

This month completes celebrating Ten Years of renewed Colchester Orthodoxy

Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester

Antiochian Orthodox Deanery

NEWSLETTER 127 DECEMBER 2006



God walked in Palestine!

Can we really say that *God walked in Palestine*? That does seem an impossibility to the mind of man. If we take what the philosophers tell us of God, that statement is an absurdity which could never be.

But of course we Christians do *not* just take what the philosophers tell us. While we do listen to them and learn from them, we cannot accept that rationality is the beginning and the end of religion.

What counts far more for us is 'revelation' - i.e. we believe that God has *revealed* truths to mankind - particularly in Jesus Christ himself.

This Jesus Christ has been revealed to us as the Son of God - one who shares his very nature with God himself.

The answer to our opening question is, then, Yes, we certainly *can* say God walked - and ate and slept and suffered and wept - and we *must* say that! This is the astounding claim of Orthodox Christianity: *God walked in Palestine*.

To say anything less is unworthy of the fullness of our belief: *The Word was made flesh*.

Poet Laureate John Betjeman, put it this way:

God was Man in Palestine,
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

Orthodox Faith means that at Christmas we can rightly greet each other with this fantastic claim:

God is born: Glorify him!

The reason we say this, is that the earliest followers of Christ could give no other explanation to their personal and corporate experience of Jesus of Nazareth than to say that he was clearly *God himself in human flesh*.

In the Ecumenical Councils the Holy Fathers spelt that out. They put their corporate seal on that belief. They rejected anything that could not agree with that early experience of Christ of the disciples (such as the Arian teaching that Christ was partly a god).

We must defend and promote our belief about Christ - the fruit of revelation, not man's thinking - based on the disciples' experience. In these days there are many 'Christians' whose understanding is sadly less than whole - let alone those of other faiths or none.

There is a lovely English children's hymn that says it all. It calls Our Lord at his Nativity,

God in his Mother's arms.

It is faith in Jesus Christ - fully God, fully Man - that saves us. Nothing less will do.

May God bless you all this Holy Christmas.

Father Alexander

Weekday Holy Liturgy 9.30 am

WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER

HOLY WONDERWORKER NICHOLAS OF MYRA

TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER

ST SPYRIDON, BISHOP OF TRYMITHOUS

WEDNESDAY 20 DECEMBER

HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH

FRIDAY 29 DECEMBER

HOLY INNOCENTS SLAIN BY HEROD AT BETHLEHEM



God is born! Glorify him!

Christmas at St Helen's:

Celebrating the Incarnation of Christ our God

- ♦ Friday 22 December 10.30 am Royal Hours
- ♦ Saturday 23 December 4.30 pm Great Vespers
- ♦ Sunday 24 December 10.30 am Holy Liturgy
- Eve of the Nativity 4.30 pm Vigil (Gt Compline & Mattins)
- ♦ Monday 25 December 10.30 am Holy Liturgy
- Holy Nativity

Holy Liturgy
ST FURSEY'S
Saturday
2 December
9.30 am

CLACTON
Saturday
16 December
10.00 am

Get yourself
right with
God:
Confessions
before
Christmas
at any time
by request

St Helen's Chapel, Maidenburgh St, High St

St Helen's is 200m. down behind the George Hotel in the High Street. It is accessible from there only on foot. By car: leave Middleborough Roundabout (between dual carriageways Westway and Balkeme Hill), to Northgate; go straight along St Peter Street to Castle Park; continue round, up into Maidenburgh Street. Car Park, out of office hours: Oyster Court, close by in St Helen's Lane.

