

Liturgical Services are now streamed on YouTube. You DO NOT need a YouTube account to access the on-line services, nor do you need to subscribe. Simply click on the following link:

<http://www.youtube.com/@stsophiaVF>

PLEASE keep in mind that our fixed costs are still ever present. We hope you can help us with an online donation. You can give by going to our website, www.saintsophiachurch.org and clicking on the "Donate" button.

Donate



You can also donate using Venmo! Just search in Venmo or click on www.venmo.com/SaintSophiaChurch

We also accept Zelle as a form of payment! Through your bank's Zelle system, input treasurer@saintsophiachurch.org as a recipient and you'll be ready to donate to St. Sophia Church.




St. Sophia/Ss Faith, Hope & Agape
Greek Orthodox Church of Valley Forge
900 South Trooper Rd., Jeffersonville, PA 19403

**Rev. Fr. Konstantinos Loukas
Proistamenos**

February 22, 2026

8:45 am Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy

 **Fast Day (Dairy, Eggs, and Fish Allowed)**
Dairy, eggs, fish, oil and wine are allowed. Refrain from meat.

Today we commemorate

Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare Sunday)
The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden
The Finding of the Precious Relics of the Holy Martyrs
in the Quarter of Eugenius
Our Righteous Fathers Thalassius and Baradatus
Anthousa the Martyr & her 12 Servants



St. Sophia/SS. Faith, Hope & Agape
Greek Orthodox Church of Valley Forge

900 South Trooper Road
Jeffersonville, PA, 19403

Tel.: (610) 650-8960 • Fax: (610) 650-8961

www.saintsophiachurch.org email: office@saintsophiachurch.org

Sunday Worship: 8:45 am - Orthros: 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Office Hours - 10 am to 4 pm

Rev. Fr. Konstantinos Loukas, Proistamenos
frkonstantinos@saintsophiachurch.org
Metropolis of New Jersey



February 22, 2026



ENTRANCE HYMNS

Resurrectional Apolytikion – To Fedhron Tis Anastaseos (“The Joyful News of Your Resurrection”)

The joyful news of your resurrection was proclaimed by the angel to the women disciples. Having thrown off the curse that fell on Adam, they ran elatedly to tell the apostles: Death has been vanquished; Christ our God is risen from the dead, blessing all the world with his great mercy.

Apolytikion of St. Sophia/Ss. Faith, Hope & Agape

Greek

Ὁς ελαία κατά καρπος ανεβλάστησας, ἐν ταῖς ἀνλαῖς τοῦ Κυρίου, Σοφία μάρτυς σεμνή, καί προσήγαγες Χριστῷ καρπὸν ἡ δύτατον, τοὺς τῆς νηδύος σου βλαστούς, διὰ γώνων εὐαγῶν, Ἀγάπην τε καὶ Ἐλπίδα σὺν τῇ θεόφρονι Πίστει, μεθῶν δυσώπει υπέρ πάντων ἡμῶν.

English Phonetics for Greek

Os elea kata karpos anevlastisas, en tes avles tu Kyriou Sofia martys semni, ke prosigages Christo karpon idytaton, tus tis nidyos su vlastus, di' agonon evagon, Agapin te ke Elpida, syn ti theofroni Pisti; meth' on dysopi yper pandon imon.

English

As an olive tree laden with fruit you sprouted forth, in the courtyards of the Lord, Sophia martyr dignified, and you brought to Christ a fruit most sweet, Namely your womb's own sprouts, brought up by instructive deeds: your daughters Love and Hope, along with God-minded Faith; together intercede with God for us all.

Seasonal Kontakion – Tis sofias odhighe (“The guide of wisdom”)

O guide to wisdom, provider of prudence, disciplinarian of fools, and defender of the poor, fortify and discipline my heart, O Master; You, give me a word, O Word of the Father. For behold, I will not hinder my lips from crying to You: O merciful Lord, have mercy on me who have fallen.

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2026

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 1st	 Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 8th	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 15th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare FEBRUARY 22nd FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 1st	 SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 8th	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 15th	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS HALF WAY TO PASCHA! Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 22nd	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent MARCH 29th	 ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 5th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 10th	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 12th NO FASTING!	 HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

"And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing you will receive." Matthew 21:22

