



Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

February 2016 Monthly Bulletin

www.saintsophias.org email: stsophia.bellingham@gmail.com (360) 734-8745

Why Can Only Orthodox Christians Receive Communion in Our Church?

“This food we call Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives according to the way Christ handed down to us (Justin Martyr, First Apology).”

These powerful words were written over 1500 years ago. Today our Church makes the same statement; Holy Communion is reserved only for those who are baptized and confirmed Orthodox Christians. They must be in good standing and hold to the teachings and traditions of the Orthodox Church.

For many of us, however, this statement is not enough. Many people want to know why this is so. They question why we do not allow non-Orthodox to participate in Communion. Such a practice appears to be rude, unfair, discriminatory, or even un-Christian. More importantly, many wonder whether or not Christ himself would have held to such a standard.

To begin to understand the Church's position, we must first set aside the notion that participation in the Holy Eucharist is a means for inter-denominational communion and union. Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ, should not be used as a tool or a method. To use it as such would be a gross misuse and misrepresentation. Rather, Holy Eucharist is the visible and tangible sign of true communion between Lord and we, his servants, as well as between we and our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This means that the vehicle for uniting separate groups (denominations) of Christians should never and can never be Eucharist. Eucharist, however, is the symbol that different Christians are united in their belief. For example, a friend of mine who was offended that he was not able to take communion at an Orthodox Church at the same time disagreed and even denied the Orthodox Church's teaching concerning the Holy Eucharist, namely that it is the real Body and Blood of the Lord! His own understanding of Holy Communion did not match that of the Church and her faithful. Therefore we can say that the Church did not refuse to allow him to receive but rather his own beliefs excluded him from participating in Holy Communion.

The second thing we must understand with regards to the Church's position on Holy Communion is the way in which it is

received. To my friend, I pointed out that no one should ever simply take Communion; Communion is not a right; it is not something we earn or deserve. Holy Communion is a gift, and because of this fact, it is something that is never taken but always received. It is the Church's responsibility to pass that gift along. Yet, in doing so, the Church must exercise restraint and discernment. For just as physical food can actually harm and even kill a starving man, the spiritual food of the Eucharist can do the same. St. Paul warns us of this very phenomenon in his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 11 vv.27-30. Here he cautions the Corinthians how the reception of the Eucharist in an unworthy manner has caused physical harm. The Church then has a responsibility to guard against distributing the Body and Blood of Christ to those it would harm. Notice that even Orthodox Christians are at times excluded from receiving the Eucharist. The Church then does not deny anyone the Eucharist, but rather she safeguards it against its improper use and reception.



Finally, we can argue that if one who exists outside the Orthodox Church should desire to receive the Holy Eucharist, then only one thing is needed. Let them examine the Church's teachings and her witness to

Christ. Let them investigate what it is we teach and believe, and if in so doing, they come to proclaim as we do that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ and that salvation is found through membership in His Church, then let them approach with the fear of God, in faith, and love. Christ gave Himself for the life of the world and His Body and Blood were broken and shed so that through Christ, we might have eternal life. This is an amazing gift, and, at the same time, an awesome treasure; the responsibility of so great a gift falls on each one of us. Thus, with boldness we all must preach the good news and with steadfastness, we must faithfully adhere to the teaching once and for all delivered to all the Saints (Jude 1.3).

*By Fr. Evan Armatas
St. Spyridon Orthodox Church
Fort Collins, Colorado*

Orthodoxy and Mental Illness:

How it helps to be an Orthodox Christian when you have Mental Illness

by a Practicing Orthodox Christian Who Wishes to be Anonymous

Hello. My diagnosis is schizoaffective, which is like having schizophrenia and bipolar disorder at the same time. I have struggled with mental illness for most of my life. I know how to be hospitalized and medicated. However, I also know some things about healing and staying out of the hospital.

I am an Orthodox Christian. I am so proud of that! I have been rescued and enlightened by the Church when I obey her teachings and submit to her Lord. I would like to share with you some of the things that have helped me in my journey to sanity and prosperity.