Saturday: Great Vespers usually 4.30 pm (check before coming)

Sunday: Mattins 9.45 am (or Hours 10.15 am), Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Confessions: Saturday after Vespers, or by arrangement
Holy Marriage, Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement

St Fursey's Chapel, 111 Neville Rd, Sutton, near Stalham, Norfolk

Divine Liturgy: usually first Saturday of month 9.30 am

At St James Anglican Church, Clacton-on-sea

Divine Liturgy: usually third Saturday of month 10.00 am

At the Chaplaincy Centre, University of Essex

Divine Liturgy: one Saturday per term 10.00 am

Parish Priest: Father Alexander (Alistair) Haig

17 Maidenburgh St, Colchester CO1 1UB

Tel: 01-206-530-530 Mob: 07-947-047-201

Fax: 01-206-530-531 Email: orthodox.colchester@ntlworld.com

Reader: Stephen Weston

St Fursey's House, 111 Neville Rd, Sutton, Stalham NR12 9RR

Tel: 01-692-580-552

Parish Website:

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/orthodox.colchester>



Bournemouth area's new Orthodox Church

An Anglican church transfigured

On our return journey from a couple of nights visiting my sister at my boyhood-home in Devon Kouria HILARY and I dashed into Poole, Dorset for a flying visit to the magnificent new Orthodox church of St Dunstan (pictured).

It is a wonderful Byzantine-style church, 100 years old, well worthy of its purpose. Until recently it was an Anglican church (called St Osmund's). I am delighted it has become Orthodox because, as an Anglican 20 years ago, I nearly became its Vicar, though in the event I did not go there. It has been bought by the St Stephen's Trust, which recently took control of SPCK bookshops.

Fr CHRYSOSTOM MACDONNELL is the blessed man to become the Parish Priest there. It is an important development, not only as a building, but because, in a prominent main-road position, it will easily become known as the (only) Orthodox church in the large Bournemouth conurbation.

To be sure, I am just a little jealous of Father's fine building. He has given up responsibility for St Edward's, Athelhampton, now in the care of Fr DAVID HARRIS. I wish him and the people God will give him, a great deal of God's blessing in his new and wonderful temple.

Here and There

METROPOLITAN PAUL OF ALEPPO in Syria visited us at both St Helen's and St Fursey's a few years ago, serving a Hierarchical Liturgy in both places, and met our people, much to their joy. In November he lectured at the Cambridge Orthodox Institute on Ethics, and also visited St George's Cathedral in London to ordain Deacon JUSTIN GARNETT. MARGARET and ALEX HAIG were present at the Ordination. Alex spoke to him, and His Eminence borrowed his phone to have a brief word with me. He sent his greetings to the Parish. It is good to hear that he has not forgotten us!

ENGAGED: Congratulations to ZENA SERGHIU and PHILIP THORNE whose engagement I blessed in a large party in a Clacton hotel recently. They plan to be married in 2008.

HOLY BAPTISM: GABRIELLA ARISTODIMOU was very brave when baptised recently, but soon recovered from the shock, even managing pretty smiles! Congratulations to her and her parents ANDREAS and TAMMY, and sister XANTHE, who just had to stand by helpless!

VIOLINIST VIKA GOLDSMITH, aged 15, daughter to IAIN and INGA, goes from strength to strength. She appeared at the Cadogan Hall in London recently with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, playing the highly difficult Beethoven Violin Concerto most proficiently. KHOURIA HILARY and I met our MARGARET for a meal beforehand and heard and enjoyed the skilful performance. Television's ANGELA RIPPON was there to lend her support. Vika, who studies at the Moscow Conservatoire, is shortly playing

St Ignatius, the "God-bearer" of Antioch

I looked at last December's *Newsletter*, and saw that this time last year I confessed that this dear, wonderful Holy Martyr, second Bishop of our Church of Antioch after St Peter, does not get the place he deserves in an Antiochian parish, because his feast falls so near Christmas.

However this year at least he gets a little more of what he deserves as a great Bishop, teacher, and holy Martyr who died in the Coliseum at Rome in AD 107.

We celebrate his feast with a Holy Liturgy on Wednesday 20 December at 9.30 am.

You may remember that St Ignatius is much celebrated for the fine letters he wrote to various Churches in Asia Minor, and that he died in Rome's famous Coliseum. He was devoured by lions, and his icon often shows the lions with him.

