

**CHRIST IS RISEN!
HE IS RISEN INDEED!**



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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Visit stsymeon.com

✠ **May 22, 2016** ✠

Fourth Sunday of Pascha

The Paralytic

Martyr Basiliscus of Comana (308)

Eldress Macrina of Volos (1995)



Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

✠ **Wednesday, May 25, 6:30pm ~ Midfeast of Pentecost Vespers**

✠ **Sacrament of Holy Matrimony: Anastasia Fecanin and Daniel Johnson**

✠ **Sunday, June 5, 3:00pm** ✠

Many Years !

> **2016 High School Graduates:** James Burton, Elizabeth Condra,
Gregory Fecanin, Kimberly Hutchison and Stephen Ritchey !

> **Upcoming Events:**

High School/College retreat Saturday, June 4 at David and Nicole May's lake house:

The day will include lake activities, sessions geared specifically for Orthodox young adults, and Vespers by the Lake. Adult chaperones are needed. Please contact Dunia Ritchey or Nicole May if you young adult will attend or if you can chaperone.

> **The Children's Summer Retreat ~ Saturday, June 25 at church:**

The theme will be "Old and New," and will focus on Old Testament stories and how they are fulfilled in the New Testament. In addition, there will be a focus on the Trisagion Prayers, and Vespers that night will feature a Children's Choir and Children as Readers! Helpers are needed. Please contact Dunia Ritchey if your child will attend or if you can help.

Note: Sign up sheets for both retreats and for helpers are posted in the new hall.

Hunger for God

✠ A soul that hungers for the statutes and mercies of God is similar to a sunflower and strives for and reaches out for God. If it ceases to seek Him, it perishes. It's essential in this life to sense Christ. Whoever has not seen Him here, will never see Him there, in the future life. But how can one see Christ? The way to this is the unceasing Prayer of Jesus, which instills Christ in our souls ... And I earnestly beg you—banish all images from your head and heart, that there might be only one image there—Christ's. But how do you attain this? Again, by the Jesus Prayer.

A Fool of Fools

✠ Many learned people, knowing a multitude of sciences, do not know their own souls at all and have no understanding of spiritual life. Such a person will appear at the "great examination" and will be asked, "Did you carry out the commandments of Christ and, if you did not carry them out, did you repent over this? Did you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God?"

And this learned man, glorified on earth, will be manifest at that examination as a fool of fools

— St. Barsanouphios of Optina (1913)



This and That

Does it sometimes seem to you like our civilization is drifting and rudderless? Like our focus, our energy, our sense of purpose has disappeared? This is what happens when you lose your men — rather, when your men lose their manhood. Above all, porn is emasculation. The drive for sex, above all in men, is one of the most fundamental and powerful drives present in mankind. Most of the work of civilization consists of controlling this drive and aiming it in socially productive directions. We used to have some institutions that did that: marriage, along with the concomitant prohibition on premarital sex. (One is completely pointless without the other.) This gave society some say in where a man's most basic desires would lead him. That is all no more. "This civilization of ours has a death wish. You see it more and more with each passing day.

— Rod Dreher

We have to stop caring about what the world and the media think. They will call us bigoted no matter how loving, winsome, and fair-minded we are....We also have to remind ourselves that what we are facing directly doesn't even deserve the name persecution compared to what happened under the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, or Communism. We mustn't wallow in pity or feel sorry for ourselves, or lash out in pointless rage. But the threat is more insidious because the opposition isn't head-on or violent. It is the seductive lie that tolerance of vice is supremely good, and judgmentalism is the supreme evil. If we are not discerning about the lines between good and evil, virtue and sin, and cannot speak boldly at least within our communities about them, we are lost in a generation or two.

— Anon. commentator

The progressives have found no substitute for virtue...The Dark Ages understood virtue built a civilization; the progressive age doesn't understand virtue and is tearing down the civilization it inherited. Euthanasia is a fitting symbol: the last sacrament of a society that cannot aspire to heaven, but only to painless annihilation.