First of all, while this may not be the case for most people, I believe in my case a certain degree my mental illness has been caused by the sins I committed in my youth. I allowed the devil to have a foothold. He tempted me to mania. He oppressed me with evil thoughts. I obeyed him and got in trouble.

The Lord through his Church has given us several tools. As the Lord said, "This kind does not come out but by prayer and fasting," the Church helps us pray and fast.

The Jesus prayer has been recommended to me at several occasions. In very difficult times, it and other types of prayer -- any fervent, honest prayer-- have helped against the onslaught of thoughts and voices and craziness. The Jesus prayer can help someone who is headed toward mania or is hearing voices to not follow through with what the mania and voices are propelling us to do and say.

One of my friends related to me how a monk or elder said that he used to be insane and act crazy. Someone told him to do his morning and evening prayers. He does them now, and so he acts normal and sane.

I also recommend the Akathist to the Theotokos. Praying to the saints helps, and there is a Patron Saint of mental illness, Saint Dymphna, (look her up!) who has helped me with my medication. On that note, please don't go off your medicine without a doctor's approval. But remember that the Lord can help you and the doctor to get the right type and dosage of medicine when you pray for help.

Church services, attended frequently, as much as possible, serve to center us and free us from the grip of insanity. They connect us to the Lord and to each other, and give peace to the heart. Moderate (but not severe) fasting can help clear the mind, quiet the spirit, and gives us the strength and freedom to fight against our thoughts. Please don't fast too severely!! And don't eat a lot either, it makes voices worse!

Trusting in and obeying my spiritual father has been immensely helpful to me. One time I was on a manic frenzy, and I thought my voices were from God. My priest told me that voices are never from God, and that all of the Church Fathers say so. I told myself, "I am an Orthodox Christian. Orthodox Christians obey their priests. I'm going to obey my priest! I am not going to listen to the voices." And I was spared from further insanity, the voices stopped, and I had a clear, sound mind again. I would like to mention that working or doing something to serve others has an immense healing effect. Getting out of the house, being around others, and doing something for someone else lightens the darkness of loneliness that we so often face, and which makes our symptoms worse. The Lord showed me in my heart one day that working would heal me of my mental illness. I volunteered for two years and now I have a job and I love it!! I am more like the person God has called me to be, and miraculously I have had the job for ten months! I am a success story and I am more stable than I have ever been.

Another thing that has helped me is the desire to get well. Mental illness, as nasty as it can be, can be comforting and familiar because being crazy is fun and we can avoid work and responsibility. I have struggled with that for a long time. I have a little voice in my head that says, "I can't!" which comes from the refusal "I won't!" Growing up I was "ill" and never did some of the things that normal people did because I refused to grow up. As someone with mental illness, I have to realize that I may have a difficult cross, but that I also can learn the same normal healthy behaviors as someone else. This has taken me a few years to be able to do.

We are not as bad as we think we are. And we are made to be well and healthy in mind and spirit. I have heard that we should not say "I am a schizophrenic, I am bipolar," etc. Instead we can say, "I am God's child who has schizophrenia, I am God's child who has bipolar." If we define ourselves by our illness, we give it power. If we define ourselves as Christians and God's children, we give the Lord glory and power.




Another thing that has immensely helped me is to reach out to and be honest with my family and with the people of the Church. I also have had many counselors who have helped me be honest with myself, sort through confusing thoughts, and give me good tools. My godmother has been extremely helpful in helping me through some of the cycles and struggles I have. My friends who are Orthodox show Christ's love to me, encourage me and pray for me and with me. Sometimes it just takes someone to give you a big hug and help you feel loved.

Love is the power that drew me to the Church. Love is the reason I stay in the Church. I think the last thing you must realize is that God is love, and whoever lives in love, lives in God. Love will heal a mental illness. The Church teaches us to love God and each other, and when we pray, fast, obey spiritual authority, work and have fellowship with one another, we must do it with love.

