

**Orthodox Parish of
St Helen of Colchester**

Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the UK & Ireland
NEWSLETTER 158 OCTOBER 2009



October Weekday Liturgies at St Helen's

Wednesday 7 October

Martyr Osyth of Chich, Queen of Essex, 9.30 am

Friday 23 October

Holy Apostle James the Lord's Brother, 9.30 am

In Crete and Greece...

It has been my great privilege and delight to visit the land of Greece again in September. My time there was in two distinct parts. For the first week I was on Crete. For the second I was on the mainland. Altogether I had a splendid time, and think to tell you about it - I hope, not bore you about it!

My week on Crete began on 14 September, the feast of course of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I was determined to join in the feast there, and travelled therefore over-night via Athens (not a terribly enjoyable experience, I should say!).

By the kindness of Metropolitan DAMASKINOS of Chania, I was able to attend his Hierarchical Liturgy in a village church on the edge of Chania dedicated to the Holy Cross. Invited to concelebrate, I declined since I was really very tired, having arrived on the island at 6.20 am. To attend a service in Greece is naturally to experience Orthodoxy at its roots, and it was lovely.

Then I was whisked away for a week at a luxurious hotel at nearby Stavrou, in a beautiful setting above the sea.

I was there for the Patriarchate of Antioch on the International Dialogue between the Orthodox and Anglican communions. We were guests of the Metropolis, representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and were royally entertained.

I do not have a lot to report on our proceedings, for they were the first in a third phase of the Dialogue. We did have preliminary papers on Anglican and Orthodox thinking, which we discussed, but we were mainly planning procedures and who was to produce papers on various subjects concerning Christian 'anthropology', by which is meant the study of what Christians understand as the meaning of 'being a human being'.

The basic question is, What do we mean by saying that man is made in the image and likeness of God? Future subjects must include such important and practical issues as bio-ethics and sexuality.

These subjects are of immediate relevance to all of us in the 21st century. Discussion of them in an ecumenical front is good for all sides. There is now no idea that Anglicans and Orthodox can possibly consider 'reunion', but it is probably good even for world society that we have discussion together of such important difficulties. Our discussions took up every morning and afternoon Monday-Friday, and Saturday morning.

Besides that, we were taken out into the district every evening and so saw at least a part of the island, though not much of what the tourists see. We were wine and dined in various restaurants, and visited a couple of parishes and several Monasteries, including the lovely Chrysopigi women's

Monastery, and the impressive Holy Trinity (Agia Triada) men's Monastery, where Metropolitan KALLISTOS presided with four Bishops and several Priests, including me, at the Sunday Holy Liturgy.

We also visited the Orthodox Theological Academy of Crete where I was delighted to find the wife of the Director KONSTANTINOS KENANIDIS is Colchester-born PETRONELLA, daughter of MICHAEL and ARTEMIS COLE of Parsons Heath!

Everywhere we were made most welcome, and it was a stimulating week.



At the Orthodox Academy of Crete I met Director Konstantinos Kenanidis, his wife Colchester-born Petronella Cole, and their two daughters.

The second week I spent in mainland Greece. First I stayed with LAMBROS and DAREEN PSOMAS - both MA students here in 2005. They warmly welcomed me into their home in Ancient Corinth, which of course was an important early Christian community. There I saw the bema or stage where St Paul, great Apostle of the area, was judged by Prefect Gallio.

Lambros also took me, via Sparta, a town with classical resonances (but sadly no sign of its inheritance), to Mistras in the south, one with great Byzantine resonances, whose fabulous mediaeval churches I have long wished to see - and was not disappointed!

We also visited the lovely St Patapios Monastery in Lutraki, where the Saint is



Metropolitan KALLISTOS of Diokleia, one of the best-known Bishops in the Orthodox world, a writer and lecturer, paid a visit to St Helen's Chapel recently. *He wrote in the Visitors Book: "May our Saviour Christ bless this church and all who worship here."*

buried in a cave on the mountain-side above the town.

