

Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch
British Antiochian Orthodox Deanery

NEWSLETTER 53

MARCH 2000

Time in the Gym.....

I am not a great one for physical exercise. Never have been. As you will realise - and regret.

I don't play sports, don't go jogging, don't do a round of golf every Saturday morning, don't go to the gym one evening a week for an exhilarating game of squash. Never have done - now, never will. I do enjoy a walk, even a longer one, or taking the dog out for an hour - though I wish others also would share in that daily chore [Let him that readeth understand!]

But I could never be accused of excessive addiction to the fitness routine.

Great Lent of course can be compared to that taking physical exercise, to keeping fit, to an aerobics session, to a jog through the city streets. Lent is the time each year to try to get our spiritual life back in trim, to cut an inch or two off our spiritual waistline.

If only those "fitness fanatics" would be as concerned about their *spiritual* well-being as they are about being *physically* fit!

And if only all Christian people, especially our Orthodox people, would try to do a bit of spiritual fitness training during Lent - spiritually, Lent is our "time in the gym".

There is strength in numbers, strength in doing something *together*, in the company of others - witness the fitness *clubs*. So that is why in Lent we all try to do it *together*, try to do a bit more fasting, a bit more praying, a bit more worshipping, than we do at other times. Doing it together helps us not to give up, to keep at it.

God grant us the grace this Great Fast to do a little more in the way of spiritual exercise - and so get a little nearer God the Holy Trinity.

Father Alexander

The Great Fast (Lent) starts 13 March. Orthodox Easter is 30 April.

Sunday of Orthodoxy 19 March

Pan-Orthodox Vespers 6.30 pm

The various Orthodox Churches join together in a united celebration of our Holy Orthodox Faith - this year in

Agia Sophia Cathedral, Bayswater, London

It is proposed to arrange a bus from Clacton, the University, and Colchester. If interested, telephone for details a.s.a.p.

DIVINE AND HOLY LITURGY

ST FURSEY, SUTTON.....SATURDAY 4 MARCH 10.00 AM

ST JAMES, CLACTON.....SATURDAY 18 MARCH 10.00 AM

"Any news on that church?" people keep asking me - and all I can answer is, "Not much!"

It's not easy! Yes, I should not grumble. Yes, I should be patient. Yes, I, should trust in God and his mysterious ways. But, after all, it is *over five years* since the Anglican Arch-deacon said to me, "Would you be interested in St Martin's Church?"

And even now, when there has at last been some movement on the part of the authorities, I do get a bit frustrated that God does not answer our prayers, our fervent prayers, over night!

St Martin's, beautiful St Martin's, ancient St Martin's, St Martin's that was a place of Christian worship in the days of England's Orthodoxy, and which has been lovingly cared for and developed over the centuries since, is now definitely within our reach, almost in our grasp - but not quite.

Still in London the authorities wield their pens, pound away at their wordprocessors, argue amongst themselves over whether the Orthodox Parish at Colchester should be allowed this or that or what, and the amount they will charge us (that's the vital question: without the answer to that we cannot make a decision on whether we really do want the building at all.)

We have been in this general position a very long time. But we must rejoice that our latest request was received by the Churches Conservation Trust "sympathetically and positively". I think this means that they have agreed in principle to our having it, and leave the mere "details" of terms and cost to be decided *some time in the future*. They cannot say when that will be - the matter is with the Church Commissioners, finding out what *they* think.

Ah well, God is trying to teach us something through all this. And the answer may come even tomorrow, or next week, or next month. - Or next year?

But there has been one development. We have had the keys for a few days, and some of us were able actually to visit the interior and see for ourselves what a beautiful building it is. We saw it could happily be adapted for our worship and other use.

We saw that it is spacious, but not too vast for us. That there is room for the nave for the people, for the iconostasis and Holy Altar, and for other rooms also. That there is an existing WC and wash-basin - though they would certainly have to be replaced. That there is electricity on the premises, though the wiring will all have to be replaced. That there is no heating - by golly, it was cold!

So, our hearts are, yes, higher and more hopeful - but we do itch for some more movement, so that we may indeed find a home for ourselves, and a place for the worship of the Most High God.