Liturgical & Events Calendar

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church
Bellingham, Washington

sun mon tue wed thu fri sat

						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	5:30 pm Great Vespers	PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE 8:45 am Orthros 9:30 am Liturgy	6:15 pm Vespers			ST. PHOTIOS THE GREAT 8:45 am Orthros 9:30 am Liturgy 4:30 Confessions 5:30 Great Vespers
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
16TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW 8:45 am Orthros 10 am Divine Liturgy 11:15 Sunday School 11:15 Fellowship	7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous	10 am Homeschool Coop	 ST. HARALAMBOS 8:45 am Orthros 9:30 am Liturgy 6:15 pm Vespers			4:30 Confessions 5:30 Great Vespers
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
SUNDAY OF THE CANAANITE WOMAN 8:45 am Orthros 10 am Divine Liturgy 11:15 Sunday School	7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous	10 am Homeschool Coop	6:15 pm Vespers	Washington Orthodox Clergy Association- St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Seattle		4:30 Confessions 5:30 Great Vespers
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN & THE PHARISEE-TRIODION BEGINS 8:45 am Orthros 10 am Liturgy 11:15 Sunday School 11:15 Fellowship	7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous	10 am Homeschool Coop	1pm St. Sophia Book Club discusses "Praying wth Icons" 6:15 pm Vespers			Pre-Lenten Women's Retreat, Holy Resurrection Church, Puyallup 4:30 Confessions 5:30 Great Vespers
28	29					
SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON 8:45 am Orthros 10 am Divine Liturgy 11:15 Sunday School 11:15 Fellowship	METROPOLIS CLERGY-LAITY February 29-March 1st Dunlap, California		10 am Homeschool Coop			
	7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous					

Liturgical & Events Calendar

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church
Bellingham, Washington

MARCH 2016

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
		1	2	3	4	5
	METROPOLIS CLERGY-LAITY IN CALIFORNIA, Feb. 29-March 1st		Fr. Michael at Clergy Conference in California March. 1-3			SAT. OF SOULS 8:45 am Orthros 9:30 am Liturgy & Memorial Service 11 am Trisagion at Bayview Cemetery
	7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous	10 am Homeschool Coop	6:15 pm Reader's Vespers			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
JUDGEMENT-MEATFARE SUNDAY 8:45 am Orthros 10 am Divine Liturgy 11:15 Sunday School 11:15 Fellowship	7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous	Washington Orthodox Clergy Association- St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Snohomish 10 am Homeschool Coop	6:15 pm Vespers			CHEESEFARE SATURDAY 8:45 am Orthros 9:30 am Liturgy & Memorial Service 11 am Orthodox march in St. Patrick's Day Parade 4:30 Confessions 5:30 Great Vespers
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
FORGIVENESS-CHEESEFARE SUNDAY 8:45 am Orthros 10 am Liturgy 11:15 Sunday School 11:15 Fellowship 12:00 Forgiveness Vespers	GREAT LENT BEGINS Clean Monday Office Closed 7pm Great Compline 7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous	10 am Homeschool Coop	1pm St. Sophia Book Group 5:30 pm 9th Hour 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 7 pm Lenten potluck		7 pm 1st Salutations	1ST SAT. OF LENT / MIRACLE OF THE KOLYVA 8:45 am Orthros 9:30 am Liturgy & Memorial Service 4:30 Confessions 5:30 Great Vespers
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY 8:45 am Orthros 10 am Liturgy & Procession of Icons 11:15 Sunday School 11:15 Fellowship 5:30 Pan-Orthodox Vespers @ St Andrew, Arlington	7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm Great Compline	10 am Homeschool Coop	5:30 pm 9th Hour 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 7 pm Lenten potluck	5:30 pm Great Vespers	ANNUICIATION/ EVANGELISMOS 8:45 am Orthros 9:30 am Liturgy 10:45 am Greek Independence-Great Doxology @ Memorial Park 7 pm 2nd Salutations	4:30 Confessions 5:30 Great Vespers
27	28	29	30	31		
SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS 8:45 am Orthros 10 am Divine Liturgy 11:15 Sunday School 11:15 Fellowship	7 pm Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm Great Compline	10 am Homeschool Coop	5:30 pm 9th Hour 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 7 pm Lenten potluck			

"The Orthodox Conception of Tragedy"

Melinda Johnson is an Orthodox Christian, wife, mama, and writer. She is the author of *Letters to Saint Lydia* (AFP, 2010) and *The Other Side of the Bonfire* (LSP, 2012), and she's hard at work on another book project. Melinda has a Master's in English Literature because she loved literature classes so much she couldn't stop taking them. Although she no longer remembers every great book she studied, Melinda retains and treasures the way these books taught her to look at the world. When she is not seeing "heaven in a wildflower," Melinda enjoys writing for children, walking and talking, and knitting. She lives with her family in the Pacific Northwest.