— Joseph Sobran

Alexis de Tocqueville described what tyranny would look like in a democracy:

"But one also finds in the human heart a depraved taste for equality, which impels the weak to want to bring the strong down to their level, and which reduces men to preferring equality in servitude to inequality in freedom". Despotism under a democracy could see "a multitude of men", uniformly alike, equal, "constantly circling for petty pleasures", unaware of fellow citizens, and subject to the will of a powerful state which exerted an "immense protective power". Tocqueville compared a potentially despotic democratic government to a protective parent who wants to keep its citizens (children) as "perpetual children", and which doesn't break men's wills but rather guides it, and presides over people in the same way as a shepherd looking after a "flock of timid animals".

"The more lost, disoriented and spiritually defeated people become, the more susceptible they become to persuasion, and the more they end up buying into the oversold expectations of consumption. But in unreality culture, hyper-inflated expectations continually collide with the reality of experience. Since nothing lives up to the hype, the world of the consumer is actually an ongoing exercise in disappointment. While most disappointments are minor and easy to dissociate, they accumulate into an emotional background of frustration as deeper human needs get neglected. Continued starvation of these needs fuels disillusion about one's whole approach to life. Over time, people's core assumptions can become unstable."

John Schumaker

Future historians will marvel at how Westerners dismantled the fundamentals of civilization — religion, family, community — in the name of a utopian progressive vision: the liberation of the Self. It is left to the rest of us to figure out how to remain resilient and hopeful amid the ruins they create with each passing day.

— Rod Dreher

The Spiritual Life of an Orthodox Family
From Life Transfigured, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2003

During this past Lent, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, our abbess was asked to speak at the Vespers Service held in Warren, Ohio. The following article is based on the talk she gave.

While most monastics have never married or raised children, perhaps we do have experience that can help understand the spiritual life of an Orthodox family. Everyone, after all, is part of a family, be it a parish, a monastery, or a family of mother, father, and children. And all of us are also part of a larger family of brother, sister, aunts, uncles, grandparents, in-laws and so on—each called to live in love and in imitation of Christ.

As the abbess of an Orthodox monastery, in America, in the 21st century, I can tell you that forming an Orthodox spiritual family is hard work, very hard work. A women's monastery is also a family, formed around Christ, with an Abbess, called Mother, and others, called sisters in Christ. We, too, are sinful people, with generations and generations of sinful people in our backgrounds. Few of us were raised with the teachings of Christ as our main emphasis. Even if we were raised in the Church, taught to be good and to be honest and to love, our culture has not encouraged us along the lines of humility, modesty or meekness.

Rather, in our culture, we are used to enjoying many material things and pursuing instant gratification. We want what we want, and we want it now. We are too proud to say we are wrong, or we are sorry, or that we don't know. Independence is the watchword.

We all face temptations coming from ourselves, the world, and the devil. Almost no one feels free to be him or herself—the person God made in His image and likeness, striving to be more and more like Him every day! Rather, we strive to be more and more like our neighbor, or the slim model on the magazine cover, or the “together” professional, or the mom who can do it all. Or perhaps we have even taken on every possible task at our parish and have become a sort of “committee of one.”

Hard work and activities are not sinful in themselves. Work is good. It is appointed by God. But everything has a time, everything has a place. We always have to keep a check on our lives to ensure that they stay in balance. We balance our checkbooks at least once a month. Why not make such a review of our lives?

Keep an eye on your lives, examining them with the help of the Scriptures, the life of Christ, the lives of the Saints and those good, mature, Christ-loving people that we know. One thing is certain: the devil and all his hosts are keeping an eye on your lives. While the devil is not God and does not know the future, he knows the past. He knows how each of us falls, what are our weak points and our tendencies. So if being busy keeps our minds off our inner life and our true responsibilities before God—the devil will keep us busy. He can even keep us busy with good things, like charitable or church work, all the while trying to get us to neglect the “little church” of our homes, and our souls.

If food is our delight, he will not cease reminding us of some tasty treat. If judging others is “our thing”, then the devil encourages us to look at other people and notice this or that about them: how they are always late, overweight, dressed unfashionably, sing off key, or never smile at us. Or the devil will remind us of how that person hurt us last Christmas, or ...in 1938!

