

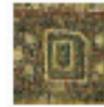
Sophia Newsletter

Issue #160 April 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

Sophia Newsletter

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St. Sophia Orthodox Church



Canadian Parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

195 Joseph Street,
Victoria, British Columbia
Canada V8S 3H6

email: fatherphilosoph@gmail.com

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Priest Philosoph Uhlman
Protodeacon Gordian Bruce

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April Services

Wednesday, April 1, 6:30 p.m. Confession before 7:00 p.m. Presanctified Liturgy

Saturday, April 4, Baptisms of Catechumens 10:00 a.m.

Vigil, Litya, Blessing & ✨Distribution of Palm Sunday Willows 5:00 p.m. (Confession following)

Sunday, April 5, Palm Sunday - Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. (Bring last night's Blessed Pussy Willows!)

- Vespers & Matins for Holy Week - 5:00 p.m. (Confession following)

Great & Holy Monday, April 6, Presanctified Liturgy - 10:00 a.m.

- Vigil, Litya for Feast of the Annunciation, 6:00 p.m. (Confession following)

Great & Holy Tuesday, April 7, Feast of Annunciation & Divine Liturgy - 10:00 a.m.

- Matins for Holy Week, 6:00 p.m. (Confession following)

Great & Holy Wednesday, April 8, Presanctified Liturgy - 10:00 a.m.

- Matins for Holy Week, 6:00 p.m. (Confession following)

Great & Holy Thursday, April 9, Vesperal Liturgy - 10:00 a.m.

- Matins & Passion Gospels (Bring Lantern), 6:00 p.m.

Great & Holy Friday, April 10

- Royal Hours - 8:00 a.m.

- Procession & Bringing Out of the Winding Sheet - 3:00 p.m.

- Matins & Lamentations, followed by Confession - 5:30 p.m.

Great & Holy Saturday, April 11

- Vesperal Liturgy - 10:00 a.m.

Confession (for Holy Communion at Pascha) - 3:00 ~ 5:00 p.m.

Readings of the Acts of the Apostles - 10:30 p.m.

Pascha Part 1/2

Midnight Office & Procession for Pascha - 11:30 p.m.

(Please, if possible, bring 6-12 hardboiled eggs to church to be blessed and dispersed to parish after service.)

Pascha Part 2/2

Sunday, April 12 Great & Holy Pascha

- Paschal Matins & Midnight Divine Liturgy 12:00 a.m.

Followed by the Blessing of Eggs & Paschal Baskets. This is the only time to bless the Pascha Baskets!

Holy Paschal Afternoon Vespers 1:00 p.m.

- Parishioners' Paschal Potluck Lunch (with Youth Choir's Mini Concert) 1:30 p.m.

Bright Saturday April 18, Vigil 5:00 p.m.

Sunday April 19, Second Sunday of Pascha; Thomas Sunday, Divine Liturgy - 10:00 a.m.

- Radonitsa Blessing of the Graves (Meet at Royal Oak Cemetery at Fr. John's Grave)

Saturday April 25, Vigil - 5:00 p.m.

April 26, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women Divine Liturgy - 10:00 a.m.

ALL SERVICES & EVENTS ~ ONLINE MONTHLY SERVICES CALENDAR

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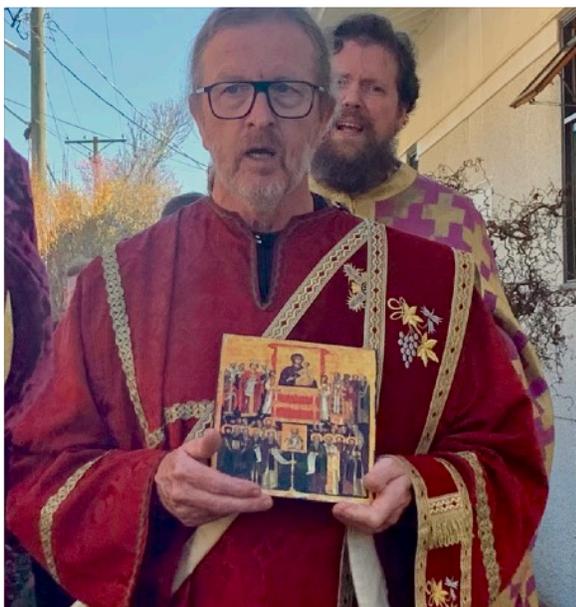
April Saints' Days

Congratulations to Daria, Svetlana and Marie. God grant you many years! Did we miss anyone? Please [help us update the parish list!](#) Thank you!