Pre Lenten Women's Retreat with author and speaker **Melinda Johnson**

Saturday, February 27, 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Sixth Hour at 9:00 a.m. Vespers at 6:00 p.m

Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church
8710 28th Avenue East
Tacoma, WA 98445

A \$20 contribution is requested. Luncheon will be provided.
Please contact Michelle: mmewhinneyangel@hotmail.com
or Susan: susansophia.f@gmail.com for more information.



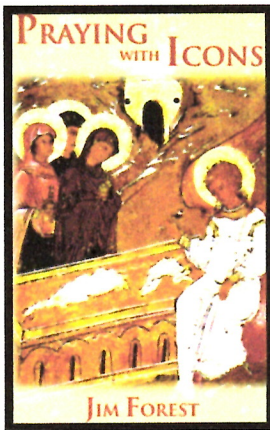
Name(s)

Address

Phone & email

Please send completed registration form and payment by February 14 to:
(or go to OrthodoxTacoma.com for online registration)

Holy Resurrection Church
P.O. Box 1332
Puyallup, WA 98371



**Come, Join the
St. Sophia Book Group...**

On Wednesday, February 24th at
1:00 pm the Book Group will
gather in the fellowship
to discuss the book
“Praying with Icons”
by Jim Forest.

**This book is available in parish
bookstore.**



**Orthodox
Christian
Fellowship**

The OCF is a ministry to
college students at WWU
and other local colleges
where they can meet with other Orthodox and non-
Orthodox Christians to learn about the Orthodox
Faith. For more info, contact Matthew Macris at
matt.macris@outlook.com

www.ocf.org

REAL BREAK 2016

Jerusalem · New Orleans · Constantinople · Alaska
Guatemala · Thessaloniki · Cleveland · Romania



**CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING
AT THE LIGHTHOUSE MISSION**

The only walk-in rescue mission between Everett and Vancouver, BC, The Lighthouse Mission is helping Whatcom County's men, women, and children get back on their feet and on with their lives."

Fr Michael and his family visited the Mission last week to explore volunteer opportunities. There are many ways to help out. Please contact Fr Michael if you would like to join St Sophia's effort to help.

www.thelighthousemission.org



**SAVE THE
DATES...**

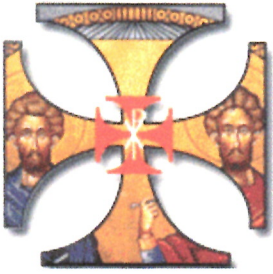
**Sat. April 16th
A Lenten &
Pre-Holy Week
Retreat**

will take place at St.
Sophia
12pm-6:00pm.
More information to
come.

Great Lent
Begins with Clean
Monday on March 14th

Palm Sunday
is April 24th

**Orthodox
Pascha-Easter**
this year is May 1st.



A new year and we are on the move in our philanthropic endeavors. It is very exciting as we plan for our year of giving and sharing our talents and our Orthodox Christian faith.

Thank you so much to Eleni Kipelides, Koula Margarites, and Alexandra Diamant for spending all day on January 9 making the *vasloпита* for our sale the next day. We sold all the loaves and thank you to the parish members who purchased this delicious bread. Your president was also present as she made the coffee and ran the mixer.

Thanks to Dorine Boulos for a successful Christmas gift drive with the gifts going to the Bellingham Boys and Girls club; special acknowledgements to all parishioners who donated the gifts. The Christmas Tea and Ornament exchange was a lot of fun with beautiful and artistic ornaments exchanged. Thanks to Darlene Piantes for chairing the event; picture of this group having fun is posted on the board in the hall.