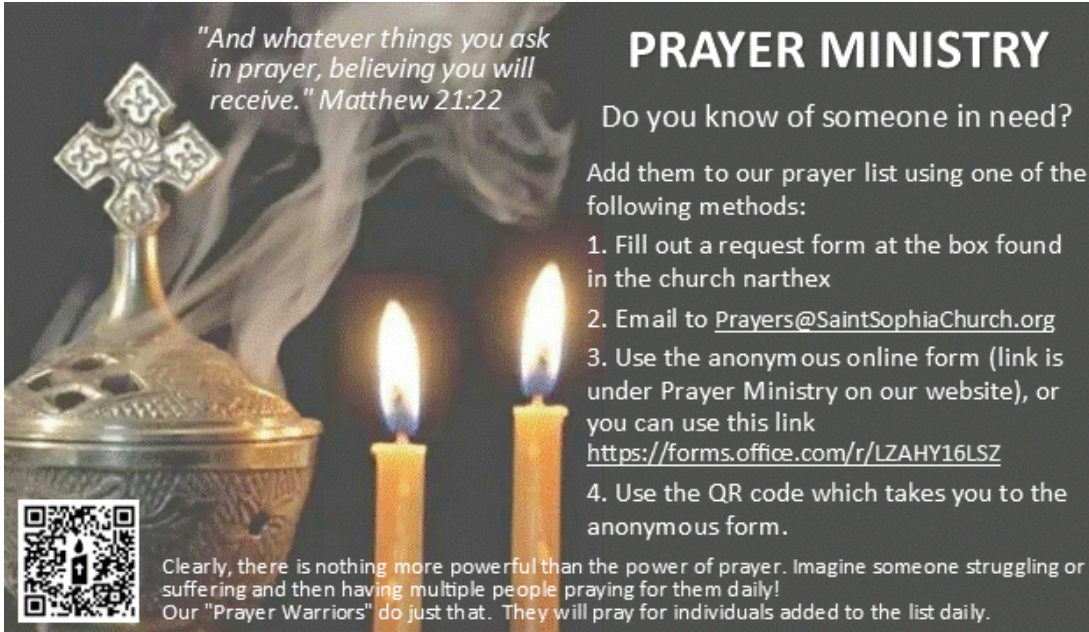
PRAYER MINISTRY

Do you know of someone in need?

Add them to our prayer list using one of the following methods:

1. Fill out a request form at the box found in the church narthex
2. Email to Prayers@SaintSophiaChurch.org
3. Use the anonymous online form (link is under Prayer Ministry on our website), or you can use this link <https://forms.office.com/r/LZAHY16LSZ>
4. Use the QR code which takes you to the anonymous form.

Clearly, there is nothing more powerful than the power of prayer. Imagine someone struggling or suffering and then having multiple people praying for them daily! Our "Prayer Warriors" do just that. They will pray for individuals added to the list daily.



Epistle Reading
The reading is from St. Paul's First Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4

***Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.
Verse: God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.***

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

Ἀνάγνωσις ἐπιστολῆς
Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους 13:11-14, 14:1-4 τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα

***Εὔξασθε καὶ ἀπόδοτε Κυρίῳ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν.
Στίχ. Γνωστὸς ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ὁ Θεός, ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ μέγα τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.***

Ἀδελφοί, νῦν ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν ἢ σωτηρία ἢ ὅτε ἐπίστεύσαμεν. Ἡ νύξ προέκοπεν, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν· ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους, καὶ ἐνδυσώμεθα τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός. Ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ, εὐσχημόνως περιπατήσωμεν, μὴ κώμοις καὶ μέθαις, μὴ κοίταις καὶ ἀσελγείαις, μὴ ἔριδι καὶ ζήλῳ. Ἄλλ' ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, καὶ τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιείσθε, εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν. Τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει προσλαμβάνεσθε, μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν. Ὅς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει. Ὁ ἐσθίων τὸν μὴ ἐσθίοντα μὴ ἐξουθενείτω, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἐσθίων τὸν ἐσθίοντα μὴ κρινέτω· ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο. Σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην; Τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει. Σταθήσεται δέ· δυνατὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς στήσαι αὐτόν.

Order by
March 16

Pickup
April 4

ST. SOPHIA PHILOPTOCHOS

Tsoureki Sale

TRADITIONAL GREEK EASTER BREAD

\$20 each

Make checks payable to
St. Sophia Philoptochos or pay electronically
with Venmo or Zelle (ladies@saintsophiachurch.org)



Made with PosterMyWall.com



GOSPEL READING

The Gospel According to Matthew 6:14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ

Ἐκ τοῦ Κατὰ Ματθαῖον 6:14-21 Εὐαγγελίου τὸ Ἀνάγνωσμα

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος· Ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, οὐδὲ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν. Ὅταν δὲ νηστεύητε, μὴ γίνεσθε ὡσπερ οἱ ὑποκριταὶ σκυθρωποί· ἀφανίζουσι γὰρ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν ὅπως φανῶσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύοντες· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀπέχουσι τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν. σὺ δὲ νηστεύων ἄλειψαί σου τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου νίψαι, ὅπως μὴ φανῆς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύων, ἀλλὰ τῷ πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ, καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι ἐν τῷ φανερῷ. Μὴ θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅπου σὴς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει, καὶ ὅπου κλέπται διορύσσουσι καὶ κλέπτουσι· θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὅπου οὔτε σὴς οὔτε βρῶσις ἀφανίζει, καὶ ὅπου κλέπται οὐ διορύσσουσιν οὐδὲ κλέπτουσιν· ὅπου γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ θησαυρὸς ὑμῶν, ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδία ὑμῶν.



