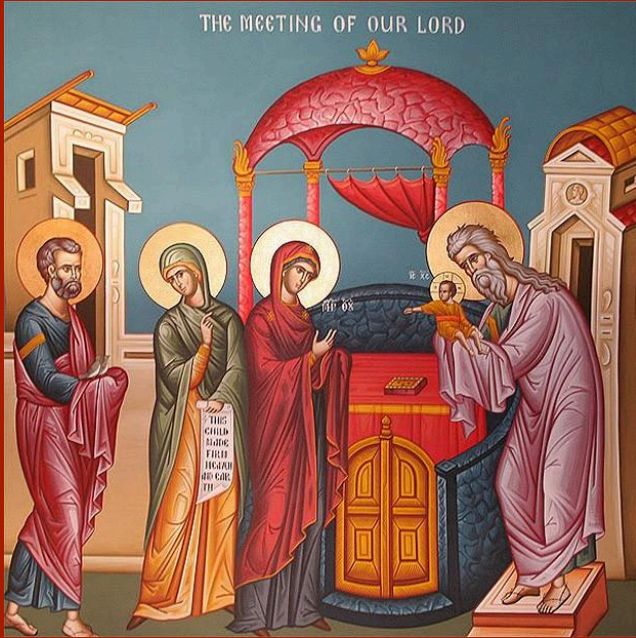


# THE ORTHODOX PARISH OF ST MARTIN & ST HELEN

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



## The Meeting Of Our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ in the Temple.

**This feast**, celebrated on February 2, is also known in the Orthodox Church as The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Another name for the feast is The Meeting of our Lord. Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians call the feast, The Purification of the Holy Virgin. About 450 AD in Jerusalem, people began the custom of holding lighted candles during the Divine Liturgy of this feast day. Therefore, some churches in the West refer to this holy day as Candlemas. The Feast of the Presentation concludes the observances related to the Nativity of Christ, a period that opened on November 15 with the beginning of the Nativity fast. The hymns of the feast emphasize the incarnate God, the Lord Jesus Christ, meeting with His people, Israel, in the persons of the Prophet Simeon and the Prophetess Anna. In the Gospel of Luke 2:22-35, Mary and Joseph took the infant Christ to the Temple in Jerusalem. He was received in the arms of the elder Simeon, who then prayed, "Now let Thy servant depart in peace... for I have seen Thy salvation." This was one of the things that Mary "pondered in her heart": the fact that others recognized that her Son was the Messiah. All of us, like Simeon must 'take Christ in our arms' and depart in peace; not from the trials and tribulations of this life, which we must continue to live through and face with faith, love, courage and humility but instead to depart from the hold that *sin, the passions and the world* has on us. *Brothers and sisters, God bless you all and Happy Feast!*

## News & Views

**ATHOS TRIP** This year in October we are planning a pilgrimage to Mount Athos. Catalin Fliscu is organising the logistics. Fr Mark will be going and there are around 10 spaces available all together. Two different durations of stay will be offered: a shorter Monday to Friday trip (so that Father Mark can get back for Sunday Liturgy!) and a longer, perhaps 9 or 10 day trip for those who are able and who wish to stay longer. We are still in the planning stages and the places will be allocated on a strictly first come first served basis. Any men of the parish who would like to come, please contact Catalin Fliscu by email at [catalinfliscu@gmail.com](mailto:catalinfliscu@gmail.com)

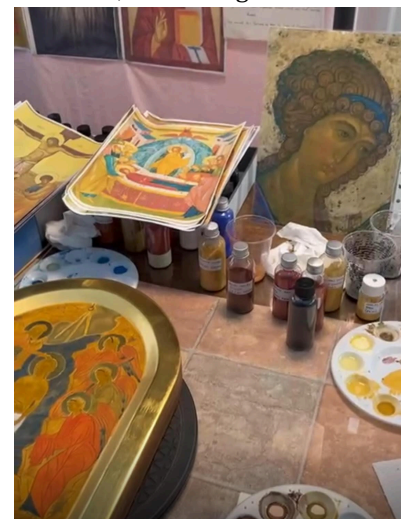
**CLEANERS NEEDED** We are in need of new volunteers to clean St Martin's Church. We currently have two regular cleaners who have helped whenever they can around their busy lives but the church really needs regular cleaning every week which requires additional support. The work involves hoovering, and cleaning the toilet and kitchen area. A clean and tidy church is very important, firstly and most importantly to make it a fitting temple for the worship of God, and also to protect from vermin such as mice and rats which can easily become a problem in ancient buildings, especially when food is served, as after the Liturgy on Sundays at coffee hour. This type of work is a real service to the church. Humble, practical work can be offered to the glory of God just as much as anything else. Please consider giving some of your time and energy and if you feel you can help, contact our Facilities Manager, Theadora Ford on 07541 214 306. Many thanks in advance!

