



Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen Colchester

SERIES 2 NO 8 | AUGUST 2023

The Transfiguration and The Dormition

August contains two of the great feasts of the Church, whose dates are fixed: The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ on August 6 and The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos on August 15. The account of the Transfiguration appears in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, referred to as the synoptic Gospels as they contain many common accounts of the events in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. After speaking with His disciples about His forthcoming Passion, Cross and Death and warning them of the trials and tribulations they themselves must experience; Jesus gives the assurance and hope of Glory for those who endure to the end. Later Jesus goes to pray, leading Peter, James and John to the summit of Mount Tabor. Jesus' countenance is changed, his raiment becoming as a dazzling white light. The dumbfounded disciples also see the Holy Prophets Moses and Elijah talking with their Master; a great cloud then descends and covers them; and they are very afraid. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My Son, My Beloved; listen to Him! And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And the disciples kept silent afterwards and spoke to no one of what they had witnessed.

Liturgically, the most important Feast of the Theotokos is that of her Dormition or Falling-Asleep. Prior to this Feast there is a strict two-week fast, beginning on August 1, the fast is broken only by the Feast of the Transfiguration on August 6. For the Orthodox, this feast of the Dormition encapsulates two great themes: firstly, that of death and burial and secondly, resurrection and the assumption of the Mother of God. This taking up into heaven of the Theotokos is a part of our Holy Tradition, which in earlier times was not discussed with those outside the Church, and as Orthodox Christians we know that as the son of God assumed human nature in the womb of the Virgin, she herself who was the very means of His Incarnation was resurrected and taken up into Heaven in the Divine Glory of her Son. The Transfiguration reveals as much as can be received by mortal beings of Jesus' Divine Nature and establishes Him as King over all, not merely another prophet as some have attempted to dismiss Him. The Dormition is a reminder that Jesus, the Messiah of God took His humanity from a real human woman; that this humanity is not a mere special power, attribute or characteristic but full in its nature, and in a perfect hypostatic unity with His Divine nature.



The struggle of our spiritual life is symbolised in the image of climbing a mountain and the life and repose of the Mother of God offers a perfect example of the humility and obedience which true Christianity demands of us, if we are to endure. Brothers and sisters, let us then fast and feast with joy and gratitude for God's abundant mercy!

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 July 2023

Tue 1 August	Hours & Holy Liturgy, Procession of the Honourable Wood of the Life Giving Cross of the Lord, 9.30am St Helen's Chapel
Tue 15 August	Hours & Holy Liturgy, Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary, 9.30am St Martin's Church
Fri 18 August	Hours & Holy Liturgy, Repose of St Helen, 9.30am St Helen's Chapel
Wed 23 August	Hours & Holy Liturgy, St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons 9.30am St Helen's Chapel
Thurs 31 August	Hours & Holy Liturgy, Deposition of the Cincture of the Most Holy Theotokos in the Church of Chalkoprateria 9.30 St Helen's Chapel

Sunday 20 August 2023 - Picnic after the Holy Liturgy

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:

Pilgrimage to St Botolph

Father Mark and Khouria Paula joined pilgrims from the Russian Orthodox Community at Mettingham on a pilgrimage to St Botolph's Church in Iken, Suffolk. With Sayedna Silouan's blessing, Father Mark concelebrated at a special moleben service, with a beautiful Akathist to St Botolph, with Father Mark Tattum-Smith (Diocese of Great Britain



and Western Europe) of Mettingham and Father Evgeny Selensky (Diocese of Sourozh). It was a very prayerful and happy occasion and wonderful to be with other Orthodox faithful from around East Anglia.

Prosphora bakers needed: we need people to volunteer to bake prosphora for Divine Liturgy; if you can bake or would like to find out how please let Khouria Hilary know. Making the bread for the precious gifts is a wonderful service to God and His Holy Church!



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 August:

Sunday 13/08: Holy Mysteries (sacraments)

Sunday 27/08: Icons and the Saints

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

National Heritage Days: once again the parish will participate in the National Heritage Days weekend in September when we will open our temples to the public. The dates and times are: Saturday 9 September 10am - 4pm and Sunday 10 September 1pm - 4pm. We need volunteers for morning and/or afternoon shifts on Saturday and for the afternoon on Sunday, to greet visitors and tell them a little about our wonderful historic buildings. It is also a good opportunity to talk about our Orthodox faith as visitors often have questions and are very interested to learn about what we believe.

A word from the Fathers: St Philaret of Moscow, Sermon of Sept 23, 1847: "Every Christian should find for himself the imperative and incentive to become holy. If you live without struggle and without hope of becoming holy, then you are Christians only in name and not in essence. But without holiness, no one shall see the Lord, that is to say they will not attain eternal blessedness. It is a trustworthy saying that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (I Tim. 1:15). But we deceive ourselves if we think that we are saved while remaining sinners. Christ saves those sinners by giving them the means to become saints."

Saint Theodora of Sihla (+1650)

Saint Theodora of Sihla, one of the greatest of Romania's women ascetics, was born in the first half of the seventeenth century as the daughter of Stefan Joldea, the governor of the Neamt Fortress. Saint Theodora will be, since childhood, a model of holiness. She will attend the monasteries in the Neamt region and especially the "Saint Nicholas" Church. In her early life her family experienced a great trial - her sister died in a tragic way - and this event deeply affected her. The thought of abandoning the world blossomed in her heart yet her parents disagreed and, at the proper time, they married her to a young man. St Theodora did not have any children, and with the approval of her good husband, she entered a monastery to become a nun.



In just a few short years, she advanced in obedience, prayer, and asceticism, acquiring the grace of unceasing prayer of the heart. A Turkish invasion will destroy the hermitage and thus the nuns will scatter. She will live as a hermit for the rest of her life, fasting, praying, enduring cold and hunger. She made such progress in asceticism that she could keep vigil all night with her arms lifted up toward heaven; in the morning she would eat some herbs and other vegetation to break her fast. She drank the rainwater she collected from a channel cut into the cliff, still known as St Theodora's Spring. When praying, her mind was raised up to Heaven and her body was lifted off the ground, her face shone with radiant light and a flame came forth from her mouth. She had the gift of clairvoyance and of doing miracles as well.

Her end was miraculously announced to Abbot Varsanufie from Sihastria Hermitage. In the presence of all the monks who had come to see her, Saint Theodora confessed and received the Sacraments, passed away peacefully, being buried in the cave. In the second half of the XIXth century, her relics were taken to Pecerska Lavra in Kyiv, Ukraine, where they still are today.

Saint Theodora pray for us all!

Also in August: Saint Bertram of Ilam (lived in the 8th century). Hermit and wonderworker, St Bertram lived for many years as a recluse and anchorite in the wooded and hilly areas of Stafford and Ilam. The village of Ilam still preserves a parish church, a shrine, crosses, two holy wells and a cave associated with St Bertram. Many pilgrimages are still organised today in the area.

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.

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