The Ladies Philoptochos Society of St. Luke, in partnership with Rise Against Hunger, invites you to

A MEAL PACKAGING EVENT

Rise Against Hunger is driven by the vision of a world without hunger. Their mission is to end hunger in our lifetime by providing food and life-changing aid to the world's most vulnerable and creating a global commitment to mobilize the necessary resources. riseagainsthunger.org

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2026 • 10 AM TO 12 PM
ST LUKE COMMUNITY CENTER

Contact: Christina Thomas at thomascut@aol.com
www.stlukephiloptochos.org

SCAN HERE:
REGISTER TO
VOLUNTEER



FOCUS North America exists to serve the poor by bringing together Orthodox Christian churches and community partners to provide Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding, Shelter and other assistance to address the needs of local communities.

Since December 2024, FOCUS Philadelphia has grown from serving 30 meals every Thursday at Aviator Park to providing **over 150 meals each week** across two days in both **Norristown and Philadelphia**. And we're not stopping there — **by this Spring, we expect to reach 300 meals per week**. But we cannot do this without you.

Our dedicated volunteers work tirelessly every week, and they could use an extra set of hands. **Volunteering is easy**—visit our Sign Up Genius link below to get involved.

Where We Serve:

Norristown: Wednesdays at 7:00 PM **Philadelphia:** Thursdays at 8:00 PM

All meals are prepared at **St. Sophia**, and thanks to our recently donated **school bus**, we can safely transport food, supplies, and volunteers directly to the communities we serve. If you cannot volunteer, then no worries. We need help with food and clothing donations, financial assistance, help with communications, keeping supplies organized and more. Discover how you can support this vital ministry either by going to focusphiladelphia.org to learn more.



**MINI-SERIES
ON CHURCH SERVICES
(FEB–MAY)**

4 MONTHLY MEETINGS

**WHAT WE'LL EXPLORE
LITURGICAL BOOKS
(WHAT THEY ARE AND HOW WE USE THEM)**

**THE BASIC ORDER OF SERVICES
(A SIMPLE GUIDE TO THE FLOW)**

**BYZANTINE MUSIC MODES (ECHOI)
(A CLEAR, BEGINNER-FRIENDLY OVERVIEW)**

**LEARNING ONE HYMN TOGETHER
(STEP-BY-STEP, EVERYONE WELCOME)**

WHO IS IT FOR?  **ANYONE WHO WANTS TO UNDERSTAND THE SERVICES A LITTLE BETTER
NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED.**

WHERE  **SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH OF VALLEY FORGE
(IN THE CHURCH HALL)**



**THURSDAY,
FEBRUARY 19,
7:30–9:00 P.M.**

**THURSDAY,
MARCH 19,
7:30–9:00 P.M.**

**THURSDAY,
APRIL 23,
7:30–9:00 P.M.**

**THURSDAY,
MAY 14,
7:30–9:00 P.M.**

**TO REGISTER: PZOURNATZOGLOU@SAINTSOPHIACHURCH.ORG
PANAGIOTIS ZOURNATZOGLOU, PROTOPSALTIS**

**THE NICENE CREED
(The Confession of Faith)**

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages;

Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through Whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;

And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father;

And He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.

In one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the age to come.

Amen

ENGLISH

Our Father, who art in heaven;
hallowed be Thy name, Thy
Kingdom come, Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses, as
we forgive those who trespass
against us; and lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from
evil.

GREEK

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς
ἀγιασθήτω τό ὄνομά σου,
ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου,
γενηθήτω τό θέλημά σου, ὡς
ἐν οὐρανῷ καί ἐπί τῆς γῆς.

Τόν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τόν
ἐπιούσιον δός ἡμῖν
σήμερον καί ἄφες ἡμῖν τά
ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καί ἡμεῖς
ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν καί
μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς
πειρασμόν, ἀλλά ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπό
τοῦ πονηροῦ.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

ENGLISH PHONETICS

Pá-ter i-món o en tis ou-ra-nís
a-gi-as-thí-to to o-no-má Sou,
el-thé-to I va-si-lí-a Sou,
ge-ni-thí-to to thé-li-má Sou, os
en ou-ra-nó ke e-pi tis ghis.

Ton ár-ton i-món ton
e-pi-ou-si-on dos i-mín
sí-me-ron ke á-fes i-mín ta
o-fe-lí-ma-ta i-món, os ke i-mís
a-fí-e-men tis o-fí-lé-tes i-món ke
mi i-se-nég-kis i-más is
pi-ras-món, al-la rí-se i-más a-pó
tou po-ni-roú.

