

## Annual Christmas Festival features Archieparchial Choir

The Pittsburgh Byzantine Catholic Archieparchial Choir (PBCAC) under direction of Darlene Fejka performed at Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh, Pa., for the 10th annual Christmas Festival sponsored by the Christian Leaders Fellowship on December 12.

The program, under the musical direction of Rev. James Chepponis, featured 10 choirs with nearly 400 singers representing all the Christian communities in southwest Pennsylvania. Father Chepponis, who also directed the 27-piece orchestra, is Director of the Office for Music Ministry for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Scriptural readings on the birth of Christ and well-known carols sung by all added to the evening that began and ended with prayers offered by members of the fellowship.

Metropolitan Basil opened the Intercessory Prayers at the conclusion of the celebration with the invitation to "place before God the prayers of our heart."

The prayers were followed by a blessing offered by all members of the fellowship upon the assembly and the whole community.

The fellowship is comprised of Pittsburgh area bishops and denominational leaders, who meet monthly to study scripture, discuss matters of mutual concern and pray for the entire community.

Singing *Hospod Boh Predvicnyj* (God the Lord Eternal) and *Budi Imja Hospodne* (Blessed be the Name of the Lord) in Slavonic and English, the PBCAC sounded and looked magnificent as they debuted their exquisite garnet and gold choir gowns. Recently acquired, the gowns were an anonymous and generous gift bestowed in memory of the choir's founder and former patron, the late Metropolitan Judson M. Procyk.

### New music, new look highlight choir's first Christmas program

The Pittsburgh Byzantine Catholic Archieparchial Choir (PBCAC) presented "Songs of Joy: An Old-World Christmas" on Sunday, December 18 at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Munhall, Pa.

Dedicated to the memory of Metropolitan Judson M. Procyk, who founded the choir in 1998, the special program included Christmas hymns and carols from the Byzantine Ruthenian tradition, as well as those of other Eastern and Western European traditions. In addition to the 60 voices of the Archieparchial Choir, Director Darlene Fejka engaged several guest performers for the presentation.

Program highlights included:

- PBCAC soprano soloist Anne Chemsak of St. Nicholas Church, McKeesport, Pa. in a heartfelt delivery of the beloved Marian hymn "O Godbearer Virgin";

- PBCAC duet of Sister Cornelia Mihalko, OSBM and Mary Caryl Planiczki of St. Elias Church, Munhall, Pa. singing the Hungarian Christmas hymn "Dicsoseg";

- A new arrangement of the 12th century French carol "The Friendly Beasts";

- PBCAC soloists in a new arrangement of Bob Beers' "The Peace Carol";

- Croatian soloist Marilyn "Chee Chee" Repasky of Apollo, Pa. singing "Cestit svjetu danak svemu" (A wish for peace over all the earth);

- Violinist Dana Holomshek

of SS. Peter & Paul Church, Duquesne, Pa. as accompanist for several selections throughout the program;

