

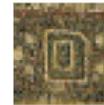
# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026



Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven  
pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her  
wine; she hath also furnished her table.  
She hath sent forth her maidens:  
she crieth upon the highest places of the city,  
Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for  
him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,  
Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.  
Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

# Sophia



A DEVOTIONAL NEWSLETTER OF ST. SOPHIA PARISH

St. Sophia Orthodox Church  
195 Joseph St.  
Victoria, BC  
V8S 3H6  
Canada

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Issue #158 February 2026



## St. Sophia Orthodox Church



*Canadian Parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia*

195 Joseph Street,  
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email: [fatherphilosoph@gmail.com](mailto:fatherphilosoph@gmail.com)

website: <https://saintsophia.ca/>

[Archpriest John Adams](#) † Memory Eternal

Priest Philosoph Uhlman

Protodeacon Gordian Bruce

Deacon Olexandr Savitskyi

# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026

## February Services

**Sat. Jan. 31, [Vigil](#) - 5:00 p.m. (Confession following)**

**Sun. Feb. 1, [Sunday of the Publican & the Pharisee](#) - Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.**

**Sat. Feb. 7, Vigil - 5:00 p.m. (Confession following)**

**Sun. Feb. 8, [Sunday of the Prodigal Son](#) Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.**

**Sat. Feb. 14, [General Pannykhida](#) 4:30 p.m.; followed by Vigil - 5:00 p.m. (Confession following)**

**Sun. Feb. 15, [Meeting of the Lord in the Temple](#) Feast Day - Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.**

*Followed by [Blessing of the Church Candles - Candelmas an ancient church custom since 450 AD](#). Bring your own beeswax candles to be blessed, then take home for prayers.*

*Also, [Candelmas Bells \(Snowdrop Flowers\)](#) are traditionally picked to decorate icon corners today.*

**Today also coincides with the [Sunday of the Dread Judgment \(Meatfare Sunday\)](#) and is the last day we eat meat before Pascha, & is the **beginning of [Cheesefare Week](#)****

**Sat. Feb. 21, Vigil - 5:00 p.m. (Confession following)**

**Sun. Feb. 22, [Forgiveness Sunday](#) (Cheesefare Sunday) - Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.**

***Immediately followed by [Forgiveness Sunday Vespers:12:00 p.m. with the asking of Mutual Forgiveness](#) Then we meet together for our traditional Cheesefare Blini Parish Potluck. (Fish and "all things cheesefare" are allowed, but not meat.)***

## Mon. Feb. 23, is the start of [Great Lent](#)

**The beautiful, penitential [Canon of St. Andrew of Crete](#) is chanted & sung together at services during the first 4 days of Great Lent - Mon. Feb. 23; Tues. Feb. 24; Wed. Feb. 25; Thurs. Feb 26; at 6:30 p.m.**

## ONLINE PARISH [MONTHLY SERVICES CALENDAR](#)

## February [Saints' Days](#)

Congratulations Xenia, John-Tallis S., John T, Zoe, and Kyra.

May God grant you many years! Please [help us update the parish list!](#)

## Thank You Church Cleaners & Floral Designers

What at first glance might seem like a chore or a duty, **church cleaning**, once experienced - quickly feels like a privilege and a gift all at the same time! An ordinary every day job is transformed into something we seem to be searching for in our endeavours for happiness, namely peace and tranquility, which seem to abide with us, unworthy as we are.

# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026

After a half hour cleaning and coming back home, one feels much better for doing such a small thing. But then again, we are all small people in a wondrous creation... so easily overlooked, in our usual haste to get things done we don't notice the marvels around us. In church we are given back that amazement, with so little cost to ourselves.

## Thinking about helping with the Church Flowers?

It's easy, and *Father Philosopher* reminds us to please keep it simple.