You see, this is the warfare all of us are engaged in. This warfare does not just go on inside of me or you, but inside of all of us. It is going on in all of us in our very homes, in our families, in the marriage that was blessed and consecrated by God before His Holy Altar! The priest prays at every Orthodox

Marriage Service that God will preserve the newlyweds as He did the Three Holy Youths in the fire. In that Biblical account, we find Three Holy Youths walking in a hot, fiery furnace, praising God. The flames became as dew and the youths were preserved as Christ came and walked with them! We live in a fallen world and we will struggle our whole lives. But the good news is that God has come in the flesh to walk with us, as He did with the Three Holy Youths. He has given us a path to follow; He has shown us the way! *He is the way.*

Christ, the Son of God, took on flesh. He was born of a woman. He lived for the first 30 years of his short earthly life in His parents' home! He was obedient to them, studying the Scriptures, and working as a carpenter like His foster father. The Theotokos was a housewife and mother for 30 years! Joseph was a dedicated and faithful father, protecting, teaching and providing—not just for an “easy” child, but for one the king wanted to kill, forcing the family to move, as directed by God, first to Bethlehem, then to Egypt, and then to Nazareth. Christ consecrated and blessed this path of marriage, family, and home.

The life of the family, the life in our Orthodox homes or monasteries, is not some “sideline” to our “real,” professional lives. Christ shows us by His life that *it is life itself.* It gives us life and we are called to give this holy life to others.

Marriage is a high calling. It is from God—a vocation. To be united with another person and become one before God, to form a Christian family, a “little church” is indeed a very holy calling! As monastics, we will not tell you how to establish a prayer life in your home or a rule of fasting, or how many services to attend or what books to read, or how many hours to spend looking at the computer screen. You need to discern these things through prayer and discussion, revising these decisions as life and circumstances change.

Christ founded His Holy Church. He left us His very Body and Blood and He sent us His Spirit. We have the tools and the armor that we need to be good Orthodox Christians and establish healthy Orthodox families. We have the Sacraments, the prayers, the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and Holy Tradition. We have the life of Christ and His family, as well as the Saints, the Apostles, the Hierarchs, and the Martyrs to imitate.

Yet, we are not called to become carbon copies of the Saints. We are called to be ourselves: each of us, who we are, who God made us and who He is calling us to be at this time and in this place. We do not live in an easy time. Never before have we been bombarded by so much information, so much opportunity, so much exposure to non-Christian, even inhuman, ways of life. Perhaps the war, the unseen warfare, of baptized Christians is intensifying.

Let us draw back into the bosom of Christ and His Church. Let us keep a watch on ourselves and our lives and our families. Let us spend some quiet time each day away from noise and news, away from activities and animosities, away from hurts and hurdles—and reflect on Christ's love, securely and gently saying with the Psalmist David:

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great or too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a child is quieted at its mother's breast; like a child that is quieted is my soul. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and for evermore! (Ps. 131:1-3)

- Mother Christophora

Bright Week—The New Creation

Great and Holy Pascha, celebrating the Death/Resurrection of Our Lord, brings into time the timeless. Pascha is the "Eighth Day." God created the world by His Word (Logos) in six days; on the seventh day He rested. Seven is the number of completion, fulfillment, perfection. When the Divine Logos entered His own creation by becoming one of us, He recreated the universe which had become fallen through Adam's disobedience. Our Lord completed His redemptive work on the Cross when He said, "It is finished!"—on the sixth day. And on the seventh day He rested, recapitulating the original creation. But then, something *new* happened. Beyond the day of rest, beyond that Sabbath, He rose from the dead on the Eighth Day and ushered in the New Creation. Pascha is surely our experience of Resurrection, but the Resurrection not

only as past event, but as the inauguration of the New Age, the cosmos restored, re-fashioned to a new and greater perfection.