**Hear and answer our prayers, O Christ our God!
Hear, and when thou hearest, forgive!**

Services in the Parish

At the Co-operative Chapel, Bourne Court, Mersea Rd

Saturday: Great Vespers usually 6.30 pm (check before coming)

Sunday: Mattins or Hours 9.45 am; Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

In Sutton, Norfolk at St Fursey's Chapel, 111 Neville Rd

Divine Liturgy usually first Saturday of month 10.00 am

In Clacton-on-sea at St James Anglican Church

Divine Liturgy usually third Saturday of month at 10.00 am

In Colchester at the University of Essex

Divine Liturgy one Saturday per term at 10.00 am

Confessions: Saturday after Vespers, or by arrangement

Holy Marriage, Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement

Parish Priest: Father Alexander Haig

66 Wimpole Rd, Colchester CO1 2BN Tel: 01206-795275

Email: orthodox.colchester@aspects.net

Reader: Stephen Weston, St Fursey's House, 111 Neville Rd, Sutton NR12 9RR

Parish Web Site: www.aspects.net/~orthodox/

WHY GREEK ORTHODOX ?

DENNIS HINDLE was baptised in January – a first for him of course, but also a first for us, the first adult Baptism in the Parish. Here he shares with us the emotions of the moment he became the Child of God.

HAVING been born at the start of the war, being baptised somehow got lost in the midst of time. Throughout my childhood and adult life I 'believed' but found no way in. Whichever church I entered and prayed in I always felt I was intruding on the faithful of that church.

About 14 years ago my wife, Bertha, and I went to Greece for a holiday. During that holiday we paid a visit to the monastery on Patmos island (my mother-in-law was born and baptised in Patmos). On entering the monastery I felt something pulling me in and did not want to let go – for the first time in my life I felt at home in a church: even though I did not and still do not understand the language. When we came home I went to pray in church, but as before felt nothing. When we went to Greece again for a holiday I once more felt that warmth and love of being wanted. Since then we have been to Greece many times and that feeling has never left me.

One day I heard of the Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester that Father Alexander Haig had started. It seemed at last I had somewhere to pray

without feeling 'lost'. The more I attended at St Helen's the more relaxed I became and I realised that I wanted to be baptised into the Greek Orthodox faith. I then spoke to Father Alexander of my wish; he welcomed me with great feelings. During the next few weeks he visited me to give me instruction. This he did thoroughly and left me with no questions after each visit.

Just before October 1996 Bertha and I had met and made firm friends with Dr Robin Stone and his wife, Lee. I asked Robin, being from Corfu, to be my godfather. This he agreed to joyously, also my mother-in-law Theologhia de Carlo, did me the honour of being my godmother.

My Baptism

After Great Vespers on Saturday evening I took confession and left with a wonderful peace of mind. When I awoke Sunday morning I felt very excited but nervous too. On arrival at the chapel Hilary Haig helped me to fill a large tank with hot and cold water for the baptism and we made sure it would be warm enough later (little did we know). At the start of the baptism, with 20-25 friends and relatives about me, I denounced the devil. Once that was done I could not wait to enter the chapel for protection. When Father Alexander led me into the chapel I felt very humble and small, like a baby, but also full of joy. As I stood in the previously filled

font I was expecting a little water to be poured over my head three times. But as with my instruction beforehand Father Alexander very enthusiastically carried out the full pour of the jug each time. The water was not warm, it was cold and I was well and truly baptised. I stood in the font and reminded myself this was nothing compared to Jesus' sufferings, and then the water did not seem so cold. When I had a real Christian name at last I cannot put into words how I felt to be holding hands with the King. Let me just say weak but strong, contented and peaceful. I must confess I had tears in my eyes when I took my first Holy Communion, as over the years I have watched this happen to so many but not to me.

Afterwards, I walked away with my little piece of blessed bread clutched in my hand and felt complete for the first time in my life. The congregation then sang "We wish you many years" and I had great love for my fellow men. Many guests joined us for a parish lunch at home, where after a good feed and a few glasses of wine I cut my Christening cake, which Hilary Haig so kindly made for me, and my daughter Tina iced, it was truly delicious.

So my day ended on the same happy note it started with. I wish to thank all who shared my special day for their cards, gifts and good wishes.

