

“At Antioch the disciples were first called Christians” Acts 11.26

**Orthodox Parish of
St Helen of Colchester**
Antiochian Archdiocese of the UK & Ireland
NEWSLETTER 206 FEBRUARY 2014



WEEKDAY HOLY LITURGY 9.30 AM

MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY
HIEROMARTYR CHARALAMBOS
BISHOP OF MAGNESIA

MONDAY 24 FEBRUARY
FIRST AND SECOND FINDINGS OF THE
HEAD OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Great Fast will soon be upon us....

Four Sundays before the Great Fast begins, there is a definite change in the atmosphere of worship in the Orthodox calendar.

The first of the Great Forty Days (often called Lent in English, which means the *lengthening* of days, i.e. Spring) falls this year on 3 March. The fourth Sunday before is 9 February: it goes by the title of *The Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee*.

It is the beginning of the preparation period for Lent, and teaches us an important lesson before we begin to get ready for Holy Pascha.

In Lent we shall be fasting and praying and repenting, asking the forgiveness of God for our sins, our 'unlikeness' to Christ: I will write more on that subject next month.

On this first day of 'pre-Lent' is read to us this moving story of the Publican - 'publican' is an old English word, not for a man who keeps a public house, but for a tax-collector. He, in spite of all his sinfulness, is accepted by Christ in a way that the Pharisee (a very upright and respectable pillar of society) never can be - simply because the Pharisee just does not realise that he too is a sinner, quite as much as the publican.

The Pharisee reminds God how much good he has done. The Publican simply recognises how sinful he is and asks forgiveness: *God be merciful to me a sinner*.

The story is meant to remind us that the Publican's attitude *must be ours, must indeed be mine*.

So, the only way I can achieve salvation, allow into my soul the love of God, the balm of sweet joy in Christ, is to acknowledge my sins and to beg the healing power of Christ for my sin-sick soul.

Yes, I may have done a few good things in my life, but *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags* (Isaiah 64.6).

And any goodness we have comes from God anyway and from his grace.

Unless we can begin to feel this in our heart, we can never reach out and accept that loving forgiveness which Christ wishes to pour into the depths of our soul.

Accepting this, is the very best way to prepare for Lent and Easter: see my own sin, and forget all about anyone else's.

+ + +

And surprise, surprise! The reward for living your life with Holy Church is that in that week, anticipating that we are going into some strict training for Pascha (six weeks and more of it), the week following the *Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee* is entirely **fast-free**, even that Wednesday and Friday!

God bless you in your opening up to him, in penitence and in faith, and so receiving the strength and joy of forgiveness!

Father Alexander

The liturgical book used from the *Publican & Pharisee* through till the end of Holy Week and the beginning of Easter (Pascha) is called the *Lent Triodion*, or *Triodion* for short. It is a mine for meditation on the necessity and beauty of repentance.



The Sunday of the Prodigal Son, 16 Feb, reminds us of the wonderful loving forgiveness that God extends to us his sons and daughters when we truly return from our sins to our loving Father.

Parish Annual Meeting

Sunday 16 February

immediately after Holy Liturgy

Please stay for this. We must have it every year to approve the parish accounts and elect officers. The Liturgy will end in good time, and the Meeting will take only about 30 minutes.

So you will get away about the usual time.

Lent starts
3 March.
Pascha is
20 April.

HOLY LITURGY
CLACTON
Saturday
15 February
10.00 am

FELLOWSHIP OF ST ALBAN AND ST SERGIUS

Tuesday 25 February 7.30 pm
St Cedd's RC Hall, Old Rd, Frinton
Archdeacon Michael Fox

will speak on

Anglicans and Orthodox and Others
discussing how Anglicans today relate to other Christian churches, particularly the Orthodox
All welcome: ask if you need a lift

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 Balkeme Hill), to Northgate; go straight along St Peter Street to Castle Park; continue round, up into Maidenburgh Street. Nunns 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

Tel: 01-206-530-530 Mob: 07-947-047-201 Eml: parishpriest@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk

Rdr Andreas Moran, 6 Woodlands, Welshwood Park CO4 3JA Tel: 01-206-865-697

Rdr Alexander Haig Jnr, detached service in Winchester parish

Churchwardens: David Davies 01-473-745-167 Dusan Radunovic 01-206-710-073

The Parish of St Helen is Registered Charity No. 1134418

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

At St James Anglican Church, Beatrice Rd, Clacton-on-sea CO15 1LE

Divine Liturgy: usually third Saturday 10.00 am

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



Last month in this spot we had a photo of some of the folk at Clacton. Lest we breed any rivalry, this month we have one of St Helen's on Christmas Day, which proved a very happy service. After Holy Liturgy we had carols in English, Greek, Romanian and Serbian.

A devout Nun, with an unusual and moving story...

SISTER ANASTASIA has, sadly and suddenly, died, at the age of 72.

She was unusual in that she was married for many years, and then became a Nun. Her husband was still alive then, and of course his agreement was essential. She was tonsured in the early '90s, and it was a few years later that I first met her and learnt her story. She had received the Great Schema. She was a naturally devout woman, a Cypriot who had lived in Britain for many years. She was of very short stature. She had a family, including her daughter AGNES SKAMBALLIS of Stanway and a daughter who is a Nun in Greece. There are several grandchildren, including Agnes's children NICOLAS (now a Royal Marine) and KYRIAKI.

