



## Approaching Lent: The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

As the joyful feasts of Nativity and Theophany recede into the past we experience the familiar Sundays of the Ten Lepers, Zacchaeus and the Canaanite Woman; The Prodigal Son, the Publican and the Pharisee, The Last Judgement and the Expulsion from Paradise. All of these prepare us in different ways for the spiritual labour of the Great Fast to come. We learn of our need to live in thankfulness to God, to cry out to Christ, to have faith despite difficulties and trials. We learn too of our need to recognise our true condition and to return to our loving Father, our need for real humility and forgiveness; how we should learn to live each day as though it were our last in love for God and our neighbour and about our deadly separation from God through the curse of sin and death. In the midst of all this at the start of February (2nd) the Church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The Old Testament Law meant that a firstborn male child was to be presented to God in the temple on the fortieth day after his birth with ritual sacrifices, and that the mother must undergo a ceremony of purification. Mary the Blessed Theotokos and Joseph faithfully obeyed this law and brought the forty day old Jesus to the Temple, and a holy man, Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit to meet them there. Simeon had been waiting his whole life for the Messiah and knew in his heart that the infant Jesus was indeed the long awaited Christ. As the Righteous and Holy Simeon held baby Jesus aloft in his arms we see this ancient Law of Moses finally fulfilled.

***Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (Matthew 5:17)***

### Services February 2023

Saturdays: Great vespers 4.30pm

Sundays: Holy Liturgy 10:30am

(during the winter: Hours before the Liturgy)

Thursday 2 Feb	Meeting of Christ in the Temple Holy Liturgy 9:30am
Sunday 5 Feb	Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee Holy Liturgy 10:30am
Wednesday 8 Feb	Funeral Paraskevoulla Gowers 1:30pm, St Helen's Chapel (Burial at West Mersea)
Friday 10 Feb	Hieromartyr Charalambos of Magnesia, Holy Liturgy 9:30am, St Helen's Chapel
Sunday 12 Feb	Sunday of the Prodigal Son Holy Liturgy 10:30am
Friday 17 Feb	St Theodore The Recruit, Holy Liturgy 9:30am, St Helen's Chapel
Sunday 19 Feb	Sunday of Meatfare, Sunday of Last Judgement, Holy Liturgy 10:30am
Sunday 26 Feb	Sunday of Cheesefare, Forgiveness Sunday, Holy Liturgy 10:30am & Forgiveness Prayers
Monday 27 Feb	First day of the Great Fast (Lent)



Simeon's words declaring this fulfillment are with us today in the Song of Simeon: "Lord now lettest Thou, Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the gentiles and the glory of Thy people, Israel."

Let us, as Simeon did, hurry to the temple to meet Christ, Who is the fulfillment of all things and our only salvation.

Father Mark

### News and updates of the month:

A meeting have taken place in January to see what will happen to St Helen's chapel in the future. Decisions will need to be made whether to keep it or not. There are pros and cons about this so please pray if possible.

Work on the iconostasis have also begun and we will share more news about it soon. Thinking about this and the icons on it, I just think that we are very lucky to be able to have such icons that bring us closer to God and His Saints.

In the image to the right hand side we see an old picture (taken by an anonymous person) of Saint Sophrony meanwhile painting Saint Silouan, at the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Essex. May St Soprony and St Silouan always help our community at St Martin's and St Helen's.



Ligia Iftime

## A word from the Fathers

“Do not rush one prayer after another but say them with orderly deliberation, as one addressing a great person for a favour. Do not just pay attention to words, but rather let the mind be in the heart, standing before the Lord in full awareness of His presence, in full consciousness of His greatness and grace and justice.”

*(Saint Theophan the Recluse )*

“To be a Christian means believing in the resurrection of the dead; hoping for the ‘adoption of sons’ by the heavenly Father; receiving the divine image of being; becoming through the gift of the Father’s love what He Himself is by His nature - a god. These things hath our Father promised to those who believe in Christ Jesus as the only-begotten Son of one substance with the Father. It is a great sin to belittle the revelation given to us in the Holy Spirit concerning Man, on how Man was conceived by God before the creation of the visible world. Punishment for this sin - unbelief in the Resurrection - bears a particular stamp: it is our own self-condemnation - we refuse the gift of our Creator.”

*(Saint Sophrony the Athonite, on prayer)*

## Also in February:

Saint Ethelbert, first Christian King of Kent (616). He was buried in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, which he had established. Many miracles were worked at his tomb, where a lamp was kept lit until the veneration of Saints in the UK was prohibited and the monastery was disbanded in 1538.

## Great-martyr Theodore the Tyro (Recruit, ~360)

The Holy Martyr Theodore the Recruit was a soldier in Pontus. Though he had been a Christian since childhood, he kept his faith secret while in the army. When the commander of his camp ordered a sacrifice to the pagan gods, Theodore boldly refused by saying ‘I’m a Christian!’, and he then encouraged the other Christians in the camp to do the same. That night he went to a nearby pagan temple and burned it down. Because of this, he was thrown into a solitary dungeon cell; there he refused bread and water saying that Christ had promised him food from heaven. He spent his time there chanting hymns with the angels.

When all argument, bribery and threat had failed to turn him away from Christ, the governor resorted to torture and mutilations, but St Theodore calmly endured everything. Fearing that other Christians may join him, the governor ordered that he be burned. Walking freely into the flames, there is where he gave back his soul to God. His body was later found untouched and a church was built in Euchaita in its honor; many pilgrims came there for healing of the soul and body.



In 361, the Emperor Julian ordered to have all foods in the marketplaces sprinkled with animal blood during the first week of Lent, so that Christians would be unable to escape contact with idolatry. St Theodore appeared in a vision to Patriarch Eudoxius, warned him of this plan, and told him to tell the Christians not to buy any food from the market but to eat kolyva made from boiled wheat grains. Since that time, kolyva has come to be offered also in honor of the Saints and in the memory of the departed.

May Great Martyr Theodore pray for us all!

**St Martin’s Church, West Stockwell Street, CO1 1HN**  
**St Helen’s Chapel, Maidenburgh Street, CO1 1UB**

Both temples are off the High Street, but accessible from there only on foot. Nearest car park NCP Nunn’s Road, CO1 1EJ.

Confessions: Saturdays 5pm, after Vespers or by arrangement.

Holy Marriage, Holy Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement.

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