Phonetics by Dr. Christine Kerxhalli,
orthodoxtoday.wordpress.com



**Archpastoral Visit of His Eminence
Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey**

Sunday of St. John Climacus

**Orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
Sunday, March 22, 2026
9:00 AM**



**St. Sophia, Sts. Faith, Hope and Love
Greek Orthodox Church
900 S Trooper Rd,
Jeffersonville, PA 19403**

Senior Citizen Ministry: St. Sophia's Senior Parea is open to all senior citizens of the community. The meetings take place on Thursdays from 10:00 am to 12 noon.

Coffee Hour Sponsors Needed: Thank you to everyone who has sponsored coffee hour recently. There are several upcoming Sundays available. If you are interested in sponsoring a coffee hour, please sign up on the Coffee Hour Sponsor Sheet on the window at the back of the hall near the coffee/refreshments table. **The sponsor is responsible for bringing the food, but the church will supply the coffee, creamer, juice, and paper products to eliminate waste and clutter. We ask that the sponsors donate \$25 (made payable to St. Sophia Church) to offset these expenses.** Thank you!

Mortgage Reduction Campaign: As of **February 1, 2026**, our mortgage balance is **\$192,942.34**. Thank you to our Stewards and friends who participated this month, and please help us continue to reduce the mortgage to \$0 in the near future.

February 22, 2026



St. Sophia/Ss Faith, Hope & Agape Vigil Candle: If you are interested in sponsoring a vigil candle, please see a Parish Council member at the Pangari – no advance signup necessary and several individuals or families can sponsor each week. The proceeds of these donations will go to our Mortgage Reduction Fund. Each vigil candle lasts one week; the asking donation is \$10.

Memorial: Today's memorial is chanted for the souls of:

- ✘ **Melissa Anastasia Kourtidis (3 years)**, loving wife of Kiriakos and mother to Christos and Despina. She is also survived by her parents Lina and Alejandro, her brother Eric and wife Sue, nephew Brandon, her mother-in-law, Despina, sister-in-law and best friend Ourania, and her niece Christina and nephew Leandros. May her memory be eternal.
- ✘ **Efthimios Tsatalos (45 years) & Alexandra Tsatalos (20 years)**, beloved parents of Nancy (George) Reganis. They were grandparents to Efthimios and Paraskevoula and great-grandparents to Anna and Alexandra. May their memory be eternal.

Blessing of the Scarves: St. Sophia's Knitting Guild has been working diligently since 2021, making handmade knitted and crocheted items. They have completed several different projects since then. This morning, a collection of scarves will be blessed, after which they will be handed over to our FOCUS team for distribution to the homeless.

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival: The Parish Level of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival will take place today immediately following the Divine Liturgy.

Coffee Hour: Thank you to the Kourtidis family for offering today's coffee hour (in memory of Melissa) in conjunction with our Ladies Philoptochos, who is having their Tiropita and Bougatsa Fundraiser today.

Cheesefare Sunday: The Ladies Philoptochos is having a **Tiropita** and **Bougatsa** sale during coffee hour today. Don't delay -- quantities are limited!

Saturday of Souls: The third Saturday of Souls is **Saturday, February 27th**. **Forms for the names of the departed are available at the Pangari (and attached)**. Please submit your names to the Parish office by 12 noon on February 27th. **Please DO NOT text the names or submit them via Facebook**. Please also remember your loved ones by not only submitting their names, but by making koliva and attending the holy services to offer your own prayers for their eternal rest. Please remember that the names you submit are read on all three Saturdays. Please **PRINT CLEARLY, AND ONLY BAPTISMAL FIRST NAMES ARE NECESSARY**.

CHEESEFARE SUNDAY
TIROPITA AND BOUGATSA SALE
FEBRUARY 22, 2026



TIROPITA
\$6



BOUGATSA
\$7

Proceeds will be used to continue the philanthropic works of the Saint Sophia Ladies Philoptochos

ST. SOPHIA PHILOPTOCHOS
PRESENTS

DINNER AND A MOVIE

SATURDAY - MARCH 14, 2026

LENTEN MEAL
DINNER: 5 PM
SHOWTIME: 6 PM

DINNER DONATION - \$15

FEEL FREE TO BRING YOUR
FAVORITE SNACK OR BEVERAGE



RESERVATIONS BY SUNDAY, MARCH 8TH

ladies@saintsophiachurch.org
or Kathy Tsipras 610-256-9715

FR. JOHN A. LIMBERAKIS CULTURAL CENTER
900 S TROOPER ROAD, JEFFERSONVILLE, PA 19403

CATECHETICAL HOMILY
For the Opening of Holy and Great Lent

+ **BARTHOLOMEW**

By God's mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church

May the grace and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ;
and from us, prayer, blessing, and forgiveness.