Then I had two night in Patras with NEKTARIOS STELLAKIS, MA here in 1999, who helped establish this Parish. It was good to see him and THEODORA, and, for the first time, their two sons CHRISTOFEROS and ANDREAS. He took me to venerate the head of St Andrew, and we visited the touristy but impressive men's Monastery at Nafpaktos, and the 'paradise' of the St Elias women's Monastery. We lunched at pretty Galaxidi, where I could see the village of Itea across the bay where PAM and JOHN BOULDEN have their house.

After the Sunday Holy Liturgy in Ancient Corinth Lambros, Dareen and I were entertained to lunch in Athens by EVDOCHIA SALAPATA, another 2005 MA, whom it was good to see.

They left me at Holy Parakletos Monastery at Oropos, north of Athens, for my last night, with old friend Dane Father FOTIOS. It was good to be there again after nine years - and to attend Third and Sixth Hours in Danish!

What a lot in 15 days, but all splendid, most enjoyable, and refreshing!

My prayers were offered for you all daily, and particularly to St Andrew and St Patapios, and I have brought back icon cards and holy oil for you.

God bless you all! **Father Alexander**

St Helen's Chapel, Maidenburgh St, High St

St Helen's is 200m. down behind the George Hotel in the High Street, but accessible from there only on foot. By car: leave Middleborough Roundabout (between dual carriageways Westway and Balkeine Hill), to Northgate; go straight along St Peter Street to Castle Park; continue round, up into Maidenburgh Street. Nunn's Road NCP is the nearest car park.

Saturday: Great Vespers usually 4.30 pm (check before coming)
Sunday: Mattins 9.45 am (or Hours 10.15 am), Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Confessions: Saturday after Vespers, or by arrangement
Holy Marriage, Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement

Parish Priest: **Father Alexander (Alistair) Haig**
17 Maidenburgh St, Colchester CO1 1UB

Tel: 01-206-530-530 Mob: 07-947-047-201 Eml: orthodox.colchester@ntlworld.com

Reader: **Stephen Weston**

St Fursey's House, 111 Neville Rd, Sutton, Stalham NR12 9RR Tel: 01-692-580-552

New Parish Website: <http://www.orthodoxcolchester.org.uk>

St Fursey's Chapel, 111 Neville Rd, Sutton, near Stalham, Norfolk
Divine Liturgy: usually first Saturday 9.30 am

At St James Anglican Church, Beatrice Rd, Clacton-on-sea
Divine Liturgy: usually third Saturday 10.00 am

At University of Essex Chaplaincy Centre: Divine Liturgy: one Saturday per term 10.00 am

HOLY LITURGY

ST FURSEY'S
Saturday 10 October
9.30 am

CLACTON
Saturday 17 October
10.00 am

FELLOWSHIP OF ST ALBAN & ST SERGIUS

Local branch meeting
at Merrywood, 25 Fourth Avenue, Frinton,
on Wednesday 28 October, 7.30 for 7.45 pm
The Rev Dr John Turner will speak on
The Spiritual Struggle according to Orthodoxy:
Highlights from the Bose Conference 2009.
Ask for transport.

Two lives given to God

Recently I have attended the consecrations of two people's lives to the service of God, to the life in Christ. It has been a privilege and an honour, and also a rather moving experience.

The first (I mentioned it in September's Newsletter) was the **Consecration to a life of Virginity of a woman living in the world - Consecration of a Virgin** for short - in a Roman Catholic church in Bristol. MARION is a long-standing convert from the Anglican Church, and has lived in that city for years. A school-friend of Hilary's, we were delighted when we moved to Bath in 1978 that she was so near. Then we moved back to Essex and she stayed on there.

All along she has been a devout member and indeed she has been working officially, I think, in parish affairs - and on a much wider basis too. She now took this step of taking vows before her Bishop and being consecrated to that state of life by him, a highly unusual ceremony.

I was surprised that the Bishop seemed to consider the ceremony primarily *her* action, her *vows*, rather than *God's* action - a rather Protestant line to take, I thought, or certainly a Western emphasis! But I noted that the text of the service itself, introduced in the reforms of the RC Church some thirty years or so ago, emphasised more the action of *God*, the pouring out of his grace.