Thank You ❤️ March Church Cleaners & Floral Designers

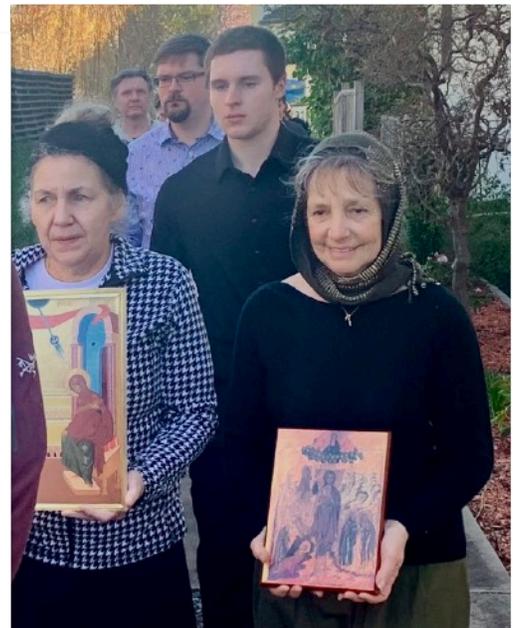
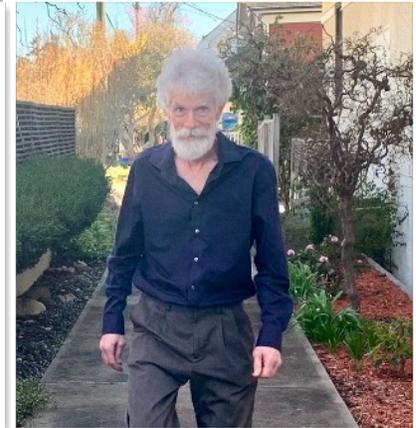
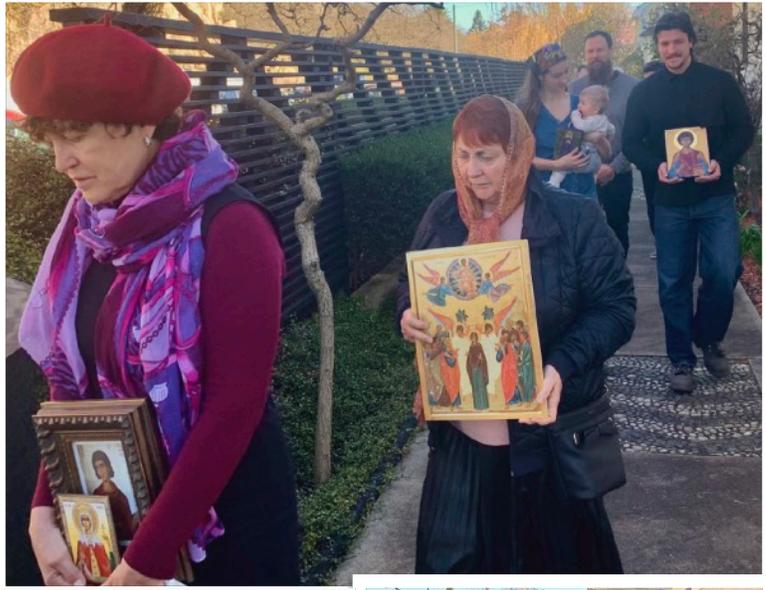
New volunteer positions for April are available on the bulletin board!

1st Sunday of Great Lent 2026 Triumph of Orthodoxy, Procession



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Parish Charitable Donations

Father Philosoph blessed \$100.00 each to be sent from the parish to:
The [Cridge Family Centre](#); [Victoria Native Friendship Centre](#) and [Hope Air](#).