God bless you all,

DIONYSIUS

HERE AND THERE

UNIVERSITY: Until now, we have used a lecture room for the Holy Liturgy. In February I served in the Chaplaincy Centre for the first time, and the general consensus seemed to be that it was for the better: we were able to put up some large icons on the walls, and to have a reasonable sanctuary area I am very grateful to DENNIS HINDLE for making a portable Holy Table which we can pack away in a cupboard, and to FIORI POOLE for making a lovely covering for it. As ever, NICKOS NIKOLIDES and ALEX ISAAKIDIS sang beautifully for us, and ALEX HAIG assisted at the Altar – to them all we are grateful. We are now to try having a session at the Chaplaincy on Wednesdays 3 – 5 pm, which will provide an opportunity for anyone wanting to see me for confession or chat, and to have a cup of tea, perhaps a discussion all together, and perhaps some prayers. This starts on 1 March, and continues as an experiment this term. Then on 17 and 24 March, the first two Fridays of Lent, the Akathist to the Theotokos will be sung. This will be at 7.30 pm in the Chaplaincy Centre.

CONGRATULATIONS to former student here, well-known in the parish, NEKTARIOS STELLAKIS and his wife THEODORA, who spent some time here with us also, on the birth of their first child in Patras on 13 February. Mother and child are both well, we hear: we wish them all God's blessing.

WEDNESDAY GROUP: The group has successfully met, watching a video of PETER FRANCE and his Journey to Orthodoxy (he was baptised on Patmos), and then going on to discussion and prayers. It decided to meet every Wednesday at 7.30 pm at 66 Wimpole Road. Anyone who would like to attend is invited.

FATHER SAMIR is the friendly Arab Priest at our Cathedral (St George's, near Regents Park) in London, who received the HAIG family into the Church in December 1995. He is sent this Newsletter every month, and apparently reads it with interest, even with enthusiasm – for he phoned the other day to have a little chat, and said he found the Newsletter "captivating"! I showed him and a coach-load of his people the exterior of St Martin's some three years ago, and when he rang he asked how we were getting on with the project. I was able to bring him up to date.

BATH: It will be a pleasure on 2 March to visit the beautiful city of Bath again – our home for 10 years, where our children were born. But it will be only for a day – for a meeting of Orthodox university chaplains from all over the country. Bishops KALLISTOS of Diokleia and BASIL of Sergievo will speak, and it should be a stimulating day.

A WORD FROM THE FATHERS

My brothers, do let us have a little humility; let us forget our self-assertion and pride and stupid quarrelling, and do what the Scriptures tell us instead. The Holy Spirit says, The wise man is not to brag of his wisdom, nor the strong man of his strength, nor the rich man of his wealth; if a man must boast, he should boast of the Lord, seeking him out and acting with justice and uprightness. More particularly, let us remember what our Lord Jesus Christ said in one of his lessons of mildness and forbearance. Be merciful, he told us, that you may obtain mercy; forgive, that you may be forgiven. What you do yourself, will be done to you; what you give, will be given to you; as you judge, so you will be judged; as you show kindness, so it will be shown to you. Your portion will be weighed out for you in your own scales. May this precept, and these commands, strengthen our resolve to live in obedience to his sacred words, and in humility of mind; for the holy word says, Whom shall I look upon, but him that is gentle and peaceable, and trembles at my sayings?

St Clement of Rome (died about AD 100)

FELLOWSHIP OF ST ALBAN & ST SERGIUS

North Essex Branch
Tuesday 21 March 7.30 pm
RC Convent 48 Priory Street
Colchester

Orthodoxy in the Britain of Today

Speaker:
Fr ALEXANDER FOSTIROPOULOS
Orthodox Chaplain at Kings College London
The Fellowship brings together
Orthodox, Anglicans, RCs and others
You are warmly invited

MARCH DAYS

Sat	4	Sat of Meatfare, Memorial Saturday
Sun	5	Sun of Meatfare, Sun of the Last Judgement
Thu	9	Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste
Sat	11	Sat of Cheesefare, Comm. of All Monks & Nuns
Sun	12	Sunday of Cheesefare, Forgiveness Sunday
Mon	13	GREAT FAST (LENT) BEGINS
Fri	17	St Patrick, Apostle of Ireland
Sat	18	1st Sat of Gt Lent, St Theodore the Recruit, St Edward the Martyr
Sun	19	1st Sunday of Lent, Sunday of Orthodoxy
Sat	25	2nd Sat of Gt Lent, Annunciation of Theotokos
Sun	26	2nd Sunday of Gt Lent, St Gregory Palamas

A full list of the month's feasts and fasts is available on request

ST HELEN ORTHODOX CALENDAR FOR COMPUTERS

VERSION 4 ABOUT TO APPEAR

– the same splendid features

PLUS readings for Holy Liturgy, Vespers etc for AD 2000

Orthodox Millennium Festival, Saturday 1 July, Shrewsbury
Watch out for more details – Book the date – Plan to go!