The second consecration I attended was much nearer home. Our Parish's long-standing friend Father ATHANASIUS, who also had been an Anglican, then an Orthodox Priest, has been a Monk (technically a Hieromonk or Priest-Monk) for many years now.

He has been a *Rasaphore* Monk (the first level of the monastic life). For the last three years or so he has been at the Hermitage in the Shotley Peninsula.

The Hermitage feast is the Placing of the Sash of the Theotokos in a church in Constantinople, 31 August, though the Sash was in the 14th century moved to Vatopedi on the Holy Mountain. That is the Monastery where Father was first tonsured—which explains his devotion to the Holy Sash.

He had arranged for the feast this year to be attended by Metropolitan KALLISTOS, and it was decided to confer on him the **Great Schema**. This is the fullness of the Monastic life. There were many friends present, with several from our Parish, and he was presented by Archimandrite KYRILL, Abbot of the Monastery of St John the Baptist at Tolleshunt Knights.

It was very moving to see these two people, in very different circumstances, doing a very similar thing. For love of Christ they were giving themselves whole-heartedly to him, their Lord and their God, and Christ was embracing them with all his love and joy and peace.

It showed as well that *ultimately* Orthodox and Roman Catholics are on about essentially the same things (even if no more can be said - and surely more *can* be said). Certainly the closeness of Monks and Nuns across 'denominational' boundaries has long been felt by many of them.

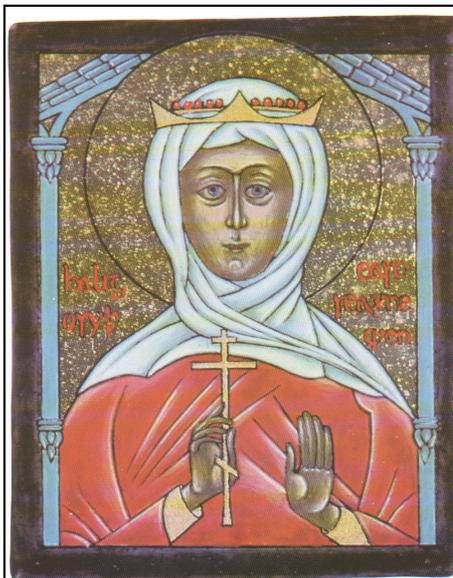
The life in Christ is *our* aim and ambition too. Monks and Nuns are called to *heroic* levels in the service of him - but it is also the calling of *all* of us who are baptised.

Sister MARION and Father ATHANASIUS, I salute you both! Remember us in your holy prayers as we remember you and all who seek Christ "in chastity of life", as it says in the Anaphora. Many years!

A Word from a modern Spiritual Father

Whoever is at peace in the material world and is not concerned about the salvation of his soul is like the senseless birds who do not make a noise from within the egg, so as to break the shell and come out to enjoy the sun - the heavenly flight in the life of Paradise - but instead remain unmoving and die within the egg shell.

Elder Paisios the Athonite (1924-1994)



St Osyth of Chich, Queen of Essex, Nun & Martyr, 7 Oct.

Here and There

OUR VERY GOOD WISHES to GHISSEH SARKO, who has now left us after six years here on her PhD. She has attended St Helen's regularly, so we have got very fond of her, and will miss her. She will teach in her University at Lattakia in Syria, and we hope she will remember us in her prayers, as we will remember her in ours. Many years!

PILGRIMS: We welcomed members of the London branch of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius to St Helen's, as they came to honour her one recent Saturday. After coffee and an introductory talk we had a Service to the Saint, and then picnic lunch in the cemetery. In the afternoon IAN McMEEKAN gave a guided tour of parts of the town centre. We finished with tea and as the climax of the day they venerated the relic of St Helen. Thanks to Khouria HILARY and the LAWRENCE family and to all who helped in any way, especially in the provision of cakes for tea. We have had a nice letter from them saying how much they enjoyed it all.