We have been issued an invitation from The Assumption parish in Seattle to their Valentine Tea, February 13 from 1-4; requested donation of \$15.00.

As February is "GO RED" month for preventing women's heart disease, we will wear red on Sunday, Feb. 7 and have our picture taken to be sent to National. On Sunday, February 28 Dorine Boulos will chair a luncheon with donation proceeds to be given to our local hospital's heart division.

March 1 begins our two month membership drive; we invite all women (men are also invited) to join and make a difference in our community and outside of our community. An enrollment table will be in the hall the months of March and April during coffee hour. We are initiating something new...one can become a supportive member with an "ask me once" clause in which you will only be asked once to participate in a philanthropic project. We also look forward to increasing our Honorary college girl membership.

St. Sophia Philoptochos is in action; creating and contributing in making a difference in the lives of others. With God's help, we look forward to a great 2016. "FOR WITH GOD, NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE" Luke 1:37

In Christ,

President: Harieklia Meras-Bryant
 V. President: Dorine Boulos
 Secretary: Nahla Gholam
 Treasurer: Elizabeth Morgan



Our St. Sophia Philoptochos / Friends of the Poor
 Christmas Tea and Ornament Exchange
 December, 2016



Join thousands of teens across the nation & **#ShareOrthodoxy!**

2016 ORATORICAL FESTIVAL



EXPLORE a deeper knowledge of your Orthodox faith
THINK critically about current issues
SPEAK to a gentle and loving audience

Share Your FAITH

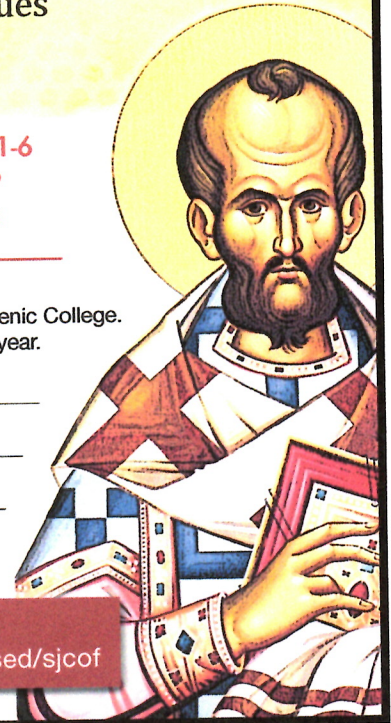
Elementary Division, Grades 1-6
 Junior Division, Grades 7-9
 High School Division 10-12

AWARDS - The Chrysostom Scholarship for Hellenic College
 The 2016 finalists are eligible to receive a Chrysostom Scholarship to Hellenic College. This scholarship provides awards ranging from \$2,500 up to \$30,000 per year.

Parish Festival Date Sunday, April 10th, 12 noon
 Parish Chairperson Presvytera Elizabeth
 Contact Information elizabeth.tervo@gmail.com

The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival is a Ministry of the Department of Religious Education from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.

Find the topics, rules, and prize information at <http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/religious/sjcof>



Sunday School will meet every Sunday in February and March.



Youth Play: "The Prodigal Son"

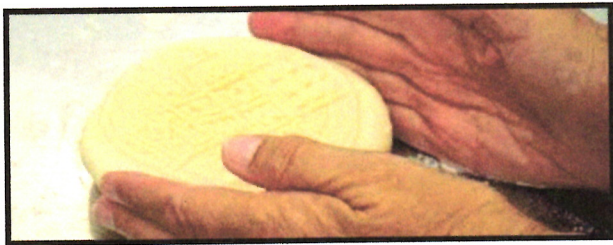
On February 28, a short play entitled "The Prodigal Son" will be presented by the church young people in the hall after coffee hour. Those who are interested in participating, please see Presvytera Elizabeth.