## Father Mark

**ROOF REPAIRS** *The repairs to our roof will sadly have to be put on hold until around April/May. This is due to an on-going survey to ensure that any bats which may nest or roost in the area are not unduly disturbed. Disturbing or killing bats is a criminal offence with large fines or prison sentences for offenders, and so we must await the outcome of the report before proceeding with any work to ensure we do not commit an offence under the The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Let us pray that blessings are hidden in this inconvenience, as they so often seem to be!*

## Icon Progress

Sophronia continues to work hard on completing the icons for the 12 feasts, which will grace the top row of our iconostasis. We hope that we may have them in time for Pascha, which will be a cause for great joy. Please pray for Sophronia as she undertakes this work, which so glorifies God.

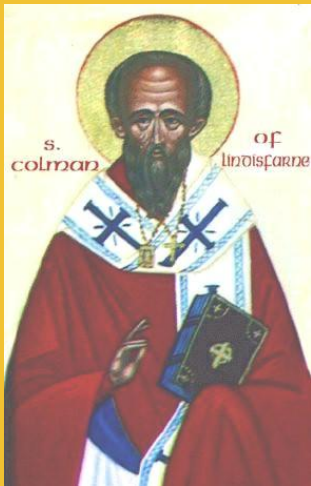


# PREPARATORY SUNDAYS BEFORE GREAT LENT

*"Let us flee the bragging of the Pharisee, and learn the humility of the Publican, while crying out unto the Savior with groanings: Be gracious unto us, O Thou Who alone dost readily forgive". Kontakion Tone 4*



*It seems a little hard to believe, but once again we are amongst the Sundays that precede and prepare us for Lent, the Great Fast. There is a palpable change in the atmosphere of the Divine Liturgies of each of these Sundays. Starting with the Pre-Triodion Sunday of Zacchaeus which reminds us to recognise Jesus for Who He Is, to come down from our tree of pride and self worship to meet Him, we are led first to the Publican and the Pharisee with its theme of humility and recognition of our sinful state. We are enjoined to adopt the humble, self-effacing prayer of the publican and shun the hard hearted, proud rigorism of the Pharisee. Moving on, we encounter the Prodigal Son and we see ourselves in him, lost in the ruins and sadness of our self will and sitting among the pigs. We rouse ourselves and get up to return home and find that our All-Merciful Father has run out to meet us, to put a fine robe upon our shoulders and prepare a feast in our honour! On the Sunday of the Last Judgement we are reminded that, as we proclaim in the Nicene Creed, Christ will indeed come again in Glory to judge the living and the dead. Will we be found worthy on that awesome day of inheriting the Kingdom by virtue of our true love for God and our neighbour or by our negligence and hardness of heart be burned up like so much petrified wood? Then at last, on Forgiveness Sunday, at which we recall the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, we are reminded that our dire inheritance is a broken communion with God, and thereby with each other. We take a step towards restoring this communion in the beautiful Vespers service, at which the faithful embrace and ask, often with tears, mutual forgiveness for the sins committed by all of us towards each other. On the Monday after we begin The Great Fast. **Good Strength! Father Mark***



### St Colman Bishop of Lindisfarne February 18

An Irish bishop of Lindisfarne, England, a disciple of St. Columba. He was born in Connaught, Ireland. At the Synod of Whitby Colman defended the Celtic ecclesiastical practices against St. Eilfrid and St. Agilbert. When King Oswy introduced the Roman rites, Colman refused to accept the decision and led a group of Irish and English monks to the Isle of Innishboffin, near Connaught. In time he moved the English monks to Mayo. Colman was praised by St. Bede.

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, / an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence; / your humility exalted you; / your poverty enriched you. / Hierarch Father Colman, / entreat Christ our God / that our souls may be saved. Troparion Tone 4

### ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY 2025

Thursday 6 February: St Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople - Hours and Divine Liturgy from 9:10am, St Helen's Chapel.