WEDDING PHOTOS of ALEX and MIHAELA HAIG may now be viewed at: <http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/alex.haig/wedding#537437791144624210>



With Lambros & Dareen Psomas at Ancient Corinth

Church Council meets

Our Church Council met after the Sunday Holy Liturgy recently. Among matters progressed were:

- the setting up of a Parish Trust,
- registration of the Trust with the Charity Commission,
- registration of St Helen's as a Place of Worship and for weddings,
- payments to our Deanery and Archdiocese (£300 and £700 was agreed to be sent p.a.),
- improvements to the Porch,
- the problem of car-parking,
- working with new child protection laws,
- use of St Martin's,
- possible Parish development in the south of Essex.

Dates were agreed for the **Annual Meeting** (Sunday 31 Jan, immediately after the Holy Liturgy), and **Council Meetings** for 8 Nov, 24 Jan, and 14 Mar. Please put these dates in your diary.

Meet your local Saints

A series on the Orthodox Saints of the Colchester area

3. Holy Martyr Osyth, Queen of Essex: our very local Martyr

St Osyth, whose icon we show here, lived in the seventh century. She died about the year 700 on 7 October, which is kept as her feast. Her story is rather muddled - and there may even have been two Saints with the name Osyth, their stories confused in later generations.

This was the very early days of the Saxons becoming Christian, a time of a fascinating mixture of deep devotion and sanctity in many, but in many others of only half-converted people, whose faith could not endure the problems of life.

She was probably a princess by birth, the daughter of a devout Prince of Mercia, who may have lived at Aylesbury in the Chiltern hills, north-west of London, and possibly helped St Erkenwald found the Monastery at Chertsey, on the Thames.

Some say Osyth (the name can also be found as Osith or Osgytha) was sent for her education to her aunt at the Monastery at Burton-on-Trent. One day, they say, the little princess fell into a stream with a book of the Gospels but she kept it above the water and saved it (Gospel books of course would have been extremely precious volumes in the days before printing).

When it came time for marriage, she was given to young King Sighere of the East Saxons (Essex). It is told that at the wedding-feast the young prince saw a white stag pass the hall, and left the bride and feast with his mates and went hunting it; and that Osyth took the opportunity to flee to two Bishops and be tonsured as a Nun. This charming story cannot be true, for in fact she bore him a son.

Then Sighere, though a Christian, got problems. St Cedd had by now arrived to convert his people. But a great plague devastated them in 664: Cedd died of it at Lastingham in Yorkshire. Sighere returned with many of his people to paganism.

It was probably this apostasy of her husband that led Osyth to part from him and found the women's Monastery at Chich, the village now called St Osyth's, where our River Colne joins the River Blackwater at the open sea. Sighere gave her the land. Or perhaps she founded it when he died.

She and her foundation flourished for some years. But Danish pirates, pagans, attacked the Monastery and slaughtered the Holy Nuns. This would have been about 700. She should be venerated as a Martyr but not as a Virgin-Martyr.

On the death of his father, Osyth and Sighere's son Offa reigned for seven years, before abdicating to go on pilgrimage to Rome. There he died as a Monk. He also is venerated as a Saint, St Offa of Essex.

OCTOBER DAYS

Thu	1	Protection of the Holy Theotokos
Sat	3	Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite
Sun	4	Pentecost 17
Tue	6	Holy Apostle Thomas,
Wed	7	Martyr Queen Osyth of Chich
Fri	9	Holy Apostle James, son of Alphaeus
Sat	10	S Paulinus, Bishop of York
Sun	11	Pentecost 18, Fathers of 7th Council, Apostle Philip of the 70, S Ethelburga Abbess of Barking
Mon	12	S Wilfred Bp of York, S Simeon the New theologian
Wed	14	S Paraskeva the Younger, whose relics are at Iasi
Fri	16	Martyr Longinus the centurion
Sun	18	Pentecost 19, Holy Apostle & Evangelist Luke
Mon	19	S John of Kronstadt, S Frideswide of Oxford
Tue	20	Great Martyr Artemius at Antioch, S Gerasimus
Wed	21	S Christodoulos of Patmos
Fri	23	Holy Apostle James the Lord's Brother
Sat	24	S Demetrius Commemoration of the Dead
Sun	25	Pentecost 20
Mon	26	Great Martyr Demetrius the Myrrh-flowing

A fuller list of the month's Feasts and Fasts is available on request