

All Saints Chant Class

Introduction

Why do we chant and sing?

“Just as an authentic icon makes visible for us, the invisible Kingdom of God, so too, authentic Church music makes audible for us the inaudible song of the angels around the throne of God.”

- Fr. John Finley

- We are an icon of the angelic choirs - not prideful, but reverent

“A religious hymn is a great blessing for everyone. It constitutes praise to the Most High, honor for His holy people, worldwide harmony, an eloquent proof of the Church's unity. It expresses the voice of the Church, its confession. It brings about a complete spiritual uplifting and absolute peace and joy in redeemed hearts, with the triumphal hymn and song of happiness. It drives away hardness of heart. It chases away disturbance. It dissolves and dissipates despondency... The voice sings the soul's joy, while the spirit delves into the mysteries of the faith.”

- St. Ambrose of Milan

- To proclaim the teachings of the church
- To praise God
- To drive away Satan's powers

“When chanters chant with the tongue and also with the mind, they greatly benefit not only themselves but also those who want to hear them. To recite the psalms with melody is not done from a desire for pleasing sound, but it is a manifestation of harmony among the thoughts of the soul.”

- St. Athanasius the Great

- To express “harmony among the thoughts of the soul” in a way that reading alone cannot

“Nothing so arouses the soul, gives it wing, sets it free from the earth, releases it from the prison of the body, teaches it to love wisdom and to despise all the things of this life, as concordant melody and sacred song composed in rhythm.”

- St. John Chrysostom (On Psalm 41)

“Psalmody - bringing about choral singing, a bond, as it were, toward unity, and joining people into a harmonious union of one choir - produces also the greatest of blessings: love.”

- St. Basil the Great

Summary

Church singing represents the angelic choirs, proclaiming the church's teachings, praising God, and producing love in a way that cannot be accomplished by plain reading.

How should we chant?

"While your tongue sings, let your mind search out the meaning of the words, so that you might sing in spirit and sing also in understanding."

- St. Basil the Great On Psalm 27 (PG XXIX, 304)

"The fact that you have started to chant is not important. The roosters out on the farm sing like anything. They will drown you out right away. But you are not a rooster, and you are not a hen. You have to remember that your singing should not be like that of a rooster, but like that of angels, that is done, with humility, fear, ardent love, and self reproach. Such is true and God-pleasing chanting. But the vainglorious kind, designed to please not God but men, is worse than those of roosters."

- St. Anatoloy Zertsaley of Optina

"He, the church singer, should chant without hurrying and without dragging, and he should pronounce the words clearly and distinctly. He should chant 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."

- St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

Summary

- Know the meaning of the words you are chanting
- Pronounce the words clearly
- Chant out of humility, fear, love, and self reproach
- Do not convey your own feelings or interpretations. Allow "the holy prayers to act on the listeners by their own spiritual power"
- The state of your soul is what matters the most

Why am I doing this class?

- Provide an opportunity for others to get involved (or more involved!) with the ministry of church singing
 - Provide a safe space for all of us to work together in a disciplined manner, to improve our chanting and singing (me included!)
- Taking part in the hymnography of the church has been a blessing to me in many ways. I want to enable others to be partake in that same blessing.