Tuesday 18 February: Leo the Great, Pope of Rome - Hours and Divine Liturgy from 9:10am, St Helen's Chapel.

Wednesday 26 February: Martyr Photini, The Samaritan Woman - Hours and Divine Liturgy from 9:10am, St Helen's Chapel.

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 the 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** 24 Orchard Gardens, Ipswich Rd, CO4 0BX Mobile: 07917 161 295 | Email:

[inquiries@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk](mailto:inquiries@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk) **The Very Reverend Father Archpriest Alexander Haig (retired)**, 17 Maidenburgh Street, CO1 1UB.

Phone: 01206 530 530 \ Mobile: 07947 047 201 Email: parishpriest@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk **parish website: [orthodoxcolchester.org.uk](http://orthodoxcolchester.org.uk)**

**As a special supplement to this month's newsletter, below is Metropolitan Silouan's recent letter to Father Alexander, followed by a brief word from Father.**

**To the Very Reverend Father Alexander Haig**

Dear Reverend Father Alexander,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On behalf of the clergy, faithful, and all those whose lives you have touched in your ministry, I write to express heartfelt gratitude for the years of devoted service you have rendered as the parish priest of Saint Helen in Colchester.

Your commitment to the life of the Church and the salvation of souls has been a true testament to your faith and love for the Lord. For over two decades, you have been a shepherd to the flock entrusted to you, baptizing and Chrismating children into the Body of Christ, joining couples in holy matrimony, and accompanying the faithful on their final earthly journey with prayers and blessings. Through your ceaseless prayers, wise counsel, and pastoral care, you have been a father, teacher, and guide to many.

Your efforts in finding and managing the funds to acquire the Church of Saint Martin stand as a lasting testament to your vision and dedication. Through your leadership and perseverance, the faithful of Saint Helen found a spiritual home, a sacred space where countless prayers were offered, and lives were transformed. This accomplishment will forever remain a cornerstone of your ministry and a blessing to future generations.

Saint Paul writes, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17). Truly, you have laboured in the vineyard of the Lord with steadfast dedication, building up the parish of Saint Helen and strengthening the spiritual life of its faithful.

Although you will now enter into retirement from active parish ministry, we know that your prayers, wisdom, and presence will continue to enrich the Church and its faithful. Retirement is not an end but a new season to serve the Lord in ways that His providence will reveal.

As you reflect on your many years of service, may the words of the Lord be a source of encouragement to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, / will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21).

May God bless you abundantly and grant you many years in good health and peace. Be assured of our prayers for you as you embark on this new chapter of your life.

With love and gratitude in Christ,

Your Father in Christ,

**+Silouan**



*To my dear friends the people of the Parish of St Martin of Tours and St Helen in Colchester - my brothers and sisters in Christ, together with members of the clergy and others who have sent generous gifts and cards or letters from a wide area on the occasion of my retirement from my ministry in this God-blessed city:*

I have already sent my thanks to His Eminence our beloved Archbishop SILOUAN for his words at this time and for his ordaining me Archpriest, a happy surprise to me when it happened. I do not deserve the words, though it is of course touching to hear them! Others whom I must mention include my gifted successor Father Mark Shillaker whose leadership has already taken the parish in paths of righteousness and holiness. With his dear wife Khouria Paula at his side, the parish will be greatly blessed, I hope for many years, in their care. They have been a fine force for good for a considerable period already.

So too I must acknowledge the help and strength of my darling wife Khouria Hilary and our three children. All have been my strength, my light, my joy, for a long while, contributing to the life and well-being of the community, in many ways people would hardly be aware of. Dear – beloved - people of God: praise and joy, thank you for your kindness, and good wishes. I urge you to keep close to our Lord Christ and his Church. Please pray for me, as I pray for you, that I may be of service to him in the time left to me. May the dear Saints Martin and Helen pray for me and mine, but also for all who hold the holy places of Colchester in their hearts.

In Christ,  
**Father Alexander**

*P.S. An amusing little coincidence is that in my last post in the Anglican Church I had the title "The Very Reverend" and now in the Orthodox Church I am again "The Very Reverend" I must be almost unique in holding that title in both communities, with many years apart!*