From Our Parish Youth Quarterly: *The Ark*

[The Annunciation](#) (pp. 4-7); [Palm Sunday](#) (p. 15); [The Holy Week Services](#) (pp. 12-13);
[Jesus on the Cross](#) (p.20); [Pascha Baskets](#) (p. 26)

Our Lenten "passage" to "Pascha (Easter)" is derived from the Hebrew word "Pesche", or "Passover" - and the passing over of Creation to the Kingdom of Life.



Lazarakia Buns - [Recipe](#)

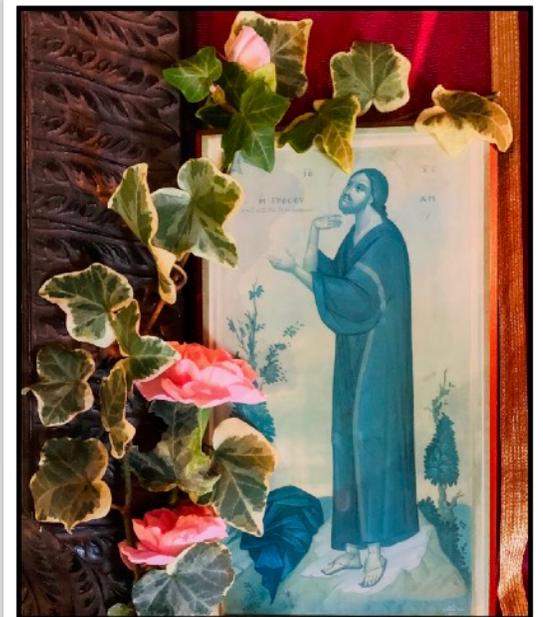
[Some More Lazarus Saturday Traditions](#)

Lazarakia buns are a special Greek bread traditionally baked to serve on [Lazarus Saturday](#), (this year it falls on April 12th) the day *before* [Palm Sunday](#)... to celebrate the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Shaped like a man wrapped in a shroud, they are vegan, and contain several sweet spices. Lazarus Saturday ends at sundown, and Palm Sunday marks the beginning of [Holy Week](#).

Keeping Watch With Jesus

Jesus and His disciples went to a garden called Gethsemane which was just outside the city. It was a place where Jesus often went when He wanted to pray alone. This time He asked three of His disciples to stay and watch with Him while He prayed. This garden is still in Jerusalem. If you visit the Holy Land you can sit in it too and think of Jesus.

For a long time Jesus prayed, for His heart was heavy and sad. He knew what was going to happen to him. When He came back He found that the three disciples had fallen asleep. "Could you not keep watch with Me for one hour?" He said, and then He went away to pray again. But the disciples were so tired that they fell asleep again, leaving Jesus to pray alone.



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This is why on Holy Thursday evening we have the service where we read all the Passion Gospels and hold candles... *We are keeping watch with Jesus, the Light of the world.*

After the Gospels, we take home the Gospels' light in a special lantern and light our home's icon corner with it.

Since ancient times each year, pilgrims from all the Orthodox countries would walk hundreds of miles to Jerusalem in the Holy Land, and bring home the Great Thursday flame.

Sometimes, if they were able to receive [the miraculous Holy Fire on Great Saturday](#) (which continues to happen each year), they would also bring it home to their village, so their church could keep the flame burning... as long as it could be properly and safely attended.

Why Did Jesus Die on the Cross?

~ [The Ark - Our Parish Youth Quarterly 2018, Volume 5](#)

Because of God's Great Love, He did something so special for each one of us! It's almost too amazing to even think about it! When we love someone very much, we help them as much as we can - without thinking how hard it might be for ourselves to do this. Through Adam and Eve, the first created man and woman, sin and death entered the world, and now we all sin. There are big sins and little sins, but everyone sins, and any sin separates us from God. Jesus Christ, the Son of God willingly took all the sins of everyone ever born, you, me, the whole world, and put all these sins upon Himself, because sin separates us from God. When Jesus died and was buried, all our sins died and were buried too. We also remember this at our baptism. We are now forgiven because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross! Jesus loves us so much! And, even if you were the ONLY person living in the whole world, Jesus still would have done this - just for you! Just for one person, because He knows each one of us and loves us all *so much!* And, because He is the Son of God - He arose victorious, from the dead! We see in His icons and on prosphora, the Greek initials "IC XC NIKA" - which means