First, remove/clean up from the previous week's spent church flowers, and substitute with perhaps a couple of potted mums that will last a 2+ weeks (making sure you remember to water them). **Another way to help with flowers is to buy 2 new small bouquets and put them in matching church vases (found downstairs) and place them under the two candle stands.** *Keep the floral receipts* and contribute them into the candle box **with your full name** on top of the receipt, **saying *taxable donation*** - towards next year's income tax return. Maybe you'd like to donate your flowers to God, in memory of someone? It's a blessing to see beautiful flowers from God's Garden, given from our love of God and reflected in the Church. Please see the volunteer signup sheets on the bulletin board in the vestibule. *If you're brand new* to doing any of this, please ask Emma to team you up with someone to show you the ropes. **Questions? Ask Emma or Elizabeth.** Thank you!

## Parish Donations

At this time of the year we are asked for donations from many churches, monasteries, and organizations. Please remember the donation box on the candle table.

## Please Help Support Our Church!

Tithing is an act of worship and commitment, our little sacrifice of praise. Our Parish is a spiritual community, our extended family, operating completely on the revenue from the Good Will of parishioners, and of course - God's Grace. All the work done in our parish is volunteer work, even the clergy are unpaid, and have day jobs. Everything we see at church has been given out of a sense of love and thanksgiving to God for His Infinite blessings.

We come and hear beautiful music. We see mosaics, painted icons, and the results from weekly cleaning of the church. We see and smell delightful floral arrangements and incense, reminding us of God's creation. There are also "*the unseen*" upkeep of clergy vestments, payment of the church utilities, heat, hydro, monthly repairs and maintenance of the church building and grounds. May we emulate the poor widow in St. Luke 21:3, who although she could only give two coins she was extra blessed, as she gave all from her heart!

**[Here are a few ways people can donate.](#) (E-transfer and PayPal)**

There are also preprinted envelopes on the candle table for those who like to write cheques or use cash. There's an area on those envelopes for one's name, so at the end of the year one can receive a taxable donation receipt.

# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026

## Thank You Everyone!

For helping fill the two Winter Non-Perishable Food & Clothing Hampers, and many thanks to Michael and Laura, who dropped off these collections, **repeatedly!**

## Parish Donation Hamper Drive Resumes for Great Lent

There are extra ways to remember our neighbours who have less.

Beginning Mon. Feb. 23, and during Great Lent we will collect these items below, again.

Also, at this time of the year we are asked for donations from many churches, monasteries, and organizations.

Please also remember the Donation\$ Box on the candle table.

### **Mustard Seed's Suggested Non-Perishable Food Hamper Donations**

- Sources of protein like peanut butter, canned fish (eg. tuna) and canned meats (eg. chicken, beef)
- Granola Bars
- Boxes/Packs of instant hot chocolate
- Bottled Water
- Healthy nonperishables (e.g., cereal, beans, pasta, canned vegetables/fruit)
- Female hygiene products
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Toilet paper

### **Clothing Hamper Suggestions**

- Gently used mens/women's coats-jackets
- New underwear/new socks (preferably white socks, so dye doesn't colour feet when shoes are wet)
- Touques, ear warmers
- Scarves, gloves
- Gently used or new sweat pants/tops/hoodies
- Gently used shoes/boots
- Gently used or new sleeping bags/blankets
- Gently used or new hand towels
- Lip balm

# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026

Thank You ❤️ Youth Choir...



...For decorating the Church's Christmas Christmas Tree, and for the wonderful Nativity Yolka Concert performed before the Potluck Lunch, under the excellent direction of Andrei K. The youth choir made a joyful noise unto the Lord, singing by heart, hymns to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker; Two Angels (Serbian carol melody); the Nativity Tropar, Kontakion, Candy Cane, and performed the mini musical [Good King Wenceslaus](#) (an Orthodox Saint)

