

THE CHILDREN OF MONASTICS

Part Two

By Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

Quite a few years ago, before I was ordained to the priesthood, a lady from Upstate New York came by our monastery for a visit. It happened to be time for Vespers, and so she stood in the area where our women visitors stand for the services.

After Vespers, she came up to me and said, "Oh, Father Ephraim, I just *love* the way the monks chant. It sounds sooo.... It sounds soooo....". (I think she was searching for the right word.)

Finally, her face brightened, and she said, "It sounds so *unrehearsed!*"

She might have meant "spontaneous," but I can't be sure. So, I said to her happily, "God bless you, madam, you don't know how right you are!"

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When I wrote about the incident mentioned above, I was referring to a time when, indeed, the monks rarely had practice sessions for their chanting. Nowadays, however, they practice on a regular basis and you can tell the difference. Of course, what they normally practice are the difficult pieces of music that one rarely hears in the ordinary parish. But this is why we are monks. Our vocation is to worship God, and we want to do it in the best way we can. Even if nobody else is there to hear it, God hears it and we hear it, and that's all that matters. People in the world have lots of noise they can listen to (and also lots of noise they don't want to listen to). We monks like to listen to *our* type of noise: liturgical chant. Now, just in case you would like to hear some of the noise we make when we worship God, you may hear it on a very nicely recorded CD of the monks of HTM chanting the entire Divine Liturgy in English.

It is said that children should be seen and not heard. Well, I think that this is maybe one particular child of the monastics that you might like hearing.

And I promise you: it does *not* sound unrehearsed!