

## **St. John's American Carpatho-Russian Male Chorus** **A Brief History**

(excerpts from the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner presentation, May 23, 1982)

The chorus was first organized by former Choir Director/Cantor, Prof. Andrew M. Griz who felt that in a parish of our size, it would be possible to form an all-male chorus. The first rehearsal was held on May 14, 1957 with the goal of performing just two months later. The Male Chorus made its initial showing on July 14, 1957 at the historic Ritz Ballroom in Bridgeport at a church dinner celebration marking the "Burning of the Mortgage". Not long after, the St. John's Board of Directors then assigned the chorus to sing the Divine Liturgy responses in English the first Sunday of every month, a tradition that continued for over 25 years.

Along with Prof. Griz, the chorus has held together and prospered under the guidance of many people including Rev. John Markovich, Michael Sutyak, George Bobko, George Komlos, Rev. John Duranko, and Prof. John Galpin. Under the direction of Prof. Galpin, the Male Chorus extended its range by learning the Divine Liturgy in Old Slavonic, and increased its repertoire considerably by adding many church and folk song selections. To celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> year, two record albums were also made.

Over the years, St. John's Male Chorus has performed to crowds great and small throughout Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania. Performances ranged from small church concerts to large celebrations of faith and music including the Diocese Cultural Center opening and the Yale Slavic Festival in 1977, The (late) Bishop John's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1980, The inauguration of Bridgeport Mayor Mary Moran in 1989, and many, many more.

The members of St. John's Male Chorus were entirely from our parish up until the later years when a few area parish members asked to be included. The chorus started out with 32 members in 1957 and celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1982 with 32 members despite deaths, dropouts, etc. The chorus membership was quite a parish family affair and has included two octogenarians, ten sets of brothers, four father/son pairs, an uncle/nephew pair, and has included many who have served as church officers.

Sadly, time has left St. John's Male Chorus with few remaining members. Occasional groups are assembled for special occasions, such as weddings or funerals, or to sing liturgical responses. For over 25 years, the St. John's Male Chorus served as ambassadors of our liturgical and folk music, spreading the beauty of our music and culture to all who would come to listen. The legacy of the chorus can still be appreciated today and for future generations by their two recordings.

Under Prof. Galpin's direction, the St. John's Male Chorus produced two albums of music. The first, "Hear the Wondrous Tidings" is a wonderful collection of traditional Slovak Christmas carols sung in both English and Slovak. The second, "By Thy Cross", is an entire Divine Liturgy recorded in our church and officiated by the Rev. John Duranko with the responses sung by the chorus. Both recordings are available on CD by simply contacting our church.