

+ Orthodoxy: original Christianity fit for purpose in the 21st century +

Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester

Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the UK & Ireland
NEWSLETTER 178 JULY-AUGUST 2011



WEEKDAY LITURGY AT ST HELEN'S 9.30am

Thursday 7 July Great Martyr Kyriaki
Wednesday 20 July Holy Prophet Elias (Elijah)
Tuesday 26 July Martyr Parasceve of Rome
Thursday 18 August REPOSE OF ST HELEN, OUR PATRON
Wednesday 24 August St Kosmas of Aetolia

Mary's fate is yours too!

My life is going down hill. Things around me are getting worse. I see no hope of things improving. All is gloomy and dark.

These may easily be your thoughts at times. This can be our feeling at any time of life.

It can hit the elderly: *I am losing my powers. I am humiliated, becoming dependent on others, as when I was a child. I am useless, I have no point....*

It can hit men and women in the full flower of life: *I have these problems - financial, personal, in my family - I cannot see any way out....*

It can even hit children and young people: *Mum or Dad is so terrible. My best friend has let me down. I can't keep up with my schoolwork....*

These feelings of hopelessness, of despair, can hit us at any time. Some people suffer it in small doses from time to time. Others suffer it for a long period, years even.

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St John of the Cross was a sixteenth-century Spanish Catholic mystic, whose teaching is sometimes rejected wholeheartedly by Orthodox observers, but who actually has a good deal to teach us.

He gave this experience of despair a telling title - *the Dark Night of the Soul*.

It seems to be a widespread malaise in the 20th and 21st centuries, and it needs tackling, both on the personal and the social levels.

Its roots surely lie in a lack of belief (of trust) in God, and making myself or my own personal concerns the centre of my world. (Extending my concern slightly, to include family and friends, is certainly an improvement.)

In other words, in our world today there is atheism in a theoretical form - proposed by such thinkers as Dawkins and Hawking - but in a much wider circle there is also a *practical* atheism.

Here people who do *in theory* believe in God and his power, *in practice* receive little or nothing from the powerful and loving Father whom our God has revealed himself to be.

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Yet Mary, the Holy Theotokos, went through torment indeed, through agonies. St Simeon the God-receiver, in the Temple in Jerusalem, prophesied that. *A sword shall pierce your own soul also*, he told her.

But if Mary ever entered the *Dark Night of the Soul* herself, she never gave up. She was there at the Crucifixion of her Son. She was there at his Holy Resurrection. She was there at Holy Pentecost. She remained constant and calm and at peace in her inner soul throughout. *She never lost faith, she never despaired.*

The result was what we see in the icon of her Dormition: Christ our God came for her and received her soul into heaven.

And the message I have for you this month, is simply this: If you do enter some Dark Night of your soul, but keep faith, when your turn arrives Christ will come for you as he did for blessed Mary, and take you to himself.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed, said St Paul (2 Cor 4.8); perplexed, but not in despair.

Despair is of the Devil. Faith brings light and hope. Joy comes in the morning.

God guard you as you keep faith with Christ and his Church.

Father Alexander



ST HELEN'S SUMMER FEAST

Thursday 18 August
Holy Liturgy 9.30 am

Sunday 21 August
Parish Summer Feast
Holy Liturgy 10.30 am
Veneration of the Holy Relic
Parish Picnic on the Green
Bring a picnic with
something to share

St Helen's main feast is of course with her son St Constantine on 21 May. In August we keep the feast of her Repose, her Falling Asleep in the Lord, which occurred on this day in AD 329, probably in Rome - or, according to the (rather improbable) Colchester Tradition, in Britain. She was buried in Rome.

After the Holy Liturgy, the Holy Relic of the Saint, presented to us in 2003 by His Grace Bishop Basil of Wichita, USA, will be exposed for veneration by the faithful

St Helen's Chapel, Maidenburgh St, High St

St Helen's is 200m. down behind the George Hotel in the High Street, but accessible from there only on foot. By car: leave Middleborough Roundabout (between dual carriageways Westway and Balkeine Hill), to Northgate; go straight along St Peter Street to Castle Park; continue round, up into Maidenburgh Street. Nunns Road NCP is the nearest car park.

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

Parish Priest: Father Alexander (Alistair) Haig

17 Maidenburgh Street, Colchester CO1 1UB

Tel: 01-206-530-530 Mob: 07-947-047-201 Eml: orthodox.colchester@ntlworld.com
Rdr Andreas Moran, 6 Woodlands, Welshwood Park CO4 3JA Tel: 01-206-865-697

The Parish of St Helen is Registered Charity No. 1134418

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

Churchwardens: David Davies, 01-473-745-167 Paul Lansley, 01-206-525-638

At St James Anglican Church, Beatrice Rd, Clacton-on-sea
Divine Liturgy: usually third Saturday 10.00 am

At St Basil's Catholic Church, Luncies Rd, Timberlog Lane, Basildon
Divine Liturgy: usually first Saturday;
Contact: Paul Brighton-Cross 01-702-305-527 orthodox.basildon@hotmail.co.uk

At University of Essex Chaplaincy Centre: Divine Liturgy: one Saturday per term 10.00 am

HOLY LITURGY

BASILDON
2 July
11.00 am

CLACTON
16 July
10.00 am

New Mayor continues and builds up our Tradition

The Mayors of Colchester come to St Helen's Chapel on appointment to honour the Patron Saint of this town pretty well as soon as they are appointed.