## Upcoming 2026 Parish Agape Grapeza Potlucks

**Feb. 22 - Forgiveness Sunday (After Vespers) Blini/Cheesefare Meal (fish allowed)**

**Sun. Mar. 29 (Fasting)**

**Sun. Apr 12 Pascha Lunch (After Vespers)**

**Sun. May 31 Pentecost**

**Sun. Jun. 21 (Fasting - fish allowed)**

**Sun July 12 (Sts. Peter and Paul Feast)**

**Sun. Aug 2**

**Sun. Aug. 30 Parish Feast Day**

**Sun. Sept. 27 (Exaltation of the Cross - Fasting)**

**Sun. Oct. 25**

**Sun. Nov. 29 (Fasting - fish allowed)**

**Sun. Dec. 20 A Coffee/Tea Hour (Fasting sweets only NOT a meal)**

# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026

## Pearls of Wisdom



*The celebration of the Meeting of the Lord in the church is not merely a historical commemoration. Inspired by the same Holy Spirit as Simeon, and led by the same Spirit into the Church of the Messiah, the members of the Church also can claim their own “meeting” with the Lord, and so also can witness that they too can “depart in peace” since their eyes have seen the salvation of God in the person of his Christ. ~ www.oca.org*

*On today's Feast of the Meeting of the Lord, when the heavens meet the earth, God meets man, history meets eternity, when - as our people beautifully say – spring and winter meet, may we also open our hearts for an encounter with the Lord... Open your hearts, listen to the*

*depths of your thoughts, desires, feelings, anticipations, nostalgias, yearnings, the pursuits of your hearts. For our hearts are created in the image of God and they yearn for God; the truth is often buried in passions, desires, appetites, ambitions, prejudices. Let us free ourselves of them and meet the Lord, for He always comes to meet us. He is the One who came, who is with us, Who always comes to be with us. ~ Bishop Atanasije (Homily on the Meeting of our Lord, Orthodox Christianity website)*

*The important thing is for us to enter into the Church (temple) – to unite ourselves with our fellow men, with the joys and sorrows of each and everyone, to feel that they are our own, to pray for everyone, to have care for their salvation, to forget about ourselves, to do everything for them just as Christ did for us. In the Church we become one with each unfortunate, suffering and sinful soul. ~ Elder Porphyrios (Wounded by Love)*

*The feasts on the calendar are not appointments with memorials, the recollection of events long past. They are invitations to present tense moments in the liturgical life of the world. In those moments there is an intersection of the present and the eternal. They are theophanies into which we may enter. ~ Fr. Stephen Freeman*

[\*\*How Can I Hold Thee?\*\* by \*\*St. Kassiani\*\* on \*\*The Meeting of the Lord Feast Day.\*\*](#)

[\*\*How to Spend Cheesefare Week\*\* by \*\*St. Tikhon of Zadonsk\*\*](#)

## Prayer, the Breath of Life

*A sermon by +Archpriest John Adams, of Eternal Memory; circa 2018*



*Photo: + Archpriest John reads from Gospel, Theophany 2021*

The subject matter is too practical and too timely not to share anew, especially as we move forward into the New Year. I want to talk of something very important - a matter of life and death, and this is prayer.

There are generally considered to be two kinds of prayer. Private prayer and public prayer. Prayer has been compared to breathing. Without this Breath, there is no Life. Prayers are like threads that go in every direction, binding us to the people we're near to... each with the whole fabric. It unites

the members with each other, with the whole body, uniting the body with the head. Prayer has been called conversation with God. In prayer, we praise or ask for what we need, or we pray to give thanks. We pray for ourselves and we pray for each other.

Don't take prayer lightly. Don't say "I can't think of anything else to do, so I'll pray about it." Don't put it last, put it first. If you say to someone, "Oh, I'll pray for you." Do it... You've made a contract. (If you ask someone to pray for you, do update them when a situation resolves.) And, you can pray for someone in secret, hoping for a reward later. Just as you don't know that someone else is having a conversation with God (about you).

What more could you do for yourself, or for someone else, than seek God's help? That doesn't mean you won't have to do anything else, as you may have to do a lot... In the Gospels, Christ says to Peter, "I have prayed for you." Many times we read, He went apart, He went up into a mountain to pray, He lifted up His eyes. St. Paul writes in his epistles asking for their prayers. And, he gives his famous commandment, "Pray without ceasing." Without ceasing - this is what we must try to do - to continue this conversation, to try to come back to it as often as you can remember - and then more often.

