox messages.

We have three levels of hymnology classes: (a) Preschool & Kindergarten, (b) 1st–5th Grades, and (c) 6th – 12th Grades. Time is allocated for these classes on most Sunday's.

- Children attend the Divine Liturgy through Communion. Then the children process to Hymnology Class for a 15-minute lesson, followed by the Church School class for a 30-45 minute period.
- Father gives the adult sermon at the end of the Divine Liturgy; parents have also learned to come to Coffee Hour to await the end of Church School classes to pick up their children.
- On Major Feast Days, children attend class first, then enter the Divine Liturgy just prior to Holy Communion for the Procession and/or special service. On some Feast Days, we have the children singing hymns during Communion.

This year we began preparing the children for a new element of our Hymnology Program, enabling those who are interested, and who meet some prerequisites, to sing with the choir!

- 1) Church School students in Grade 3 and above are welcome in the choir providing they "earn" their choir pin.
- 2) The children "**earn their choir pin**" by learning the following hymns, and singing them by memory (in either English or Greek) to one of the hymnology teachers: *Through the Prayers of the Theotokos (Tes Presvies)*, *Save Us O Son of God (Soson Imas Ie Theou)*, and the three responses, *Lord Have Mercies (Kyrie Eleison's)*. The children are introduced to these required hymns in hymnology classes.
- 3) Choir members are assigned to greet the youngsters who have passed the test and act as their "coach" to help them become full participating singers.
- 4) The children may sing with the choir as long as the Church School is in Church. Once it is time for Church School, all children must attend their classes. Altar boys wishing to sing with the choir do so on the days when they are not in rotation for altar duty.

Personnel:

The Hymnology teacher is a choir member who is also considered one of the Church School teachers. This person participates in Church School meetings and activities. The Hymnology Program is coordinated through the Church School Superintendents.

Curriculum:

1st – 5th Grade Program: Hymns of the first part of the Divine Liturgy - all taught in English and Greek as the choir sings them:

- The Antiphons: [a] *Through the Prayers of the Theotokos -Tes Presvies*, [b] *Save us O Son of God – Soson Imas*, and [c] *Holy God - Aghios O Theos*
- Responses – [a] *Kyrie eleison's*, [b] *To You O Lord - Si Kyrie*, [c] *Amen - Amin's*, [d] *Grant This, O Lord.*

- Communion sequence: [a] *We Sing Hymns to You - Se Imnoumen*, [b] *Enite – We Praise You*, [c] *We have seen the True Light - Idhomen to Fos*
- Hymns during Communion: - [a] *Enite*, [b] *Receive Me Today*, [c] *O Give Praise Unto the Lord* (Exomologhiste)
- *Holy, Holy, Holy - Aghios, Aghios, Aghios*
- *Feast Day Hymns*

Preschool Program: Children work on Holy God, the Antiphons, “Little Prayers (the responses), and Christ is Risen.

The Teen Program is in its infancy. Singing is minimal. Instead, plans are to present special classes on hymnology, meanings of certain hymns and feast days chanting and Byzantine neumes, etc. The goal is to motivate the youngsters to sing in the choir or learn to chant.

Special Events:

- **The Holy Friday Retreat** has become a tradition – this includes hymnology, theology, and iconography.
- **Saturday of Lazarus** – Children sing the entire Liturgy, then stay for Communion Breakfast and make the crosses.
- **First Resurrection Service** – Children sing the refrain of the *Hymn of the Three Youths* and sing *Arise O God (Anasta O Theos)* as Father scatters bay leaves and rose petals around the church. The children ring bells at this point of the service.
- **Christmas** – The children sing Orthodox hymns plus a few contemporary carols for the short program, often a pageant; sometimes “entertainment” after lunch.

Learning’s:

- **Provide opportunities for the children to sing in church as often as possible.** Singing during Communion is a perfect time, and the congregation loves it! Work with the choir to share singing the hymns – try singing antiphonally with them and the children during certain parts of the Liturgy.
- **Encourage children to sing with the choir.** Priest and choir members can be instrumental in encouraging this. Be a little “looser” with them about rehearsal rules.
- **Do not leave out the older children**, but plan a separate liturgical music program for them.
- **Help Church School teachers understand** that hymnology is indeed Church School instruction, just with a different tool than they use. It is not music class!
- **It takes time, consistency, and perseverance!** Even 10-15 minutes a week, when consistent, reaps dividends!
- **Prepare handouts** for the children to take home to their parents.
- **Keep on the lookout for children who are taking music lessons and/or who sing in their school/community choir.** Use them to assist the program (accompanying) and encourage them to be the leaders in singing with the choir. They may also form the core of a more formal Junior Choir program.

For More Information, Contact:

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