Most honorable brother Hierarchs and blessed children in the Lord,

Filled with sacred emotion, we enter once again, by God's goodwill, into Holy and Great Lent, the arena of ascetic struggle, the time of fasting and repentance, of humility and prayer, of spiritual vigilance and love, with the eyes of our heart directed to the life-giving Cross of the Lord, which guides us all toward Holy Pascha that opens the gates of Paradise to the human race.

This blessed period now opening before us constitutes an opportunity to comprehend once more the truth of asceticism according to Christ and its inseparable association with the Eucharistic realization of the Church, whose every expression and dimension is illumined by the light and joy of the Resurrection. The spirit of asceticism is hardly a foreign element introduced into Christianity, nor is it the result of influence by dualistic ideologies outside the Church. Asceticism is another word for the Christian existence, connecting it with absolute trust in Divine Providence, with the inexhaustible spiritual gladness of a life dedicated to Christ, with self-transcendence and self-offering, with charitable love and respect for all creation.

Asceticism is not a matter of self-willed choices and subjective particularities, but of submission to the rule and the "catholic experience" of the Church. It has been described as an "ecclesiastical" rather than an "individual" event. Life in the Church is indivisible. Repentance, prayer, humility, forgiveness, fasting, and philanthropic deeds are interconnected and interwoven. In the Orthodox tradition, there is no asceticism as an end in itself, for that only leads to an overestimation of individual effort and feeds tendencies of self-justification.

Great Lent is the appropriate time to experience the Church as the place and the manner in which the gifts of divine Grace are revealed, always as a foretaste of the joy of the Lord's Resurrection, the cornerstone of our faith and the all-radiant horizon of "the hope within us." It is by divine inspiration that the Church honours on Cheesefare Saturday the sacred memory of saintly men and women who have shone brightly in asceticism, for they are the supporters and companions of the faithful in the long course of asceticism. In the arena of spiritual struggle, we have the benevolence of the Triune God with us, the

protection of the All-Holy Mother of God and Mother of us all, and the intercessions of the saints and martyrs of the faith.

Healthy Christian asceticism is the participation of the whole human being—as a unity of spirit, soul, and body—in the life in Christ, without undervaluing matter and the body, and without a Manichaean reduction of spirituality. As it has been written, Christian asceticism is ultimately a struggle “not *against*, but *for* the body”; as the *Gerontikon* affirms: “We have been taught not to destroy the body, but to destroy the passions.”

Unfortunately, and inaccurately, Christian asceticism has been labelled by contemporary thinkers as a denial of the joy of life and as a restriction of human creativity. Nothing could be further from the truth! As release from “having” and from attachment to the possession of things, and especially as liberation from the ego, from “seeking one’s own,” and from the “having of our being,” asceticism is the source and expression of genuine freedom.

What can be more truthful than the exodus from the captivity of “individual right” and the openness and love for our fellow human beings, the inner “good change” and steadfastness in fulfilling God’s commandments? What could be more creative than fasting, when it is a holistic attitude of life and expresses the ascetic and Eucharistic spirit of the Church, when it is a “common struggle” and not an “individual feat”? What could be more existentially striking than repentance and internal conversion, as a vital direction toward the truth and a renewed discovery of the power of divine Grace, of the depth of life in Christ and the hope of eternal life?

It is truly impressive that, when the early Christian character of Holy and Great Lent as a period of preparation for Holy Baptism in the Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection was replaced by the “ethos of repentance,” there nevertheless remained its experience as a “second baptism.” For this reason, the period of fasting and repentance is not sorrowful. Our hymnology speaks of the “spring of fasting,” while theology calls Great Lent a “spiritual spring” and a “period of joy and light.” All of this assumes special timeliness and significance in the face of the anthropological confusion of our time, as well as the new alienations rooted in contemporary civilization.

With these sentiments and thoughts, reminding all the children of the Holy Great Church of Christ throughout the Lord’s dominion, that on the day of the Akathist Hymn, the festivities will culminate, marking the 1400th anniversary of the year 626—when, in expression of gratitude to the Theotokos for the deliverance of the City of Constre from a perilous siege, the Akathist Hymn was chanted standing in the sacred Church of Blachernae—we wish you all a smooth course of the Fast, with asceticism and patience, with thanksgiving and doxology.

May we all, speaking the truth in love and being sanctified in the Lord, travel this way toward the fullness of joy in His radiant Resurrection.

