

Ecclesiastical Music and Mission

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From the beginning, ecclesiastical music has been an integral part of Christian worship, which, for the Orthodox, constitutes the foundation of the faith. As Fr. Georges Florovsky never tired of reminding us: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. Although, mainly for historical reasons, the Orthodox Churches have largely ignored mission for the past several centuries, it, too—as contemporary theologians such as Yannoulatos, Bria, and Vassiliadis, among others, remind us—constitutes an intrinsic part of the Christian faith, something which lies at the very core of the Church’s being. Ecclesiastical music and mission, then, have co-existed in the Church for 2000 years. This paper will reflect on this relationship, noting how missionary endeavors have utilized, developed, and/or adapted the Church’s music in order to “incarnate” Christ again and again in each time and place. Finally, the paper will present and analyze several different examples from contemporary missions in North America.

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- *Fr. Gregory Edwards, Th.D., was born in Virginia, USA, in 1978, and was raised Episcopalian (Anglican). At Brown University, under the tutelage of Prof. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, a renowned Syriac scholar and Orthodox convert, Fr. Gregory discovered Orthodoxy in 2002. After a year of catechism, he was received into the Orthodox Church. In 2006, one of the pre-eminent Orthodox New Testament scholars, Prof. Petros Vassiliadis, accepted Fr. Gregory as a doctoral candidate in the School of Theology of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In the summer of 2006, Fr. Gregory moved with his wife to Panorama, Thessaloniki and began language school at the university. After passing the university language exam in 2007, Fr. Gregory officially began his doctoral work at the School of Theology. In December 2007, Fr. Gregory was ordained a deacon and accepted into the Holy Metropolis of Dimitriadou and Almyrou. While finishing his studies in Thessaloniki, Fr. Gregory collaborated with the Metropolis’ Volos Academy for Theological Studies, for which he has translated many published theological works. Independently, he also edited well-received collections of articles by Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) and Christos Yannaras. In 2009, Fr. Gregory was ordained a priest, and became the father of triplets. On June 5, 2012, Fr. Gregory successfully defended his doctoral dissertation entitled “«Η Διακονία των αγίων» (Α΄ Κορ. 16,15). Διακονία και Μαρτυρία κατά τον Απ. Παύλο και η Σύγχρονη Ορθόδοξη Χριστιανική Μαρτυρία στην Βόρεια Αμερική” and was awarded άριστα. On July 31, 2012, Fr. Gregory was appointed proistamenos of the Church of the Holy Unmercenarys, Portaria, Volos, where he now lives with his family. He continues to collaborate with the Volos Academy for Theological Studies as a translator. On June 3, 2013, Fr. Gregory and his wife welcomed a new daughter. Finally, in April 2014, he was appointed Sessional Assistant Professor of Missiology at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York.*