The Eighth Day was not a new division of the week; it did not and does not now take its place in time. There are still only seven days in the week. But the Eighth Day coincides with the first day, thereby bringing into time the eternal, the *eschaton*. The Apostle Paul, in his wonderful chapter on the Resurrection (I Cor. 15), says, "In fact Christ has been raised from the dead . . . for as by a man came death, by a man came also the Resurrection of the dead" (v. 21). Christ the "second Adam" is also the "last Adam" Who brings into time both the knowledge and the power of the New



Creation—marked by resurrection to newness of life. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (v. 22). This new life is revealed, bestowed, and experienced by the faithful as soon as they enter the Church in baptism, and baptism traditionally took place on Pascha. In the familiar homily for Pascha by St. John Chrysostom, we hear, "Christ is Risen, and Life reigns." Life triumphs over death. Man's last and worst enemy is overthrown by Christ's Resurrection. Access to God's Eternal Kingdom is open through the gateway of Pascha, which means literally "passage"; the passage from the darkness of death to the light of life.

The whole manner of introducing the

Eighth Day into human experience by the Church is traditionally the logic of catechesis, a three-fold process offered to those who desire to be recreated, reborn, to be "in Christ." The process is a liturgical one, the deepest truths transmitted in the experience of corporate worship. The last stages of the training before baptism take place in the context of the Great Fast. One cannot truly understand the meaning of the Great Fast, Pascha, and Bright Week without seeing the connection to this catechetical process. Catechumens are first purified by exorcisms, prayer, fasting, repentance, sacrifice, and by learning—they are engaged in an unfolding of a new spiritual knowledge. The training is in this and in the succeeding stages all-inclusive. It aims as much at transforming the heart as it does the mind. Nor does it exclude even the body (the

lenten prostrations being a part of the "physical catechesis"). The goal is not merely intellectual agreement with the Church's teaching, but the conversion and recreation of the whole person.

The forty days of the Great Fast mark the culmination of the time of purification, the first stage. On Holy Saturday, those who have been prepared for baptism (the *photizomeni*—those being illumined) are taken in darkness to the Baptistry (a separate building) and there baptised and chrismated. Then in their new white robes and holding candles, they proceed to the Paschal Eucharist, in which they now participate fully for the first time. (The baptisms never were and never should be in the Eu-

charist; they are necessarily prior to and distinct from the Eucharistic Liturgy.) The double Mystery of Baptism/Chrismation was called "Illumination"—with all that implies, and constituted the second stage of the process. The goal of this process was surely not understood merely as initiation into membership in an institution. The Church is, of course, necessarily an institution. But she is much more; she is an organism, described by St. Paul as the "Body of Christ." The term "body" should not be taken simply as a metaphor, but as a mystical reality, a reality transcending ordinary definitions. The goal, therefore, is much more; it is deification (*theosis*), living in God and God in us.

The third and final stage of this process is the stage of perfection; it begins with the reception of the Most Sacred Gifts, Our Lord's Body and Blood. This participation in Divine Life is the fulfillment of Christ's High Priestly Prayer, which He prayed just before His passion, and which we hear in the solemn darkness of the Service of the Passion Gospels in Holy Week: Our Lord prays to the Father that the faithful "may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us . . . I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17: 21, 23).

This mystical union is the whole purpose of the Church and all it means and does. The union of God and man is made possible for all who hear and respond to the voice of God. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me . . ." (Rev. 3:20).

The training of the neophyte does not end with the Paschal Eucharist. The newly-illuminated now begins a new phase, a phase which will continue for the rest of his earthly life. This stage was called by the Holy Fathers "*mystagogy*."

Saint Basil, in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* (chapter 27) clearly distinguishes between *kerygma*—the teaching that is openly proclaimed and written down for the conversion of unbelievers to the Faith, and *mystagogy*—the teachings transmitted either orally or without words. He says, "Of the beliefs and practices . . . which are preserved in the Church, some we possess derived from written teaching, others we have received delivered to us 'in a mys-

tery' by the tradition of the Apostles." Our authority, he says, for practices and teachings, especially those which have to do with worship and the Mysteries (Sacraments) is "silent and mystical." Well have we learned the lesson, he continues, "that the awesome dignity of the Mysteries is best preserved in silence. What the uninitiated are not even allowed to look at was hardly likely to be publicly paraded about in written documents."