Holy and Great Lent 2026

✠ **BARTHOLOMEW of Constantinople**

Your fervent supplicant for all before God

ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΤΗΧΗΤΗΡΙΟΣ
ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΝΑΡΞΗ
ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΤΕΣΣΑΡΑΚΟΣΤΗΣ

+ Β Α Ρ Θ Ο Λ Ο Μ Α Ι Ο Σ

ΕΛΕΩΙ ΘΕΟΥ

ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΩΣ - ΝΕΑΣ ΡΩΜΗΣ

ΚΑΙ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΣ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ

ΠΡΟΣ ΟΛΟ ΤΟ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ,

ΧΑΡΗ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ

ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΣΩΤΗΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΚΥΡΙΟ ΜΑΣ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟ,

ΑΠΟ ΕΜΑΣ ΔΕ ΕΥΧΗ, ΕΥΛΟΓΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΓΧΩΡΗΣΗ

* * *

Τιμιώτατοι αδελφοί Ίεράρχες και τέκνα εν Κυρίω ευλογημένα,

Πλήρεις ιερᾶς συγκινήσεως, εισερχόμαστε και ἐφέτος, με την εὐδοκία τοῦ Θεοῦ, στήν Ἁγία και Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή, στο στάδιο τῶν ἀσκητικῶν ἀγῶνων, τὸν καιρὸ τῆς νηστείας και τῆς μετανοίας, τῆς ταπεινώσεως και τῆς προσευχῆς, τῆς πνευματικῆς ἐγρηγόρσεως και τῆς φιλαδελφίας, με τὰ μάτια τῆς καρδιάς στραμμένα πρὸς τὸν ζωφόρο Σταυρὸ τοῦ Κυρίου, αὐτὸν ποὺ μᾶς ὀδηγεῖ ὅλους πρὸς τὸ Ἅγιο Πάσχα, αὐτὸ ποὺ διανοίγει τὶς πύλες τοῦ Παραδείσου στο γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Ἡ ευλογημένη περίοδος ποὺ ἀρχίζει εἶναι ευκαιρία γιὰ νὰ συνειδητοποιήσουμε και πάλι τὴν ἀλήθεια τῆς ἀσκήσεως σύμφωνα με τὸν Χριστὸ και τὴν ἄρρηκτη σύνδεσή της με τὴν ευχαριστιακὴ πραγμάτωση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἡ ὁποία σὲ ὅλες τὶς ἐκφάνσεις και διαστάσεις της φωτίζεται ἀπὸ τὸ φῶς και τὴ χαρὰ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως. Τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀσκητισμοῦ δὲν εἶναι καθόλου ἓνα παρείσακτο στοιχεῖο στὸν Χριστιανισμό, οὔτε εἶναι ἀποτέλεσμα ἐπιρροῆς ἐξωεκκλησιαστικῶν δυαλιστικῶν ιδεολογημάτων. Ἀσκησις εἶναι μία ἄλλη λέξις γιὰ τὸν χαρακτηρισμὸ τῆς χριστιανικῆς υπάρξεως, ἡ ὁποία τὴν συνδέει με τὴν ἀπόλυτη ἐμπιστοσύνη στὴ Θεία πρόνοια, με τὴν ἀνεξάντλητη πνευματικὴ ευφροσύνη τῆς ἀφιερωμένης στο Χριστὸ ζωῆς, με τὴν αὐθυπέμβαση και τὴν αὐτοπροσφορὰ, τὴν φιλόανθρωπη ἀγάπη, τὸν σεβασμὸ πρὸς ὅλη τὴν κτίση.

Ἡ ἀσκησις δὲν εἶναι ὑπόθεση αὐτοβούλων ἐπιλογῶν και ὑποκειμενικῶν ἰδιαιτεροτήτων, ἀλλὰ ὑποταγὴ στὸν κανόνα και τὴν «καθολικὴ πείρα» τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἀποτελεῖ, ὅπως ἔχει λεχθεῖ, «ἐκκλησιαστικὸ», ὄχι «ἀτομικὸ», γεγονός. Ἡ ζωὴ στήν Ἐκκλησία εἶναι ἀδιαίρετη. Μετάνοια, προσευχή, ταπεινοφροσύνη, συγχωρητικότητα, νηστεία, ἔργα ευεργετικά, εἶναι ἀλληλένδετα και ἀλληλοπεριχωρούμενα. Δὲν ὑπάρχει στήν Ὁρθόδοξη παράδοση ἀσκησις ὡς αὐτοσκοπός, ἡ ὁποία πάντοτε ὀδηγεῖ σὲ ὑπερεκτίμηση τῆς ἀτομικῆς προσπάθειας και τροφοδοτεῖ τάσεις αὐτοδικαίωσης. Ἡ Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή εἶναι ὁ κατάλληλος χρόνος γιὰ τὴ βίωση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὡς τόπου και τρόπου ἀποκαλύψεως τῶν δωρεῶν τῆς Χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ στήν Ἐκκλησία, πάντοτε ὡς πρόγευση τῆς χαρᾶς τῆς Ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Κυρίου, ὡς τοῦ ἀκρογωνιαίου λίθου τῆς πίστεώς μας και τοῦ ὀλόφωτου ὀρίζοντα τῆς «ἐλπίδας ποὺ ἔχουμε μέσα μας». Με θεία παρακίνηση ἡ Ἐκκλησία τιμᾷ κατὰ τὸ Σάββατο τῆς Τυροφάγου τὴν πανίερη μνήμη τῶν Ἁγίων ἀνδρῶν και γυναικῶν ποὺ ἔλαμψαν με τὴν ἀσκησὴ τους, οἱ ὁποῖοι εἶναι οἱ ἀρωγοὶ και συνοδοιπόροι τῶν πιστῶν στὴ μακρὰ διαδρομὴ τῆς ἀσκήσεως. Στὸ στάδιο

τῶν πνευματικῶν ἀγωνισμάτων ἔχουμε τὴν εὐαρέσκεια τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ, τὴν Παναγία Μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ὄλων μας σὰν σκέπη, καὶ ὡς πρεσβευτὲς τοὺς Ἁγίους καὶ τοὺς μάρτυρες τῆς πίστεως.