Coffee Hour Offerings

- 2/7 Salome Wolters and Elizabeth Morgan
2/14 Effie Bachelor and Francine Tsoulouhas
2/21 Ibtissam Mansour and Angelina Moussi
2/28 Dorine Boulos and Marie Boulos
- 3/6 Mary Hulbush, Dena Lien, and Cheri Webster—
*Meatfare Sunday, meat and dairy
allowed*
- 3/13 Georgia Sentkowski and Cheryl Kahle—
Cheesefare Sunday, no meat
- 3/20 Cristina Gholam and Nadia Boulos*
3/27 Marina Polichronakis and Eleni Pantoleon*
- 4/3 Nia Zourkos, Eleni Mistry, and Tammy
Stavropoulos*
4/10 Effie Eisses and Joyce Piantes*
4/17 Voula Parks, Jamee Twining, and Loree Foote*
4/24 Palm Sunday Fish Luncheon

**Lenten Fast... please no meat or dairy. Oil and
wine are allowed.*

*Thank you for finding a substitute and notifying Dena
Lien if you are not able to provide for coffee hour on your
scheduled day Please contact Dena at 360-421-3913 or
e-mail her at play_ball@comcast.net*



Proskothira Bakers

- 2/7 Brooksana Raney (4)
2/14 Kim Weil (4)
2/21 Adrienne Hunter (4)
2/28 Sue Moyer (4)
- 3/6 Tasia Tsoulouhas (4)
3/13 Tamara Mattson (5)
3/20 Christos Christoforou (6)
3/27 Harieklia Bryant (4)
- 4/3 Adrienne Hunter (4)
4/10 Brooksana Raney (4)
4/17 Kim Weil (4)
4/24 Palm Sunday/Holy Week-
Sunday- Sue Moyer (6);
Mid-Week- Harieklia Bryant (6)



Your Parish Bookstore... St. Sophia Bookstore News

FEBRUARY
SALE

25% OFF
EACH ITEM

EVERY SUNDAY
11:30 A.M. TO 1:30 P.M.
THROUGH FEB.29

WISDOM OF THE SAINTS

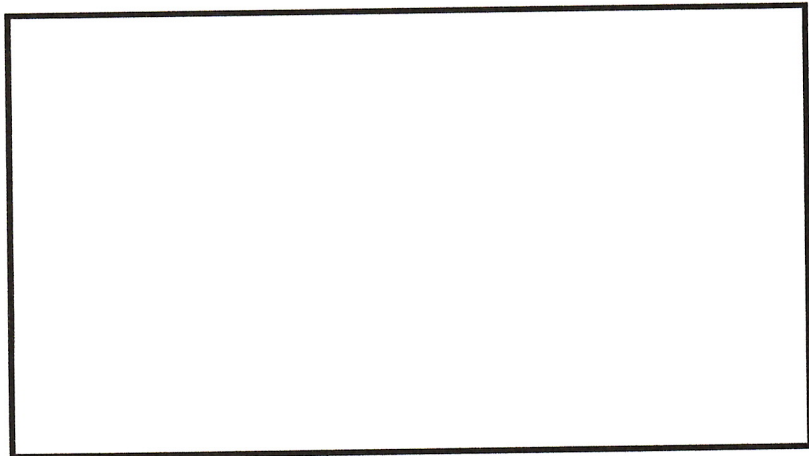
"God wants and desires only one thing from us: our humbleness. He does not need anything else; just to humble ourselves, so He can make us partakers of His divine grace, which was granted to us through the mystery of Holy Baptism. Although we did not love Him yet, neither had we struggled to acquire His grace, He gave it to us as a gift out of His extreme kindness. He is only asking from us to humble ourselves and respond out of gratefulness and appreciation to His love. Thus, divine grace, which abides in us, will be activated and function accordingly. It will make us love God and get to know Him; it will do everything for us, if only we humble ourselves and allow for it to act. The only obstacle to the energy of God's grace, is our pride, our lack of humility."

-- St. Paisios of the Holy Mountain Athos

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

510 E. Sunset Dr. Bellingham, WA 98225

FEBRUARY
2016
MONTHLY
BULLETIN



**2016 Vasilopita Cutting,
Blessing of Bellingham Bay and Diving for the Cross.**
Nick Mattson and Caleb Grow dive in the frigid water for the Cross