National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians marks 50 years of ministry.

By Observer staff

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From the opening moments of the 2026 Clergy-Laity Congress in Cleveland, the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians has underscored the vital role sacred music continues to play in the life of the Greek Orthodox Church in America. Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Forum has maintained a visible presence throughout the week, highlighting its rich legacy while charting a course for the future of Orthodox music ministry.

The centerpiece of the Forum's celebrations was the 50th Anniversary Luncheon, attended by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Patriarchal representatives His Eminence Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria, His Eminence Metropolitan Philotheos of Thessaloniki, and Grand Archimandrite Iakovos, as well as members of the Holy Eparchial Synod, clergy, church musicians, and friends of the ministry from across the country.

The luncheon featured a heartfelt video message from His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who offered his congratulations and blessing on the Forum's 50th anniversary and commended generations of church musicians for their dedication to "rendering faithful service to the musical life of the parish," preserving and advancing the sacred musical tradition of the Orthodox Church.

"This year is very special indeed," Archbishop Elpidophoros noted in his address. "You are celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of your establishment as a coordinated, and coordinating, National Ministry of our Archdiocese, for you were founded at the Bicentennial Clergy-Laity Congress in Philadelphia in 1976."

"Looking back over the decades to that 23rd Clergy-Laity Congress, and the process by which the various initiative around the country came together, we remember names like Nick Maragos and Niki Kalkanis, Presvytera Anna Gallos and George Tangires, Frank Desby and Tikey Zes, George and Daispena Raptis, Jim Futris, Mary Jo Cally, Jim and Anna Counselors, Maria Keritsis, Joan Dwight, Georgia Stavropoulos, Dino Anagnost, and the inimitable Vicky Pappas," Archbishop Elpidophoros continued.

A highlight of the luncheon was Archbishop Elpidophoros's presentation of the Saint Romanos Medallion, the highest honor bestowed upon church musicians. Announced by Public Relations Chairman of the Forum George Theodossiou, Archbishop Elpidophoros

conferred the distinguished award upon Fr. Michael Pallad, presiding priest of St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church in Peoria, Arizona, and Nicholas Chimitris, President of the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians.

Fr. Michael has worked for decades composing and arranging English-language Orthodox liturgical music, which has helped make the Church's hymnography more accessible. Chimitris was honored for his steadfast leadership and dedication to advancing the mission of the Forum and strengthening church music ministries nationwide. The Saint Romanos Medallion is conferred on those whose service has had a lasting impact on church music ministry and the worship life of the Church.

Attendees also enjoyed a musical presentation by Forum members, including its young members, conducted by Costas Tsourakis of Holy Trinity Cathedral in New York.