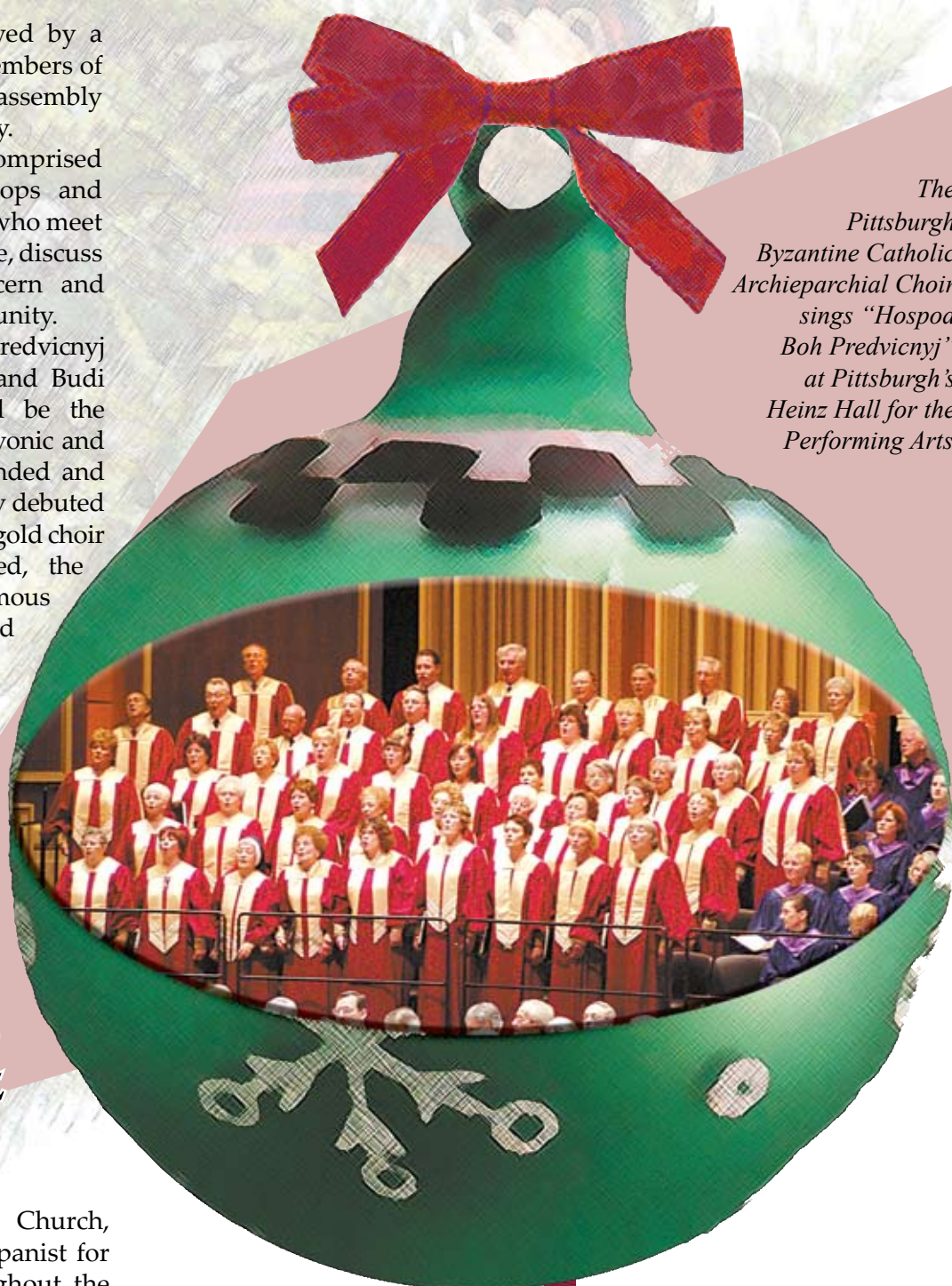
- An audience sing-along including the Hymn to St. Nicholas and an international version of "Silent Night," including verses in six languages.

Following the program, a reception was held in the lower level of the Cathedral with light refreshments and an impressive array of Christmas cookies made by choir members.

