

The Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen

Colchester

Newsletter | March 2024

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles & Ireland | Metropolitan HE Silouan (Dner)



Annunciation of the Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos & Ever-Virgin Mary

This year of 2024 the Great Fast starts in the middle of March, and we begin our ascetic journey to Holy Pascha on the distant date of May 5th, much later this year than Western Easter, which is observed by Protestants and Roman Catholics on March 31st. Every year on March 25th the Orthodox Church of course celebrates The Feast of the Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. The Feast commemorates the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would become incarnate and enter into this world through her womb. The Archangel Gabriel announces to Mary that she has been chosen by God to bear His Son; she is amazed but humbly and without argument agrees for God's will to be done through her. We see in this remarkable event Mary becoming in a sense, the first Christian, with Christ literally, and from that moment, living within her. This indwelling of Christ is what defines, or at least should define, all Christians, rather than mere rule keeping and religiosity. *Through our obedience and humble consent* to God's will in our lives, we too may say in truth, as St Paul says "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Mary's title of **Theotokos (Θεοτόκος)** in the Eastern Church, meaning 'God bearer', is a clear affirmation of the divinity of Jesus as we Orthodox Christians believe and confess, that He has two natures, fully human and fully divine, eternally combined in one personhood. In the coming weeks of fasting, let us do what we can to agree to God's plan for *our* lives, to conform ourselves to His will and to consent to His saving power in our troubled hearts in these troubled times. Let us ask for the prayers of Mary, the Mother of God, that we may, like her, say without conditions: "let it be to me Lord, according to Thy word." (Luke 1:38)

Father Mark

NEWS AND VIEWS + NEWS AND VIEWS + NEWS AND VIEWS



VISITORS: We were blessed on February the 18th to be visited by Father Alexander and Kh Hilary's daughter Margaret who brought with her two friends Jonathan and Madalina Reeve (*pictured here with Fr Alexander, Father Mark and Kh. Paula*). Margaret directed the choir and Madalina sang. There was time for some happy fellowship after the Liturgy. We were honoured to have such helpful and lovely visitors, who we hope will return very soon!

CATECHESIS: The parish is experiencing a period of significant growth, with a steady stream of inquirers and newcomers, drawn in different ways to the light of Christ shining through His Holy Orthodox Church. This increase in people, often young men, seeking the Faith seems to be a worldwide phenomenon, particularly in the Anglosphere and in many African countries. Father Mark is running a series of classes of instruction in Holy Orthodoxy throughout Lent; please contact him for details.

"I am amazed that there are some who are entirely in doubt as to whether the holy Virgin should be called Theotokos or not. For if our Lord Jesus Christ is God, how is the holy Virgin who gave Him birth, not Theotokos?" Cyril of Alexandria



ICONOSTASIS: The first stage of the installment of our new iconostasis has been completed with the main timber framework and carved panels now in place. The next phase will include the application of various decorative trims and the treatment of the structure with high quality wood stains and varnish. We now await our beautiful new icons, and hope to have several of them installed in another week or so. We are making use of the icons which have served us so well since 2020 until the new ones arrive. Even in its partially completed state the iconostasis has lent a wholly different feel to the interior of St Martin's Church. After years and months of planning, many things are coming to fruition at last. Please continue to pray for all concerned in the planning and implementation of our mission to make St Martin's Church a truly **Orthodox** temple. Holy St Martin, pray to God for us!

Akathist and Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts:

Starting in the first week of Lent we will begin serving the salutations of the Akathist to the Mother of God on Friday evenings, **starting 22/03** at 6pm in St Helen's Chapel. On Wednesday evenings **starting 20/03** we will serve the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at 6pm in St Martin's Church. The evening slot for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is something new for the parish this year, as our custom has been, in past years, to serve it in the morning. We hope this will allow more people with work commitments to feel able to attend this solemn and beautiful service. **Those wishing to receive Holy Communion on Wednesday evenings should prepare themselves accordingly and fast completely from about 1pm.**

We are grateful to those continuing to support our church by regular or occasional gifts; may 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

Regular Service Times:

Saturdays: Great Vespers 4:30pm

Sundays: Matins & Holy Liturgy from 9:45am

Weekend services ALL at St Martins. Additional (weekday) services usually at St Helen's Chapel unless otherwise stated.

St Helen's Chapel is open daily for prayer and pilgrimage.

March Special Services:

Every Wednesday from 20th March: Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts - 6pm at St Martin's Church. To continue until the week before Holy Week

Every Friday evening from 22nd March: Salutations of the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God - 6pm at St Helen's Chapel. To continue until the week before Holy Week.

Monday 25th March: The Annunciation to our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos & Ever Virgin Mary - hours and Holy Liturgy, from 9.30 at St Martin's Church



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: Nunns Road, CO1 1EJ.
Confessions: Saturdays 5pm, after Vespers or by arrangement. **Holy Marriage, Holy Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement.**

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