At first Sr Anastasia was in a small Monastery on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. After a few years she needed hospital treat-

ment and returned to England. With life politically difficult in the Holy Land, she afterwards turned to her native Cyprus, where she spent time in two Monasteries. For the past two years or so she has been living with Agnes and Kyriaki, where they all have been able to look after each other.

When in Colchester, she has worshipped with us at St Helen's a few times, but was mostly at the Monastery. It was appropriate therefore that the Monastery welcomed Sister's funeral there; Father Zachariah served. I and several of our people joined the Community at the service, with her children and grandchildren and others of her family from Cyprus.

Burial was in the Colchester cemetery, where we now have quite a number of Orthodox people buried. Our deepest sympathy to the whole family. We ourselves will miss her. Memory eternal!

Here and There

HOLY LAND PILGRIMS: Two of our people have visits to the Land of our Incarnate God this year. MARGARET HAIG was there at the very beginning of the year, with Old Calendar Christmas Eve at Bethlehem - His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem serving. I hope to publish an article by her next month. Now TAMAZ GROB, a new catechumen at St Helen's, is off there in the middle of February. I myself expect to be there for a conference in September.

UNIVERSITY LITURGY CANCELLED: The Liturgy advertised for February will not now take place. Sadly, the Liturgies there have attracted very few students in recent times, and any student can indeed attend the Sunday Liturgy at St Helen's or St John's with comparative ease. I have been loathe to take this decision, but it has been approaching for several years, and I have decided not to serve there in future. At first, when we started them back in the middle or late 1990s, we had up to 60 students present. Recently it has been as few as two or three. *Of course, if the Orthodox student body rise up and demand they start again I shall be pleased to arrange it!* I do still go up on a Wednesday evening, though the most who come along then is two or three, and often none. I am also at the University on other occasions, and advertise my availability at any time to students who need me or my services.

ARCHBISHOP PAUL (Greek Orthodox) and Archbishop YOHUNNA (Syrian Orthodox) remain missing in Syria, since they were kidnapped last March. They are bishops in Aleppo. More recently the twelve Nuns of Ma'aloula near Damascus have also been kidnapped. Please keep them all in your prayers, that they may be found and released soon! Archbishop Paul served the Holy Liturgy here at St Helen's about twelve years ago.

CHURCH BREAD-MAKERS are greatly needed for St Helen's. Volunteers please volunteer rapidly!

CHURCH MUSIC is of course extremely important in the worship of the Church. Appropriate music raises the heart to God, and we cannot overestimate its vital connection with eternity. The Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist has this year's conference in Hertfordshire, just north of London Fri-Sun 4-6 July, with first-rate speakers. I do hope some of our people can attend. Leaflet in the Porch.

A Word from a modern Spiritual Father

I saw a child running after a swarm of spring butterflies for a long time, and when one butterfly was near him, he left it and ran after the others, which seemed to him to be more beautiful.

I said, "Such are the sons of men, and such is their running through the whole of life after many desires."

Truly your race is tiring and futile. If the hour of death comes upon you, you will not be able to say what it is you have been pursuing. And you will enter into the other world with empty hands and a perplexed heart.

The race of the sons of heaven is also tiring, but is not futile. And when the hour of death comes upon them, they will be able to say what it is that they have been pursuing. And in the other world they will have full hands and a restful heart.

St Nikolai Velimirovich (1880-1956), Prayers by the Lake

The new Diocese confers together

at Swanwick, Derbyshire
Monday 26 - Wednesday 28 May

The first conference since the forming of the Archdiocese takes place in May.

The conferences of the Deanery have usually been very good, and this one should be too, with discussion of the way the Diocese should go, and of the role of the Bishop.

The cost is £130 pp, reductions for children, but I will find some money to support all parishioners who wish to attend.

It does not seem that we shall have a new Bishop by then, but His Eminence Metropolitan Ignatius of France will be present, and will ordain PAUL BRIGHTON-CROSS as Deacon for Basildon, and Dn MICHAEL ALEXANDER as Priest for York. There will be a series of discussions on various aspects of our Diocesan life.

This is a vital moment in our history. I hope there will be several from Colchester and Clacton. Do consider coming if at all possible. Speak to me soon, as places are filling up, and we ought to be well represented.

FEBRUARY DAYS

Sat 1	Martyr Tryphon of Syria, St Bridget of Kildare
Sun 2	Pentecost 32, Meeting of our Lord in the Temple
Mon 3	Righteous Simeon the God-receiver & Anna St Nicolas, Archbishop of Japan
Wed 5	Martyr Agatha of Palermo, Sicily
Thu 6	S Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople
Fri 7	S Richard of the West Saxons
Sat 8	Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates
Sun 9	Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee <i>Beginning of the Triodion</i>
Mon 10	Hieromartyr Charalambos, Bishop of Magnesia
Tue 11	Hieromartyr Blasius of Sebaste, St Caedmon of Whitby
Sun 16	Sunday of the Prodigal Son
Mon 17	St Finan, Bishop of Lindisfame
Wed 19	New Martyr Philothei of Athens
Sun 23	Sunday of Meatfare, of the Last Judgment
Mon 24	1st & 2nd Findings of Head of S John Baptist
Thu 27	S Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn
Fri 28	S John Cassian the Roman S Oswald, Archbishop of York

A fuller list of the month's Feasts and Fasts is available in church