

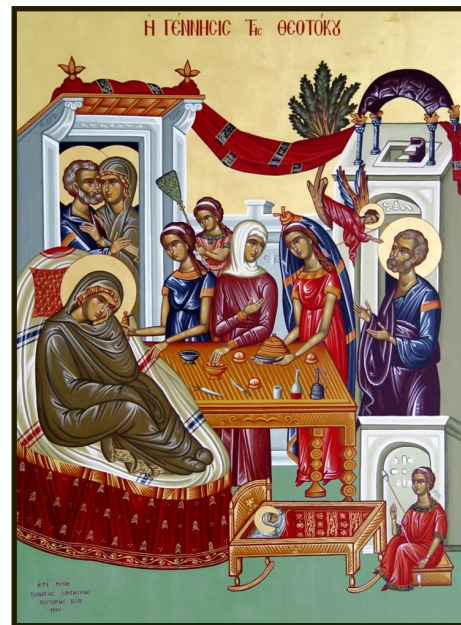


# Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen Colchester

SERIES 2 NO 9 | SEPTEMBER 2023

## The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos

September brings the start of the new liturgical year and with it two great feasts of the Orthodox Church; the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos and ever Virgin Mary and the The Exaltation of the Precious and Life Giving Cross. The account of the birth of Mary is not found in the Bible. Holy Tradition instead brings us the story in the form of apocryphal writings which are not part of the New Testament scriptures. These traditional teachings are preserved in the hymns and verses of the services for the feast, in which we learn of Joachim and Anna, a pious Jewish couple who were among the small and faithful remnant—"the poor and the needy"—who were awaiting the promised messiah. In old age and without children, they prayed earnestly to the Lord to bless them with a child, since among the Jews childlessness was seen as a sign of God's displeasure. Both in answer to their prayer and to acknowledge their patient faithfulness the aged couple was at last blessed with the child who was destined, because of her own personal goodness and holiness, to become the Mother of the promised Messiah: Christ.



The Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life Giving Cross commemorates two great events in the history of the church: the discovery by our patron St Helen of the True Cross of Christ on Golgotha in the Fourth Century and it's recapture from the Persians in the Eighth Century, after it was stolen as a spoil of war. But we are to look beyond the historical accounts to the example of the Virgin Mary's great humility and obedience, the shining wonder of the incarnation and God's great plan to free us from the curse of death through the death and resurrection of His Son. As we are called to carry our own cross in life (Matthew 16:24) we should also contemplate Christ's saving self-sacrifice and how the cross upon which he was crucified; this apparent symbol of defeat, waste, folly, torture and death has become for us a tree of life - a symbol of spiritual renewal, wisdom and the casting off of our old sinful natures and the gateway to the new life in Christ.

Father Mark

### Regular Service Times

Saturdays: Great Vespers 4:30 pm St Martin's Church  
Sundays: Matins & Holy Liturgy from 9:45 am St Martins Church

### Services for September 2023

**Fri 8 September** Hours & Holy Liturgy, The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos & Ever-Virgin Mary, 9.30 St Martin's Church.

**Thu 14 September** Hours & Holy Liturgy, The Universal Exaltation of the Precious & Live-Giving Cross, 9.30 St Martin's Church.

**Tue 19 September** Hours & Holy Liturgy, St Theodore of Tarsus, 9.30 St Helen's Chapel.

**Tue 26 September** Hours and Holy Liturgy, Repose of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, 9.30 St Helen's Chapel.

### Confessions

Father Alexander: from 5pm after Vespers or by arrangement |  
Father Mark by arrangement

*Holy Marriage, Holy Baptism, funerals, memorials etc by arrangement*

### News and updates of the month:

#### Bishop's Visit

On August 15, on the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, the parish was blessed by a visit from His Eminence Metropolitan Silouan. Sayedna served the Hierarchical Liturgy of the Feast in St Martin's Church and we were also joined by Father Alexander Haig (Jr) and Father Patrick Ramsay. Margaret Hague was also on hand to direct the choir. It was a great blessing to concelebrate together. After the service a lunch of pizza was served; it was a very happy occasion.



