

Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester

Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the UK & Ireland
NEWSLETTER 172

JANUARY 2011



Let us go forth in peace !

Theophany on 6 January, the twelfth day of Christmas, is one of the greatest feasts of the Church Year. You can see that from the fact that there is a 'Sunday before' and a 'Sunday after' the feast. Being a weekday, in the West it is not easy to observe it properly. So we do its particular ceremonies on the nearest Sunday.

So this is what we do on Sunday 9 January.

First we shall **bless the water** in church, with the beautiful long prayer to Christ, linking the Baptism of Christ to what we are doing in this service.

We conclude this part of the service by **drinking and being sprinkled** with the blessed water.

Then we go forth to **bless the River Colne** - and, through it, all manner of natural life, all creation, but especially the local life of the local community of Colchester and district.

We do this for the sake of blessing the water as the symbol of all life on behalf of the local community. It is also an **act of witness** to the local community.

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It is the Orthodox practice to ask the Priest in the days and weeks following Theophany to come to bless your home with that same holy water. It takes only some ten minutes, but brings the peace and joy of the Holy Trinity into your home.

So please:

- Be make every effort to be present on 9 January; come in to church to take a pious part in the Procession.
- Arrange a day and time suitable to you and me, for me to come to your house.
- Bring a bottle to take some holy water to your home, where you can keep it to use before prayer, to drink when sick, to sprinkle when you are

unhappy about the state of your home, etc, etc.

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Theophany as a feast is really older than Christmas. In the West it is a commemoration of the Magi, the Wise Men.

But in the Orthodox Church it has different themes:

It commemorates the Baptism of Christ.

It reveals the Holy Trinity, that God is One in Three Persons - the Father (we hear his Voice), the Son (we see him in the water), and the Holy Spirit (he descends on Christ in the form of a dove).

It shows the all-saving quality of Christ's coming as Saviour, that everything in heaven and earth will changed in quality, renewed in him, transfigured in him. The kingdom of heaven is not just for mankind.

It shows us the meaning of our own Baptism.

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God help us all to enter into the spirit and meaning of this holy occasion.

Father Alexander

- Remember that there is a vat of holy water on the table in church from which you can help yourself at any time.
- My sincere thanks to those who sent gifts or cards of greeting to us at Christmas. It is much appreciated.

ORTHODOX EXPANSION IN SOUTH ESSEX

The next Holy Liturgy in Basildon will be on Saturday 5 February.

We had a good number at the second Liturgy at the end of November, and are grateful for the RC hospitality. We have decided to ask to serve there on the first

Saturday of the month in future, as being an easier day for people to remember. We move to Holy Trinity RC church, Wickhay for a few months in the New Year, due to building work. Please tell Orthodox friends or relatives in south Essex about the services.

For details contact PAUL BRIGHTON-CROSS:

01-702-305-527 orthodox.basildon@hotmail.co.uk

HOLY LITURGY 9.30 AM

- ** Holy Theophany Thursday 6 January
- ** SS Athanasius the Great & Cyril Tuesday 18 January
- ** St John Chrysostom Thursday 27 January
- ** Meeting of Christ in the Temple Wednesday 2 February



9 January, Sunday after Holy Theophany

Holy Liturgy 10.30 am

Blessing of the Water & Procession to the River

The Holy Liturgy will be likely to start on time and be shorter, so arrive in good time! Bring a bottle to take home some holy water.

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 Balkerne 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 Street, Colchester CO1 1UB

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The Parish of St Helen is Registered Charity No. 1134418

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

CLACTON
Saturday
15 January
10.00 am



St John the Baptist is often called the *Forerunner* (*Greek Prodromos*). He figures more prominently in our day-to-day life than he does in modern Western Christianity. In the Middle Ages he was 'bigger' - another example of western Christianity's very gradual pulling away from Orthodoxy. He is obviously important in the Baptism of Christ, but in the Orthodox faith he stands out all the way from before his birth to his death: he runs before Christ as herald, recognising him when still in the womb of his mother, preaching repentance, baptising to prepare the Way for Christ, pointing followers to Christ, being condemned to death. In the grave also he awaits Christ, preaches him to the departed, welcomes him as he enters death to conquer it - as we see in the icon of the Resurrection. 'Among those born among women, none is greater than John the Baptist,' says Christ.

The People Column

TEODOR PETICA: Teodor from Romania has been a member of this congregation for a good while. We now welcome to England his new wife ILUMINITSA, who has until recently been a doctor in South Africa and is now seeking a post here. Our congratulations to them on their marriage, and we do hope and pray she will settle quickly and happily.

ELIZABETH STEVENS was a founding member of the Parish but moved away shortly afterwards. She is now a member of the Lincoln Parish, but keeps an eye on our doings from afar. We were able to call on her in her sheltered flatlet on our way home from the North recently. She seems very contented there. She is delighted to be, for the first time, very close to an Orthodox church - *All Saints of Lincolnshire*: she gets a lift most Sundays. Her Priests are our friends Fr PHILIP HALL and Fr GEORGE HACKNEY. That parish, by the way, has recently - after discussions over several years - obtained a long lease on the Victorian former-Anglican church of St Matthias, which is situated in a prominent position on the Lincoln inner ring road. They have long had use of the chancel for their worship, with a proper iconostasis etc, but will now extend the worship area into the nave of the old building, to give a comfortably-sized 'church' area and still plenty of room for a good hall with kitchen, toilets, etc. Khouria HILARY and I were pleased to join Fr George, Khouria ANNIS and a few of their members for coffee when we passed through.