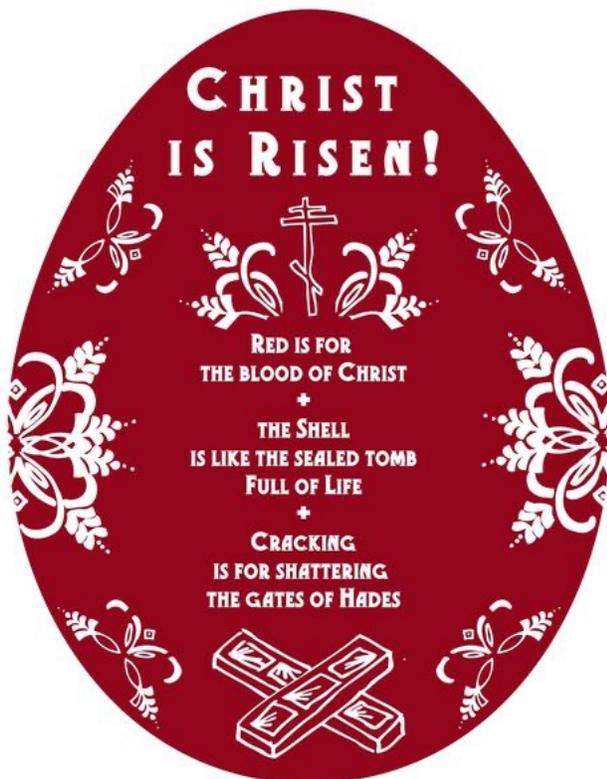


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Jesus Christ, Victor (Conqueror)! The Cross is a symbol of Christ's triumphant victory and power over death! This is why we no longer fear death, for death is a new beginning, and **Pascha - the Resurrection of Christ is the BIGGEST feast day of all! It is for this Cause that Christ was born... This new beginning!**

Onion Skin Dye for Pascha Eggs



Paschal Matins & Liturgy

When we come to Church late on Holy Saturday evening, the Church is very quiet and dark. The only light comes from the flickering lampadas. At midnight we leave the Church and walk around it three times (the procession) singing a beautiful, ancient, hymn. Each person carries a small, lit candle. It's very important to not casually chat during this time. Just sing or pray. If we concentrate on a special prayer very hard, we are very close to heaven this night. Meeting together in front of the Church door we return inside, and the Church is full of light! Candles glow everywhere. The tomb of Jesus is gone. We sing with great joy *"Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life."* This is the happiest and most important service of the year! ~ *Anonymous*

Christ's Descent into Hades Icon

This icon is frequently referred to as the Anastasis or the **Resurrection Icon**.

It is an icon of Pascha. The golden bars by Christ's feet are the gates of Hades, which He has broken and torn apart.

At Pascha, a tradition includes the cracking of our blessed Pascha eggs together. This represents how Christ shattered the gates of Hades.



There are keys floating in the abyss below, which symbolizes that he has entered and conquered both death and Hades.

Some icons have a skeletal figure who is chained up: that's Death. He has been bound and killed by Christ (all throughout Pascha-tide until the Ascension, we greet each other and sing "Christ has trampled down death by death"). The two figures whom Christ has grasped and is pulling out of Hades are Adam and Eve, symbolizing that his Victory redeems all mankind, even back to the beginning. This Resurrection scene is taking place in the past, present, and future. To his left, we see three Old Testament saints: Kings David and Solomon, two of his ancestors according to his fleshly nature. We also see, closest to him John the Baptist, who was his forerunner in both life and death.

On the right, we have the New Testament, including the apostles who are alive. The purpose is to show that Christ's redemption transcends time and space. This is an act that happened in the past, is happening right now, and will happen in the future. Christ is always in the state of redeeming and setting us free.