After the awesome experience at midnight on Pascha, when the darkness became brighter than midday, the catechumen became—through participation in the Mysteries—a *mystagogue*, one who now "knows" the Mysteries. This is not knowledge in the ordinary sense, not discursive logic or intellectual accumulation of data, but knowledge in the deeper, personal, experiential, and mystical sense. Such knowledge is best expressed in terms of a marital union, for it signifies the marriage of God and man, of the uncreated with the created. St. Paul says, "Among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age . . . We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification" (I Cor. 2:6-7). This new knowledge is what is now imparted to the *mystagogue* in the third stage, beginning in Bright Week. This knowledge does not come from the world or from human reasoning; God reveals it "through the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:10). "And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:13). The neophyte is now capable of receiving such knowledge because he is no longer what he was—a mere human. He is purified, perfected by cooperation with the grace of God. In addition to natural knowledge and acquired learning, the new Christian embarks on a lifetime of apprehending and living by knowledge which is above nature (*pneumatiki gnosis*), the immediate and certain divine knowledge imparted by God to man and felt in the center of his being, the heart. Like the catechesis of the Fast, the *mystagogy* of Bright Week is liturgical. It is transmitted through corporate worship, through prayer, and through participation in the Sacred Mysteries.

It is clear now why every day in Bright Week is a day of the Paschal Services and Eucharist; Pascha again and again. Bright

Week has, in fact, no weekdays, no ordinary time. It is a continuous Lord's Day, an Eternal Pascha, a ceaseless rejoicing with hearts full of love and thanksgiving for Christ's magnificent sacrifice which ushered in the New Creation. All enemies of mankind—sin, death, and the devil—have been rendered helpless, deprived of all power. In St. John Chrysostom's words, "O death, where is thy sting? O Hell, where is thy victory? Christ is Risen and thou art overthrown. Christ is Risen and the demons are fallen" (Paschal Homily).

The Icon that expresses best the New Creation characterized by spiritual knowledge is the one for Mid-Pentecost, that mysterious Feast that connects Pascha to Pentecost. The Icon shows Christ as a youth—as He was at the age of twelve when His Mother and earthly Father found Him seated in the Temple amidst the teachers, "listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His intelligence and His answers" (Luke 2:46-47). Jesus had the wisdom of God without learning because He was the hypostatic Wisdom of God. And He reminded His parents that He must "be about my Father's business." He came to earth not just for an appearance, but to transmit that Divine Wisdom to His creatures. This is the meaning of Bright Week: the beginning of new life and knowledge in the Spirit of God, the experience of the Eighth Day, permanently established in the hearts of the faithful who humbly listen to the voice of God and do His will.

—Archpriest Theodore Heckman

·THE MYRRHBEARERS·



What Is Human? By Rod Dreher • April 25, 2016

I came across this reaction of political scientist Dale Kuehne to the *Obergefell* ruling last year. I think this is really important to understand. Excerpts:

“By the time last Friday came, the same-sex marriage debate was no longer about sex and had very little to do with marriage. Rather it was anchored in a redefinition of human identity itself. In the new world order, it is the individual, not biology or God, who determines identity. We are now “selves” of an increasing number of varieties and we are decreasingly male or female in a biologically meaningful sense. One day soon people will cease to use “same-sex” as adjectives for marriage. Every marriage will be the same: Selves who take vows. Two selves. Perhaps even three selves or more.

Moreover, “selves” won’t be limited to human relationships. Professor Sherry Turkle from MIT has written of the question of marriage to a robot. Marriage with animals is tomorrow as well, because it is already today in some places.

Accordingly, tomorrow’s political headlines will be of two variants. One variant are headlines that announce the expansion of the rights of transgender people as well as those whose identity goes beyond gender. Transgender is the next civil rights movement. The second set of headlines will concern the issue of religious freedom for churches and religious institutions whose views on traditionally-accepted morality are deemed discriminatory to “selves.”

“Transgender is the next civil rights movement.” He wrote that about 10 months ago. He was right. More:

“Yesterday’s discussions were about sexual morality and marriage. Tomorrow’s discussions are about human identity and purpose. If anyone wishes to revisit yesterday’s discussions, the road goes through tomorrow’s discussions on identity.”

