23/09/2021

Archpastoral Visit to St. Sava Church in Phoenix, Arizona & Serbian Singing Federation 90th Anniversary



Labor Day Weekend 2021, September 3rd, 4th and 5th, the St Sava Serbian Orthodox Church's Choir "Stevan Hristic" proudly hosted the 79th Choir Festival and Serbian Singing Federation 90th Anniversary! This year's choral festival was originally scheduled for Memorial Day Weekend, as traditionally held, but moved with the Blessing of His Grace Bishop Maxim to Labor Day Weekend because of the current pandemic situation.

Choirs from Aliquippa, Milwaukee, Boston, Pittsburgh, Omaha, Kansas City, Phoenix, Lake Forest, Schererville, Joliet, Chicago, and the Tsar Lazar Male Choir from the Pittsburgh area, totaling over 160 singers along with numerous guests came to celebrate this monumental jubilee. Exactly 90 years ago the Serbian

Singing Federation was established and first-ever Choir Festival was held in Akron, Ohio.

Friday evening, September 3rd, festivities began with a welcoming dance at the St Sava Social Hall. Accompanied with delicious food and refreshments, everyone was entertained by two great orchestras, Phoenix's local "Jedinstvo" Tambura Orchestra, and Orchestra "Srna" from Northern California. Excitement could be felt by everyone that finally lifelong friends, friendships that were created during the numerous Choral Festivals over the years, could be once again rekindled.

During Saturday's concert, all Choirs presented themselves with beautiful renditions of Church and Secular music. Boston's "Desanka Maksimovic" Church Choir was inducted as the newest member of the SSF deciding to take Phoenix's "Stevan Hristic" choir to be their Honored Kumovi. The SSF generously awarded many scholarships to young worthy students to continue their education. Everything culminated with all singers joining together in singing an emotional "Tebje Boga Hvalim" hymn bringing trepidation and devout elation to everyone's heart.

As always is, the true pinnacle of this beautiful event was the Holy Hierarchical Liturgy officiated by His Grace Maxim the Bishop of the Western American Diocese. Everyone in Phoenix was especially grateful that His Grace was able to visit at this time since the Western America Diocese just held Diocesan Days 2021 along with the Annual Diocesan Assembly Meeting at St George Serbian Orthodox Church in San Diego, CA, September 3rd and 4th, where His Grace was the main host.

Very Reverend Protojerej-Stavrofor Dragomir Tuba, Host Parish Priest, together with Very Reverend Protojerej-Stavrofor Aleksandar Vlajkovic, from St Sava Serbian Orthodox Church in Boston, Reverend Deacon Daniel August from St Elijah Parish in Aliquippa, and numerous faithful greeted His Grace at the gate of the St Sava Church property with the beautiful singing of the Most Holy Theotokos Kontakion led by newly inducted "Desanka Maksimovic" Church Choir from Boston, who continued to lead the faithful in singing responses during the Holy Hierarchical Liturgy. Along with local parishioners, guest singers from all the choirs, honorable Mark Brnovich, Arizona's Attorney General, who recently announced a run for the US Senate, was present at the service with his wife Honorable Federal Judge Susan Brnovich. Mark is a lifelong parishioner, former Church Council member, and active steward at St Sava Church in Phoenix.

In his Archpastoral message, His Grace Bishop Maxim greeted everyone especially all the guests from the Serbian Singing Federation. Eloquently Speaking about

Eucharistic importance he also reflected to this Sunday's Gospel reading that our own forgiveness begins first with us being able to forgive others.

In the continuation of the celebration, a delightful banquet followed in the Social Hall during which Mr. Paul Bjelich, former SSF President, via live video addressed everyone presenting a chronological historical SSF recap. At the very end V Rev Dragomir Tuba, on behalf of His Grace Bishop Maxim and the St Sava Parish, presented SSF President, Mr. Brad Hijaz, with a signed copy of the book, "The Serbian Christian Heritage of America," whose main editor is His Grace himself. This monumental and significant book containing historical articles of many leading historians about parishes and historical figures also has a significant section entitles, "Their Song Sustained Them," among other things about the history of Serbian Church Choral and Chant Singing, Serbian American Composers, and a brief history of the SSF.

Although our "Stevan Hristic" Church Choir members together with other St Sava Parishioners who happily joined them in organizing this beautiful visit of His Grace and the SSF 79th Choral Festival, now have tired arms and heavy legs, but also a great smile on their faces for a job impeccably done. With many beautiful



have one

n!







spc.rs