Come and celebrate the life and death for Christ of Holy Hieromartyr Ignatius, early predecessor of our present Patriarch His Beatitude IGNATIUS IV.

before no less than PRESIDENT PUTIN himself. Dutch Quarter neighbour and friend IAN McMEEKAN, was also there, having previously spotted us in a restaurant as he passed *en route* to the concert with Rotary friends. The Colchester Rotary sponsored Vika a few years ago.



Our Lady of Balamand Patriarchal Monastery El-Koura, North Lebanon

Balamand, magnificently sited above the Mediterranean in sadly-abused Lebanon. It is the Church of Antioch's Seminary for training Priests and teaching Theology. Next door is the Patriarchal University, teaching many other subjects.

A Word from the Fathers

Both the virginity of Mary and her giving birth escaped the notice of the prince of this age, as did the Lord's death - three mysteries of a cry, wrought in the stillness of God.

How then was he made manifest to the ages? A star shone forth in heaven brighter than all the stars, and its light was ineffable and its novelty produced astonishment; all the other stars, with sun and moon,

gathered in chorus about this star, and it outshone them all. There was perplexity as to the origin of this novelty, so unlike the others.

Thus all magic was dissolved and every bond of wickedness vanished; ignorance was abolished and the old kingdom destroyed, since God was becoming manifest in human form for the newness of eternal life; what had been prepared by God had its beginning. Hence everything was shaken together, for the abolition of death was being planned. St Ignatius

Student presents Greek Flag to St Helen's

It was very generous of Sotiros Douklias to present his national flag to us recently. He wrote afterwards:

Dear Fr Alexander,

Thank you for letting me know that the flag is now safe in your hands. I would really like to come and present it to you but I am no longer in Essex. When I brought you the flag, it was my last week in Essex and in the UK in general. I finished my PhD and I am now back in Greece in order to do my military service. Thank you very much for this invitation anyway.

I hope God keeps you well so you can continue providing help and support to the new students and especially us orthodox Christians, as I know that it is a very welcoming surprise to find out that there is a Greek Orthodox church in town when you first come to Colchester.

God bless. SOTIRIOS DOUKLIAS

Tenth Anniversary dvd

I am delighted and grateful that friend-of-the-Parish KEN JONES (JONATHAN's father) recorded the happy day on his new video camera, and that there is now a dvd of the Holy Liturgy, the wine-and-truffles on the lawn, and the feast in the Castlegate Centre. Kouria HILARY and I have enjoyed seeing it, and I hope to make it available for you also to see.

DECEMBER DAYS

Nativity Fast continues until 24 December

Sun	3	Pentecost 25
Mon	4	Great Martyr Barbara, S John of Damascus
Tue	5	S Sabas the Sanctified
Wed	6	S Nicholas the Wonderworker
Thu	7	S Ambrose, Bishop of Milan
Sat	9	Conception by S Anna of Holy Theotokos
Sun	10	Pentecost 26
Tue	12	S Spyridon the Wonderworker, S Edburga of Minster in Kent
Wed	13	S Herman of Alaska
Thu	14	S Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers
Fri	15	Hieromartyr Eleutherius, Bishop of Illyria, S Stephen, Bishop of Sourzh
Sun	17	Pentecost 27, Sunday of H Forefathers, S Dionysius, Bishop of Aegina
Wed	20	Hieromartyr Ignatius of Antioch
Fri	22	Great Martyr Anastasia
Sat	23	Saturday before Nativity of Christ
Sun	24	Sunday of the Genealogy, Eve of the Nativity of Christ
Mon	25	Nativity according to the flesh of Christ
Tue	26	Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos
Wed	27	Holy Protomartyr Archdeacon Stephen
Fri	29	Holy Innocents slain by Herod
Sun	31	Sun after Nativity, Sun before Theophany

[A full list of the month's Feasts and Fasts available on request]