So let’s begin. I believe the prevailing cultural notion of identity, as something each of us can only discover by looking within ourselves is logically flawed. I do not believe it is possible for any of us to understand who we are merely by looking within because none of us can know who we are without a reference point outside of ourselves. The question we face concerns not whether we require reference points outside of ourselves, but which ones. Teaching needs to include the examination of external reference points to help people avoid getting lost in the abyss of the self.

If I am right, then our regime is wrong. If the regime is wrong then the consequences for ourselves, our children and coming generations is enormous. If the regime is wrong then we are embarking on a course that is destined to fail by teaching something about identity we know not to be true: that the only way we can figure out who we are is to look exclusively within.

Again, this is not simply about who gets to use which bathroom. This is about something as fundamental as human identity. You may choose to ignore or to dismiss this. But it’s not going to ignore or dismiss you. As Kuehne put it last year, this is where the debate actually is. It is now down to the fundamentals of human identity.

St. Symeon's Choir CD Reviews

~ at MusicaRussica.com ~
(which is a distributor of our recordings)

Come Bless the Lord

Those who were in attendance at the first Divine Liturgy at the recent All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America, held in Atlanta, Georgia, in July of 2015, were immensely impressed by the fine quality of the singing at that service. Indeed, instead of a minimally rehearsed pick-up choir made up of council attendees, worshipers heard a well-blended, disciplined parish choir, endowed with fine, young voices, under the direction of a gifted and musically educated conductor. The choir was from St. Symeon the New Theologian Orthodox Church in Birmingham, Alabama, a parish blessed by an abundance of musical talent, which has begun yielding fruit in the recent crop of CDs released by two different ensembles within the parish: the full parish choir (Cat. Nos. I-119 and I-121) and the St. Symeon Orthodox Church Octet (Cat. No. I-122). The present CD features a cross-section of repertoire that is representative of the multi-national patchwork that characterizes Orthodoxy in America—there are selections of znamenny, Byzantine, Serbian, Kievan, and Georgian Chants, arranged by a range of composers from the early to the late twentieth century. Seven of the works are heard in English adaptations for the first time ever; not all of the English text underlay is equally successful, however. The rich and full sound of the choir is enhanced by the fine acoustics of the recording space—the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Vestavia Hills, Alabama: no electronic enhancement of any kind was used. This CD will be greatly enjoyed by all lovers of Orthodox liturgical choral singing, particularly in English; many will be reminded of a bygone era of larger, more sonorous parish choirs, who were capable of singing in wide harmony and with doubling of parts, so characteristic of the best Orthodox choral traditions.—*V.M.*

Our God is in Heaven and on Earth

In this, their brand new CD, the Choir of St. Symeon the New Theologian Orthodox Church in Birmingham, Alabama, continues to demonstrate growth and maturity since their earlier CD, "Come, Bless the Lord" (cat. No. I-119). The selections on this disc continue to exhibit a bold and innovative approach to programming on the part of the conductor, featuring seven more works never before adapted into English. The choir is able to handle challenging music, with many divided parts, without any apparent difficulty. The CD demonstrates what a dedicated parish choir, in a city that is by no means a "center" of Orthodox culture, but which has been nurtured and developed over a number of years, is capable of achieving—truly an inspiration to all Orthodox choir directors in North America.

Pascha Hours

St. Symeon the New Theologian Orthodox Church in Birmingham, Alabama, has been blessed by an abundance of musical talent. Gifted young voices, with a musically educated and energetic young conductor, who are willing to explore new and innovative repertoire—all these things have begun yielding fruit in the recent crop of CDs released by two different ensembles within the parish: the full parish choir (Cat. Nos. I-119 and I-121) and the St. Symeon Orthodox Church Octet, featured on the present CD. On this CD the listener will hear an abundance of melodies and arrangements that are familiar as well as some heard in English for the very first time. The music is well served by the crystal clear and transparent sound of the ensemble, although some selections would have been more convincing with a larger group. One can only wish the young singers of St. Symeon Orthodox Church continued growth and success, and look forward to their future creative musical explorations.—*V.M.*