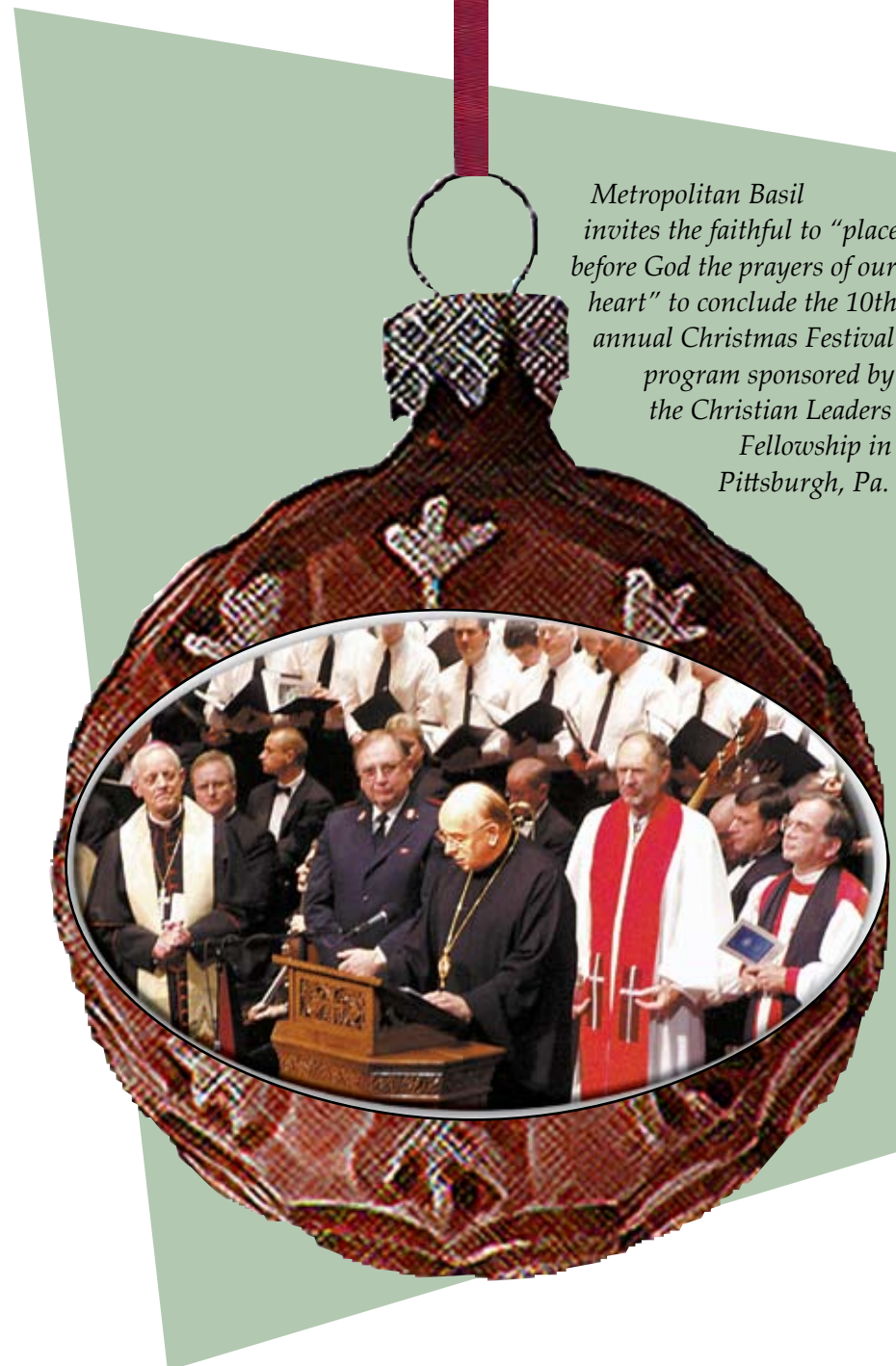
"The Choir has wanted to stage a Christmas program for quite some time, Director Fejka said. "We totally enjoy our involvement at the Heinz Hall Christmas Celebration every year, but that event can only show a fraction of the choir's Christmas repertoire, which has grown exponentially since our first official appearance as the PBCAC in 1998.

"Presenting our own program not only gives our members the opportunity to sing these beautiful Christmas melodies and arrangements again after so much time and dedication has been invested in learning them, but it also provides an opportunity to the faithful to listen and enjoy the fruits of our labor."

Sporting a fresh new look, the choir was glowing in their recently acquired garnet and gold robes, an anonymous and generous gift bestowed in memory of the choir's founder and former patron, the late Metropolitan Judson.



*The Pittsburgh Byzantine Catholic Archieparchial Choir sings "Hospod Boh Predvicnyj" at Pittsburgh's Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts*



*Metropolitan Basil invites the faithful to "place before God the prayers of our heart" to conclude the 10th annual Christmas Festival program sponsored by the Christian Leaders Fellowship in Pittsburgh, Pa.*