

**Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the
British Isles and Ireland
Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East**

Charity number: 1192469

Sunday 4 January 2026. Issue 10.

Tone 5.

**Sunday before Holy Theophany; Synaxis of the Seventy Holy
Apostles; Venerable Theoktistos of Sicily**

**Epistle Reading
Timothy (4:5-8)**

Prokeimenon in Tone VI

Prokeimenon in Tone VI

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

Verse: Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry; O my God, be not silent unto me.

My child Timoty, be watchful in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a libation, and the season of my departure is at hand: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have guarded the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will reward me at that Day, and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved His appearing.

Alleluia.

Verse 1: May God be compassionate toward us and bless us.

Verse 2: May He cause His face to shine upon us, and have mercy on us!



Gospel Reading

Mark (1:1-8)

The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets: Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make ready the way of the Lord! Make his paths straight!’ John came baptising in the wilderness and preaching the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All the country of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to him. They were all baptised by John in the Jordan river, confessing their sins. John was clothed with camel’s hair, and a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He preached, saying, “He who comes after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to kneel down and untie the strap of his sandals. I baptised you in water, but he will baptise you in the Holy Spirit.”

Troparion of the Resurrection. Tone 5.

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Forefeast of Holy Theophany

Troparion

Prepare O Zebulon; and adorn thyself O Naphtali! River Jordan, cease flowing and receive with Joy the Master coming to be baptised! Adam, rejoice with our first Mother and do not hide thyself as thou didst of old in Paradise; for having seen thee naked, He has appeared to clothe thee, with the first garment. Christ has appeared to renew all creation.

St Martin the Merciful

Troparion

In signs and in miracles thou wast renowned throughout the land of Gaul. By grace thou art a light for the world, O Martin, Bishop blessed of God. Deeds of mercy and compassion filled thy life with their splendours, teaching and wise counsel were thy riches and treasures, which still thou dost dispense freely to those who honour thee.

St Helen Troparion

We behold thee, glorious Helen, with thy God-inspired son, in the joys of the kingdom of Heaven, and we magnify Christ, for he hath revealed to us thine honoured festival, giving light more brilliant than the sun. Therefore we cry in faith: O People, exalt Christ above all forever!

Forefeast of Holy Theophany Kontakion

Today hath the Lord appeared in the streams of the Jordan, crying out to John and saying: Fear not to baptise me, for I have come to save Adam, the first created.

St John the Forerunner (7 January)

The glorious Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist is also referred to as John the Forerunner because he was the forerunner of Christ. He was an ascetic and great prophet, who baptised Christ and became one of the most revered saints in the Orthodox Church. John is a cousin of Christ through his mother Elizabeth who was the daughter of Zoia. Zoia is the sister of Christ's grandmother. He was later beheaded by Herod in the first century to satisfy the request of Herod's stepdaughter, Salome, and wife Herodias. Because he baptised Christ, he is the patron saint of godparents. He is sometimes called the Angel of the Desert; because of this title, he is sometimes depicted with wings. Isaiah 40:3-5 is commonly read as a prophecy of John. His father, Zacharias, was a priest of the course of Abia (1 Chr. 24:10), and his mother, Elizabeth, was of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1:5). John held the priesthood of Aaron, giving him the authority to perform baptisms of God.

His birth took place six months before that of Jesus, and according to the Gospel account was expected by prophecy (Matt. 3:3; Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1) and foretold by an angel. Zacharias lost his power of speech because of his unbelief over the birth of his son, and had it restored on the occasion of John's circumcision (Luke 1:64).

John was a Nazarite from his birth (Luke 1:15; Num. 6:1-12). He spent his early years in the mountainous tract of Judea lying between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea (Matt. 3:1-12). He led a simple life, wearing rope (gamla) fiber clothing and eating "locusts and wild honey" (Matt. 3:4).

As an adult John started to preach in public, and people from "every quarter" were attracted to his message. The essence of his preaching was the

necessity of repentance and turning away from selfish pursuits. He denounced the Sadducees and Pharisees as a “generation of vipers,” and warned them not to assume their heritage gave them special privilege (Luke 3:8). He warned tax collectors and soldiers against extortion and plunder. His doctrine and manner of life stirred interest, bringing people from all parts to see him on the banks of the Jordan River. There he baptised thousands unto repentance.

The fame of John reached the ears of Jesus in Nazareth (Matt. 3:5), and he came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptised by John, on the special ground that it became him to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). John’s special office ceased with the baptism of Jesus, who must now “increase” as the King come to his kingdom. He continued, however, for a while to bear testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus. He pointed him out to his disciples, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God.” His public ministry was suddenly (after about six months probably) brought to a close by his being cast into prison by Herod, whom he had reproved for the sin of having taken to himself the wife of his brother Philip (Luke 3:19). He was shut up in the castle of Machaerus, a fortress on the southern extremity of Peraea, 9 miles east of the Dead Sea, and here he was beheaded at the instigation of Herodias; later tradition also implicates Salomé. His disciples, having consigned the headless body to the grave, went and told Jesus all that had occurred (Matt. 14:3-12). John’s death occurred apparently just before the third Passover of Jesus’ ministry.

Jesus himself testified regarding John that he was a “burning and a shining light” (John 5:35). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, thus serving as a bridge figure between that period of revelation and Jesus. They also embrace a tradition that, following his death, John descended into Hell and there once more preached that Jesus the Messiah was coming.

Source: Orthodox Wiki



Liturgy this week

Tuesday 6 January, 8:15am

**Holy Theophany of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Hours and Holy Liturgy, followed by The Great Sanctification
of Water.**

St Martin’s Church.