### Iconostasis and Lighting:

Work is well underway on our iconostasis and chandeliers which we hope will be installed over the next few weeks.

**Study Sessions: Introduction to Holy Orthodoxy: Faith and Life:** Father Mark holds fortnightly study sessions for catechumens and those interested in learning more about our ancient faith. Next sessions taking place in September and October 2023:

**Sunday 24/09:** Liturgy and Life (this will be a slightly longer session to incorporate the material on Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving)

**Sunday 08/10:** The Cross & Salvation: Round Up

<http://www.orthodoxcolchester.org.uk/hm/catechesis-teaching/>

**National Heritage Days:** As in past years, the parish will open both temples to the public for the Colchester Heritage Days. St Martin's and St Helen's will be open from 10am to 4pm on Saturday 9th September and on Sunday 10th September, St Helen's will be open all day and St Martin's will remain open to visitors after the Liturgy until 4pm. We hope to see many visitors.

**A word from the Fathers: St Silouan the Athonite, Writings, VI.4:** "How can you find out if you are living within the will of God? Here is the sign: If you are troubled about any thing, this means that you have not completely given yourself over to the will of God. A person who lives in the will of God is not concerned over anything. And if he needs anything, he gives both it and himself over to God. And if he does not receive the necessary thing, he remains calm nevertheless, as if he had it. The soul which has been given over to the will of God is afraid of nothing, not of thunder nor of thieves - nothing. But whatever happens, she says, "Thus it pleases God." If she is sick, she thinks: this means that I need to be sick, or else God would not have given it to me. Thus peace is preserved in both soul and body."

## Saint Silouan (1866-1928)

St. Silouan was born Simeon Ivanovich Antonov in 1866 to Russian Orthodox parents who came from the village of Sovsk in Russia's Tambov region. At the age of twenty-seven he left his native Russia and came to Mount Athos, where he became a monk at the Monastery of St. Panteleimon and was given the name Silouan, the Russian version of the Biblical name Silvanus. He lived very simply, humbly, and quietly until St. Sophrony (Sakharov) became his spiritual child and, after the saint's repose, written a book describing his life and teaching, St. Silouan the Athonite, one of the great spiritual books of our time.

As a child, St. Silouan grew up with pious parents but was himself fairly "wordly" for a long while. When he was still a young man, he almost accidentally hurt a man with a single punch. He was immediately remorseful and devoted himself with zeal to repentance. However, this newfound fervor only lasted a few months! He returned to his old ways until he had a horrible dream that demonstrated just how displeasing his way of life was to the Mother of God. Grieved in his soul, he devoted himself again, and this time, through the prayers of St. John of Kronstadt, made his way to the Holy Mountain with a fire burning in his heart, so deep was his repentance.

An ardent ascetic, he received the grace of unceasing prayer and saw Christ in a vision. After long years of spiritual trial, he acquired great humility and inner stillness. He prayed and wept for the whole world as for himself, and he put the highest value on love for enemies. Thomas Merton, a twentieth-century Catholic monk, described Silouan as "the most authentic monk of the twentieth century." St Silouan died on September 24, 1938. He was glorified by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1987.

Saint Silouan pray for us all!



**Also in September: Saint Theodore (reposed 690, remembered September 19).** St Theodore was a Byzantine Greek from Tarsus in Cilicia. He went to Rome where he became a monk in a Greek monastery. He was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 668. He called a synod at Hertford to re-order the church. He set up a school of learning which enabled him to send out monks who would be trained in the monastic life.

**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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We are grateful to those continuing to support our church by regular or occasional gifts: God bless you.

### Bank details:

**Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen: Registered Charity No: 1192469**

**IBAN:** GB05BUKB20226780219819

**Sort Code:** 20-22-67

**Account No:** 50349364

**Appeal Account No:** 80219819

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