

## About St. Mary's Orthodox Cathedral Choir

Deacon Gregory Ealy, *Music Director*

In 1891 Professor Paul Zaichenko enlisted eight members of St. Mary's Church to form an octet to sing at divine services. These immigrant men from the Carpatho-Rusyn region of Eastern Europe had no previous musical training, but their desire to sing has served as the foundation for decades of beautiful music glorifying God through hymns and songs of praise.

Since those early immigrant days in Northeast Minneapolis, the Cathedral Choir has become a fixture and worthy example of Orthodox liturgical music in the Upper Midwest and beyond. The ensemble plays an integral role in the life of parishioners, leading the faithful at tens of thousands of divine services including the divine liturgy on Sunday mornings, contributing to the joy of thousands of weddings and baptisms, and sharing in the tears at countless funerals.



The Cathedral Choir sings in the *a cappella* tradition (without instrumental accompaniment), and has been invited to sing at events across the country including the glorification of St. Raphael of Brooklyn, the consecration of St. Paul's Church in Las Vegas, and Orthodox Education Day at St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York.

Through the years, local t.v. and radio broadcasts have featured the choir, which is renowned in the Twin Cities thanks in part to its annual concerts and participation in local community concerts, festivals, and events.

Today's cathedral choir is a mixed ensemble of nearly 70 men and women with diverse backgrounds, including some who have ties to the founding families of the parish which is dedicated to the Mother of God.

A number of its singers are second, third, or even fourth generation members who share a special bond through lifelong singing and friendships. In some instances, the choir has been the catalyst for marriages and for others, conversion to the Orthodox Faith. It is without a doubt one of the oldest and largest Orthodox choirs in North America.

The majority of the choir's repertoire reflects the Eastern Slavic and Russian heritage of the parish's founders. Over the last thirty years, chant and compositions have been introduced which celebrate the diverse global traditions found in Orthodox Christianity and reflect the diversity of the community. Of note and most promising is the growing collection of music sung by the cathedral's choir which has been composed by American Orthodox musicians.

All of these are wonderful things. Yet, the most invaluable thing about the choir is that, for 125 years now, it has delivered through song the Church's theological truths to the liturgical assembly, thereby moving it closer to the heart of the Christmas message – which is Christ Himself.