Ὁ ὑγιὲς χριστιανικὸς ἀσκητισμὸς εἶναι συμμετοχὴ τοῦ ὅλου ἀνθρώπου, ὡς πνευματικῆς, ψυχικῆς καὶ σωματικῆς ἐνότητος, στὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ, χωρὶς ὑποτίμησι τῆς ὕλης καὶ τοῦ σώματος καὶ χωρὶς κάποια μανιχαϊζουσα συρρίκνωση τῆς πνευματικότητος. Ὅπως ἔχει γραφεῖ, ἡ χριστιανικὴ ἀσκηση εἶναι ἐν τέλει «ἀγώνας ὄχι κατὰ ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος», σύμφωνα καὶ πρὸς τὰ λόγια τοῦ Γερωντικοῦ: «Ἐμεῖς δὲν διδαχθήκαμε νὰ σκοτώνουμε τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλὰ τὰ πάθη».

Ἀτυχῶς καὶ ἄστοχα, ὁ χριστιανικὸς ἀσκητισμὸς χαρακτηρίστηκε ἀπὸ σύγχρονους διανοητὲς ὡς ἄρνησι τῆς χαρᾶς τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ὡς περιστολὴ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης δημιουργικότητος. Τίποτα δὲν εἶναι ἀναληθέστερο τούτου! Ἡ ἀσκηση, ὡς ἀπαλλαγὴ ἀπὸ τὸ ἔχειν καὶ τὴν προσκόλλησι στὴν κατοχὴ πραγμάτων καί, κατ' ἐξοχήν, ὡς ἀπελευθέρωσι ἀπὸ τὸ ἐγώ, ἀπὸ τὸ «ζητεῖν τὰ ἑαυτοῦ», ἀπὸ τὸ «ἔχειν τοῦ εἶναι μας», εἶναι πηγὴ καὶ ἔκφρασι γνήσιας ἐλευθερίας. Τί εἶναι πιὸ ἀληθινὸ ἀπὸ τὴν ἐξοδο ἀπὸ τὴ φυλακὴ τοῦ «ἀτομικοῦ δικαίωματος» καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνοιχτοσύνη καὶ τὴν ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν συνάνθρωπο, ἀπὸ τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ «καλὴ ἀλλοίωσι» καὶ τὴν σταθερότητα στὴν ἐφαρμογὴ τῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ; Τί εἶναι πιὸ δημιουργικὸ ἀπὸ τὴ νηστεία, ὅταν αὐτὴ εἶναι ὀλιστικὴ στάσι ζωῆς καὶ ἐκφράζει τὸ ἀσκητικὸ καὶ εὐχαριστιακὸ πνεῦμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὅταν εἶναι «κοινὸ ἄθλημα» καὶ ὄχι ἀτομικὸ ἀγώνισμα; Τί εἶναι ὑπαρξιακὰ πιὸ συγκλονιστικὸ ἀπὸ τὴν μετάνοια, τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ μεταστροφή, ὡς ζωτικὴ κατεύθυνσι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθεια, τὴν ἐκ νέου ἀνακάλυψι τῆς δύνამις τῆς Θείας Χάριτος, τοῦ βάθους τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ζωῆς καὶ τῆς ἐλπίδας τῆς αἰώνιας ζωῆς; Εἶναι ἐντυπωσιακὸ τὸ γεγονὸς ὅτι, ὅταν ἀντικαταστάθηκε ὁ πρωτοχριστιανικὸς χαρακτήρας τῆς Ἁγίας καὶ Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστῆς ὡς περιόδου προετοιμασίας γιὰ τὸ Ἅγιο Βάπτισμα στὴ Θεία Λειτουργία τῆς Ἀναστάσεως, ἀπὸ τὸ «ἦθος τῆς μετάνοιας», παρέμεινε ἡ βίωσι τῆς ὡς «δευτέρου βαπτίσματος». Γιὰ τὸν λόγο αὐτό, ἡ περίοδος τῆς νηστείας καὶ τῆς μετάνοιας δὲν εἶναι σκυθρωπὴ. Ἡ ὕμνολογία μας ὁμιλεῖ γιὰ τὸ «ἔαρ τῆς νηστείας» καὶ ἡ Θεολογία ἀποκαλεῖ τὴν Μεγάλην Τεσσαρακοστὴ ὡς «πνευματικὴ ἀνοιξι» καὶ «περίοδο χαρᾶς καὶ φωτός». Ὅλα αὐτὰ ἀποκοτῶν ἰδιαίτερη ἐπικαιρότητα καὶ ἀξία ἐνώπιον τῆς σύγχρονης ἀνθρωπολογικῆς σύγχυσις καὶ τῶν νέων ἀλλοτριώσεων πού ἔχουν πολιτισμικὴ προέλευσι.