Read the morning and evening prayers from the prayer book, you may even have memorized them by now. But don't let them just run through your mind without attention, and here in this atmosphere, ask for what you need; help with your work, your health, your family, your specific aversion at this time. And in the evening, take a moment to be thankful, take a moment to ask forgiveness. Breathe in. Breathe out. This is private prayer.

# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026



Eve of Nativity Photos

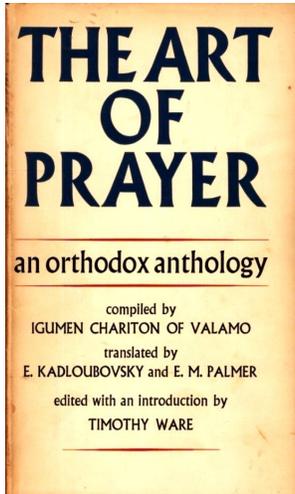
## [The Feast of Holy Theophany](#)



# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026

## Parish Library Books



*Compiled by Igumen Chariton of Valamo*

A spiritual anthology concerned in particular with the most frequently used and best loved of all Orthodox prayers, the Jesus Prayer.

Topics discussed include oral prayer, unceasing prayer of the heart, dangers of illusion and discouragement, need for seclusion, and how to attain inner peace. Texts are taken chiefly from the letters of Bishop Theophan the Recluse, along with many other writers from the Greek and Russian traditions.

## [Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian](#)



*During the week days of Lent, we say the prayer of St. Ephraim*

*O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, despondency, ambition and idle talking give me not. Prostration*

*But rather a spirit of chastity, humble-mindedness, patience, and love bestow upon me Thy servant. Prostration*

*Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my failings and not condemn my brother, for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen. Prostration*

*Then the prayer once more in full with one prostration at the end*

# Sophia Newsletter

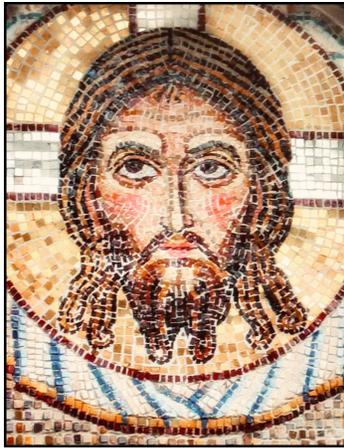
Issue #158 February 2026

## Links & Resources

- [St. Sophia Parish Website](#)
- [St. Sophia Parish Online Monthly Services Calendar](#)
- [Come and Dine](#) St. Sophia's Fasting Recipes
- [The Ark](#) - St. Sophia's Youth Quarterly
- [Church Etiquette & Dress Code](#)
- [12 Things I Wish I'd Known on First Visit to Orthodox Church](#)
- [Your First Visit to an Orthodox Church](#) Visiting an Orthodox Church – What You Should Know (YouTube)
- [About Orthodoxy](#)
- [The Divine Liturgy](#)
- [The Rudder](#) Streaming sacred music 24/7
- [Synodal Website](#)
- [Western America Diocese Official Site](#)
- [Montreal and Canadian Diocese](#)
- [Abbreviated Prayerbook](#)
- [The Sacramental Life](#)
- [Blisswood](#)

# Sophia Newsletter

Issue #158 February 2026



*“Christ the Power of God,  
and the Wisdom of God”*

*– First Corinthians*

## Troparion in the Second Tone

*We bow down before Thine all pure image, O Good One,  
asking forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ God; for  
Thou wast well pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh of  
Thine own will, that Thou mightest save what Thou hadst  
created from slavery to the enemy. Wherefore, we cry out to  
Thee in thanksgiving: Thou hast filled all things with joy, O  
our Saviour, Who hast come to save the world.*

## Kontakion in the Second Tone

*O uncircumscribable Word of the Father, knowing the  
victorious image, unincised and divinely wrought, of Thine  
ineffable and divine dispensation towards man, of Thy true  
incarnation, we honour it with veneration.*