

# THE ORTHODOX PARISH OF ST MARTIN & ST HELEN

Newsletter: March 2025 | Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles & Ireland | *HE Metropolitan Silouan Oner*



## ***The Annunciation to The Most Holy Theotokos & Ever Virgin Mary: March 25th***

On the Feast of the Annunciation, Orthodox Christians commemorate both the divine action of God, whereby He took on flesh from the Virgin for our salvation, and the human response, whereby Mary freely accepted the vocation offered to her. He elected to become man, and He desired to do this with the willing agreement of her whom He chose as His mother. Mary could have refused, for she was not a passive instrument, but an active participant with a free and positive part to play in God's plan for our salvation. Thus, when on this and other feasts the Orthodox Church honors the Theotokos, the Mother of God, it is not just because God chose her but also because she herself chose to follow His will. All of us are called in some way to this willing acceptance in our own lives, as God calls us each one to take up the cross of becoming who we were created to be. To become co-workers with God (**1 Cor 3:9**) in the building of His Kingdom.

Happy Feast! God bless you! *Father Mark*

## **News & Views**



**After the Walsingham conference**, Fr Mark and Kh Paula travelled to visit and stay with Archimandrite Fr Philip Hall (famous amongst other things for his edifying YouTube channel!) and newly ordained Fr Deacon Panagiotis at the community of All Saints of Lincolnshire, in Lincoln. Fr Mark concelebrated a Holy Liturgy with Fr Philip and Fr Deacon Panagiotis on Saturday 1 March. Fr Mark and Kh Paula were made very welcome at lunch afterwards by the friendly community there. Thanks to all at the parish for making us so welcome!

**DEATH NOTICE:** It is with great sadness, but with joy in anticipation of the General Resurrection, that we announce the death in February of our dear friend **Michael Cole**. Michael and his wife Artemis and their family have a decades long association with the monastery at Tolleshunt Knights, but have often attended services with us over the years. Michael's funeral will be served at St Martin's Church on Thursday 20 March at 10:30, with the burial at 12:00 at Colchester Cemetery. We will miss Michael very much. May his memory be eternal!

## **Clergy of the Archdiocese Meet with Sayedna at Walsingham**



**On Friday 28 February**, Fr Alexander Kh. Hilary, Fr Mark and Kh. Paula travelled to meet with Sayedna Silouan and many clergy of our God protected archdiocese at the ancient and sacred site of pilgrimage to the Mother of God in Walsingham, Norfolk. Since the pandemic there has been no gathering of this kind; the last archdiocesan conference being in 2019. Father Alexander Haig (Jr) served a Paraklesis in the morning, there was a delicious bring and share lunch in the afternoon, followed by a meeting between the clergy and Sayedna in which important matters, liturgical and pastoral, were discussed. *The day concluded with Vespers and the service of mutual forgiveness between all present. It was a very helpful and pleasant day, we hope the first of many more regular events of this kind in the coming years.*

***Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Psalm 132***



## ST JOHN CLIMACUS OF SINAI

*"Fight to escape from your own cleverness. If you do, then you will find salvation and uprightness through Jesus Christ our Lord." John Climacus,*



*On the Fourth Sunday of Lent, the Orthodox Remember St John Climacus of Sinai, the Seventh Century author of that great spiritual classic, 'The Ladder of Divine Ascent'. This thirty chapter treatise on spiritual warfare covers the many vices which beset each of us to a greater or lesser extent, alongside their corresponding virtues. Originally written for monastics, it requires handling with respect and care and should not be treated lightly, like a modern era 'self-help' book. It is sobering to discover upon opening its pages that human nature has apparently not changed one iota since the work was originally written, for all our self absorbed, modern talk of 'evolution' and 'progress'. Thirteen hundred years after 'The Ladder' was produced, its vivid and subtle analysis of our human brokenness and folly is deeply affecting. So much wisdom and treasure is contained within its pages that it has become perhaps the primary Orthodox spiritual classic and thus it is best read with the guidance of a spiritual father, a priest or someone with pastoral responsibility for the lay reader. Perhaps the overarching theme is that of the great struggle to which we must set ourselves. As with Mary, the Mother of God and her willing acceptance of the extraordinary vocation to which she was called; we too must agree to this struggle, to 'turn up', to consent to do our part and agree to participate in God's saving action in our lives. Mere intellectual 'agreement' with our religion is insufficient. We must take part, we must engage mind, body and soul, we must assent. God respects our freedom, it is part of His image within us. If we take up arms in this fight, God will help us! Or, we can choose to stay as we are.....*



### **A Relic of St Jacob of Hamatoura is Gifted to the Parish.**

At the event in Walsingham we were presented with a relic of **St Jacob of Hamatoura** (a monastery in Lebanon). Fr Michel Touma of St George Antiochian Cathedra, London, presented the relic, along with a letter of authentication from the Abbot of the Hamatoura Monastery. St Jacob was a 15th Century monastic, cruelly persecuted, tortured and killed for his faith by Mamluk soldiers who attempted without success to convert him to Islam. Our dear friend **George louannou** is helping to mount the relic on an icon of the saint, which will be hung in the church for all to venerate. It is such a blessing to receive a holy relic for our parish. **Holy St Jacob, pray to God for us!**

### Additional Lenten Services for March 2025

**Each Wednesday of March** - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, 6pm St Martin's Church. (Fast from 1pm if wishing to receive Holy Communion)

**Each Friday of March** - Salutations to the Most Holy Mother of God (Akathist Hymn), 6pm St Helen's Chapel.

**Tuesday 25 March** - The Annunciation to The Most Holy Theotokos & Ever Virgin Mary, Hours & Holy Liturgy, from 9:10am St Martin's Church.

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 9:30am

**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.

**St Martin's Church, West Stockwell Street, CO1 1HN**

**St Helen's Chapel, Maidenburgh Street, CO1 1UB.**

Both temples are off Colchester 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.

**Parish Priest:** Father Mark Shillaker Mobile: 07917 161 295 | Email: [inquiries@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk](mailto:inquiries@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk) **The Very Reverend Father**

**Archpriest Alexander Haig (retired) parish website:** [orthodoxcolchester.org.uk](http://orthodoxcolchester.org.uk)