On Joining the Orthodox Church

Aine Ford, now chrismated Theodora, tell of her recent experience. It is a warm encouragement to us all to renew ourselves in the Holy Orthodox faith.

Brought up in the Church of England, I lost confidence in the church some years ago. During this time I searched fruitlessly for something that would satisfy a spiritual hunger.

On a first visit to the Greek Islands 18 months ago, I noticed a church in the middle of the town. It was open. To my surprise, one of the priests came out and I saw the strange black robes and cap he was wearing.

Remembering that Greece is an Orthodox country and realising that this was an Orthodox Church I was instantly fascinated. Inside and accustomed to the gloom, the depth, richness, sense of ancient traditions and peace were overwhelming.

Some months later back in England, I walked home through the Dutch Quarter and came upon St Helen's. The information on the wall startled and amazed me - this was an Orthodox Church!

It felt like a sign and I promised myself I would go to just one service when I was ready, to see what it was like. In February the day came. It was very different from what I had been used to, but from the very first service I felt again that great sense of peace.

Within a few weeks there came the realisation that here was what had been missing. After speaking to Father Alexander and reading everything he suggested, Chrismation classes began. I remember being told that this was only the beginning, I would never stop learning about Orthodoxy.

Here and There

HOSPICE: The Hospice movement is now widely recognised for the way it cares for the dying. St Helena Hospice has an obvious link with us just by its name. I will again to speak with some of its Master's degree students in a few weeks' time, as I have done for several years now. I have also sent a £100 gift from the Parish and received a reply, displayed in the Porch.

ORTHODOX INSTITUTE: We make an annual gift of £100. to the Institute at Cambridge. It does excellent work educating older and younger laity in the Faith, helping prepare some of the clergy too, and is open also to non-Orthodox people. Several members of our congregation have taken advantage of their courses, not least FRANCES-KYRANNA ISACKE - who, now living in Cambridge, actually acts as Secretary to the Institute's board. I do encourage more of our people to take one of their courses (there is a distance-learning course for those who want it), and think the Church Council will be glad to support any who do with a bursary, so do not be put off by the price. There are leaflets in the Church porch, or you can consult their website.

CARPETS: Our thanks to MARIA TOMOROGA of Manningtree, who has again spent several hours cleaning the Church carpets, nicely in time for Christmas.

Whoever fears God does not fear anything else.

Elder Epiphanios of Athens, 1930-1989

So, on a cold November day, I found myself standing barefoot in the church foyer, waiting to be admitted to the Orthodox Church. I was a bit nervous about the Chrismation, there was so much to remember and I was glad of the support of my two sponsors.

Determined to give the responses to Father's questions in a definite manner, I felt as though I was being carried along by an invisible field of energy. The service felt both ancient and wonderful. It made everything definite.

Afterwards people came up to me, shook my hand, hugged and kissed me, gave me presents and congratulations and shared an enormous chocolate cake, to celebrate the end of a search and the beginning of a journey.

Thanks to you all for welcoming me to the Church of St. Helen. Now you just have to help me learn how to be a proper Orthodox person.

THE PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

will take place on

SUNDAY 6 FEBRUARY

immediately after the Holy Liturgy
Times will be watched to accommodate it,
and it normally lasts only about 30 minutes.

PLEASE BE PRESENT

JANUARY DAYS

Sat 1	Circumcision of Christ, S Basil the Great
Sun 2	Sunday before Theophany, Repose of S Seraphim
Thu 6	HOLY THEOPHANY OF CHRIST
Fri 7	Synaxis of S John the Forerunner
Sun 9	Sunday after Theophany
Tue 11	S Theodosius the Great the Cenobiarach
Wed 12	S Benedict Biscop, Abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow
Thu 13	S Hilary, Bp of Poitiers, S Kentigern Bp of Glasgow
Fri 14	S Nina, Enlightener of Georgia, Sava, Archbishop of Serbia, Hieromartyr Platon of Tallin
Sat 15	S Paul of Thebes
Sun 16	Pentecost 34, Sun of the Ten Lepers, Precious Chains of S Peter, S Fursey, Apostle of Norfolk
Mon 17	S Anthony the Great
Tue 18	SS Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria
Thu 20	S Euthymius the Great
Fri 21	S Maximos the Confessor, Virgin-Martyr Agnes
Sat 22	Apostle Timothy of the Seventy, S Vincent Protomartyr of Spain
Sun 23	Pentecost 35, Sunday of the Blind Man
Mon 24	S Xenia, Fool-for-Christ of St Petersburg
	S Neophytus the Anchorite of Cyprus
Tue 25	S Gregory the Theologian, Abp of Constantinople
Wed 26	S Xenophon, his wife Mary and their sons
Thu 27	Translation of Relics of S John Chrysostom
Fri 28	S Ephraim the Syrian, S Isaac the Syrian
Sat 29	Translation of Relics of S Ignatius the God-bearer
	S Gildas the Wise, Abbot of Llanilltud & Brittany
Sun 30	Pentecost 36, Three Ecumenical Teachers and Great Hierarchs, Basil, Gregory, & John
Mon 31	Wonderworkers & Unmercenaries Cyrus & John

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