The blue shape around Christ is called the Mandorla (which is Italian for almond, which describes its shape). The Mandorla is the uncreated, eternal light of Christ.

In the writings of the Eastern Orthodox mystics, God is often prayerfully experienced as Light. This is not simply a pretty bright light. It is the same Light which filled the apostles with wonder when they witnessed His Transfiguration. It is the Light which Christ Himself described as the power of the Kingdom of God (Mark 9:1, Matt 16:28, Luke 9:27).

It is also the Light that is seen when one purifies their heart and mind (Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God). Those who seek God will find that the more they know Him, the less they comprehend Him. To know God, to experience Him, is to walk from the darkness of sin, into His Light, to enter into the mystery of His Presence.

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Radonitsa



The Tuesday of St. Thomas week is called [Radonitsa](#), and known as the Day of Rejoicing. On this day, and with Paschal Joy, we remember all who have reposed in the Faith. Orthodox graves are blessed by priests and visited by the faithful. As it's hard for most parishes to gather at the graves on weekdays, the graves are blessed instead on the first Sunday after Pascha, called St. Thomas Sunday (this year it falls on April 19th), after the Divine Liturgy. We meet at the cemetery, and sometimes, treats are also brought and served at the graveside, or - there's a traditional, joyous, communal picnic either at the cemetery, or back at the church trapeza -

(TBA). In any case, it's important to visit the graves of our loved ones especially during the 40 days of Pascha-tide; and to greet them saying or singing [Christ is Risen](#)...!

[A Paschal Miracle At the Kiev Caves](#)

[For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.](#)

Pearls of Wisdom

Remember that we are called to change and be transformed. Great Lent is like a tuning fork that aligns our soul with a spiritual melody. We must strive to maintain this harmony for as long as possible, even after the Holy Forty Days have ended. ~ Metropolitan Onuphry of Ukraine.

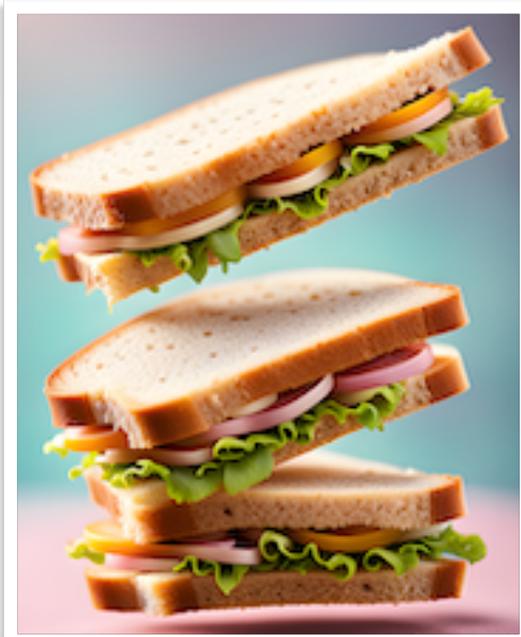
Christ's sacrifice is a sacrifice of praise, of sanctification, of restoration, by which He offers the whole of creation to the Father, so that the Father may bring it to life in the Holy Spirit. It is truly a "Pasch", the Passover, the "Passing Over" of Creation into the Kingdom of Life. ~ The Roots of Christian Mysticism, by Olivier Clement

For our Orthodox Pascha is not just a festival, but the Festival of all festivals, an event for exceeding all the events of this world. Pascha shakes the whole cosmos: the sun, by our faith, dances and becomes iridescent with every colour of the rainbow, and all of creation rejoices. Some observe a magnificent silence, lacking the strength to express the inexpressible feeling of Paschal joy which fills their souls. Others hasten to share their feeling of the Paschal triumph. All people and all things begin to move, the tedious vanities of this world are cast aside, and all are transfigured. Pascha is, first of all, in us ourselves, in our hearts. God's gift of the feeling of love penetrates our whole being, and we love each person and all things. This relates not just to the animal kingdom, but to the whole of creation, extending to the smallest blade of grass and the smallest flower. Nothing escapes our loving attention. May the Lord help us all to keep ourselves like this, for as such did the Lord create us. ~ Excerpt Paschal Epistle from Metropolitan Vitaly, May, 2000; The Two Thousandth Pascha of Christ