Μὲ αὐτὰ τὰ αἰσθήματα καὶ τὶς σκέψεις, ὑπενθυμίζοντας στὰ τέκνα τῆς Ἁγίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας πού βρίσκονται σὲ ἅπασα τὴν δεσποτεία Κυρίου ὅτι, κατὰ τὴν ἡμέρα τοῦ Ἀκαθίστου Ὑμνου θὰ κορυφωθοῦν οἱ ἑορτασμοὶ γιὰ τὴν συμπλήρωσι 1400 ἐτῶν ἀπὸ τὸ ἔτος 626, ὅταν, πρὸς ἔκφρασι εὐγνωμοσύνης πρὸς τὴν Θεοτόκο γιὰ τὴ διάσωσι τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἀπὸ ἐπικίνδυνη πολιορκία, ἐψάλη «ὀρθοστάδην» στὸν Ἱερὸ Ναὸ τῶν Βλαχερνῶν ὁ Ἀκάθιστος Ὑμνος, εὐχόμεστε πρὸς ὄλους σας εὐδρομο τὸ στάδιο τῆς νηστείας, μὲ ἀσκηση καὶ ὑπομονή, μὲ εὐχαριστία καὶ δοξολογία. Εἶθε, ἀληθεύοντας μὲ ἀγάπη καὶ ἀγιαζόμενοι ἐν Κυρίῳ, νὰ βαδίσουμε τὴν ὁδὸ πρὸς τὴν ὀλοκληρωμένη χαρὰ τῆς λαμπροφόρου Ἀναστάσεώς Του.

Ἁγία καὶ Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστὴ 2026,
† ὁ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Βαρθολομαῖος
διάπτυρος πρὸς Θεὸ εὐχέτης ὄλων σας

LENTEN RETREAT

SATURDAY

MARCH 14

9AM TO 4PM

**“Steadfast in the Storm:
Keeping the Faith
in Times of Turmoil”**

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
ARCHPRIEST TIMOTHY
HOJNICKI



Register Here

\$25 Adult Registration Fee (\$10 for kids 6-12
\$20 for students) includes both a Lenten
Breakfast and Lunch. The day will also
include Morning Prayers, the Sixth Hour,
and Great Vespers (3 pm).
Father Andrew Wythe will be offering a
presentation to the youth (ages 5-12).
Teens should attend Adult Session

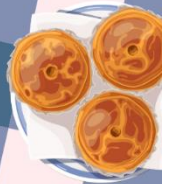
Holy Ghost Orthodox Church
70 Holy Ghost Way, Phoenixville, PA




Potluck

Join Saint Sophia's YAL
on February 22nd at
5pm for Forgiveness
Vespers followed
by a potluck and
screening of My
Big Fat Greek
Wedding

RSVP on GroupMe



DVYC HOPE/JOY






BIBLE BOWL


Join us for fun, fellowship, and friendly competition showing our scripture knowledge


March 14, 2026
10 am – 2pm

Annunciation Evangelismos

 Greek Orthodox Church
7921 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027

 **RSVP by 3/9/26**
 hopejoy@anngoc.com





Project Mexico 2026



This is Carlos, Lucera and their children standing in front of their new home in Rosarito Mexico. Prior to July 2023, they had to endure winters with a makeshift home made from tarps, pallets, tires and a dirt floor. The other photo is of their sons celebrating the fact that they will not have to stand in mud during the winter rainy season.

Their lives changed when we handed over the keys to the home pictured above. While they thanked us for the newly built and blessed home, WE thanked them for the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Christ and put our Faith in the Lord to work for this very beautiful family.

Once again, a team from St Sophia has committed to build a home with the help of other Orthodox Christians through Project Mexico. Led by John Pogas, the team includes John Papadimitriou, Demetrios Lowry, Stefan Lowry, Anthony Trioli, Jeff Kerns and Jamere Mitchell. **We're still looking for more volunteers!** Our build week is June 22 – 29.

You can help the team in a number of ways. First – please pray for our team and our safety. Second, you can support our team needs for building materials and travel expenses by making a donation through the church donation page and earmarking your funds for Project Mexico. If you would like to learn more about this incredibly rewarding mission, please email John Pogas, the group leader, at johnpogas@gmail.com or call him at 215-896-1963