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Today is the day of salvation for the world...Christ is risen from the dead: arise with him. Christ returns to Himself: you also must return to Him. Christ has come forth from the tomb: free yourselves from the fetters of evil. The gates of hell are open and the power of death destroyed. The old Adam superseded, the new perfected. In Christ a new creation is coming to birth: renew yourselves. ~ Gregory Nazianzen Oration 45, for Easter



Parish Food Distribution Efforts for Justice Van Society

With Father Philosoph's blessing, and following the directions of Colleen Miller (the Sandwich Coordinator), from the [Justice Van Society](#), several of the men from St. Sophia organized to make four loaves of sandwiches on March 15, 2026. Brothers-in-Christ, Alexei, Steven, and Daniel had purchased all of the necessary ingredients and stored them in the trapeza fridge.

Steven, Maximos, and I began assembling sandwiches - approximately 24 ham, cheese, and lettuce, and 12 Peanut Butter and Jelly - packed into sandwich bags and stored in the fridge. Later on I

collected the sandwiches into a cooler and delivered them to Frank, the founder of the Justice Van Society, outside of the Mustard Seed on Queens Ave.

There were a dozen or so people waiting nearby to receive food from Frank - I'd been told earlier by our sister-in-Christ, Genevieve, (who has been quietly making food for the Justice Van for some time), that since food sources like the Mustard Seed are closed on Sunday, these sandwiches are especially important for people without consistent food access.

I will post a sign up sheet on the vestibule's bulletin board with the next three project dates, and a call to anyone in the Parish who is interested in joining.

I'll bet we can feed a good number of people, given enough ingredients and hands! Thank you.

In Christ,

[Michael Allison](#)

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YouTube Past Paschas



Parish Youth Choir
Sing: *Son Rise* [Link](#)



Parish Youth Choir & Parish Sing:
Christ is Risen: [Link](#)



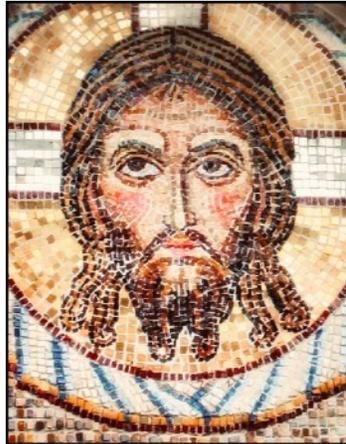
Parish Holy Week *Music & Readings*: [Link](#)

Links & Resources

- [St. Sophia Parish Website](#)
- [St. Sophia Parish Online Monthly Services Calendar](#)
- [Come and Dine](#) St. Sophia's Fasting Recipes (**Great Lenten Meal Ideas!**)
- [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](#)

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*“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.*

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*“We knew not whether we
were in heaven or earth...*

*We only know that God dwells
there among men, and their
service is fairer than
the ceremonies of
other nations.”*

The Orthodox Church

With these words, envoys sent from Russia by Prince Vladimir in the year 987 recorded their impression of Constantinople's awesome Orthodox Cathedral, Hagia Sophia. They had been sent to search for the true religion. Within a year of their report, Prince Vladimir and the Russian people were baptized in Christ by Orthodox missionaries. Today, as in Prince Vladimir's time, the Orthodox Church – fully aware that man is a union of body and soul – uses all the beauty of creation to move her faithful children to prayer and worship: icons, beautiful singing, sweet-smelling incense, and majestic services.

The Greek word 'Orthodoxia' means 'correct praise' or 'correct teaching' and in the Orthodox worship the praise and teaching are closely interwoven.

Jesus Christ founded His Church through the Apostles. By the grace received from God at Pentecost, the Apostles established the Church throughout the world. In Greece, Russia, and elsewhere, the True Apostolic Church continues to flourish, preserving the Faith of Christ pure and unchanged.