This cannot be said to be an ancient tradition, since it has existed only since 2001, after we took over St Helen's Chapel and made it a place of worship again after 461 years.

Nevertheless, it is now beginning to be a good and sustained tradition which could last many years into the future.

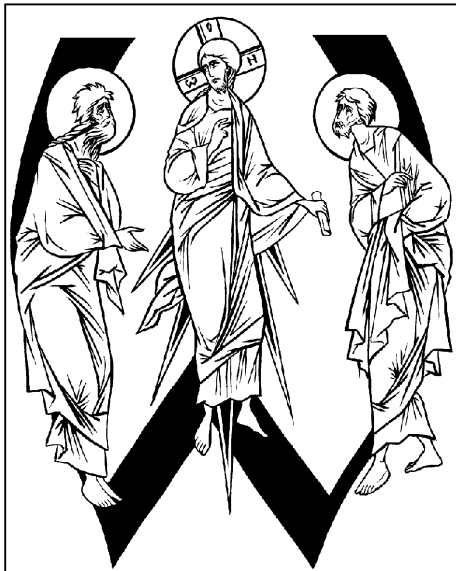
We hope it will indeed last, for it is good to acknowledge the roots of our civic life in the Christian Faith, and to glory in our tradition that St Helen was born here.

The new Mayor, Councillor HELEN CHUAH, came with her Escort, Councillor MIKE HODGES, on the last Sunday in May.

We prayed for her and the Council and its work and for all our local community, and she honoured the Holy Relic of the Saint.

Actually, the couple had done it all before, only the other way round - the Mayor who inaugurated all this in 2001 was Councillor Mike Hodges and his Escort was Councillor Helen Chuah!

Add to that the appropriateness of one called Helen honouring St Helen, and it was all a very good sign!



*A Word from the Fathers:
St Anastasius of Sinai
on the Transfiguration (6 August)*

Let us run there [to the Mount of Transfiguration], eager and joyful, and let us be enveloped in the cloud, like Moses and Elias, or James and John.

Be like Peter, rapt at the divine vision, transfigured by the glory of the transfiguration, lifted high above the things of this world.

Let us leave the flesh and creation behind and turn to the Creator, to whom Peter in ecstasy said, *Lord, it is good for us to be here.*



St Elias (Elijah) is one of the two greatest figures of the Old Testament - the other is Moses.

When Christ was later transfigured on the Holy Mountain, Moses was with him, and so was Elias. They represented between them the whole of the Old Testament - Moses the Law, Elias the Prophets.

The strength of Elias, the truth, the humility, the integrity of the holy man, is palpable as you read his stories.

Unlike many of the Prophets, he did not write anything down, nor leave a book behind.

You can read about him in 3 Kingdoms 17.1 - 4 Kingdoms 2.11 (called '1 and 2 Kings' in Protestant Bibles).

He comes on the scene suddenly and without warning, out of the mists of obscurity, when he realises that 'Fings ain't what they ought to be' in the land of Israel.

He is rough and direct. He speaks fearlessly to kings, and fearlessly to the people.

He is willing to pay the price of his forthrightness in flight and hunger.

He suffers loss of hope, he almost suffers despair, but he soars up again on the wings of eagles.

He is fed by a raven (see the icon above) - by angels. He experiences the presence of God himself in *the still, small voice.*

He keeps faith with God, and God takes him to himself in *the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof* - but not before he has left his mantle with his disciple to give him the power carry on with his work.

Look up his story and read it with love and devotion. It is ever-fresh, ever-thrilling. It is the account of a man who loved God without reserve, with every ounce of his being, with every fibre of his body and soul.

He was the man not to be equalled until John the Baptist himself came - like Elias, as the Lord said - and again turned people back to their God.

What a man!

What a messenger of God!

His feast is Wednesday 20 July, and we have a Holy Liturgy at 9.30 am.

The People Column

MELINA ELIZABETH has been born to ZENA and GEORGE DIAKOU in Colchester Hospital. Our congratulations to them! Unfortunately for us and for grandparents PETROS and GEORGINA SERGHIU the new young family is now to move to Cyprus. But we wish them well and hope to see them from time to time.

SOPHIA HOLMES, daughter of MICHAEL and ILIA MAKRI of Wivenhoe, was baptised in St Helen's at the end of May. Many years, Little One!

DIMITRI THEODOSIOU, son of THEO and LENIA THEODOSIOU of Copford, and JOANNA have got engaged. The Theodosiou family are Cypriot, long established in Britain, and Joanna is Austrian. I was delighted to be asked to go along to bless their commitment to each other. They plan to marry here in 2012.

JULY-AUGUST DAYS

Fri 1	Wonderworkers Cosmas & Damian at Rome
Sat 2	Placing of Robe of Theotokos at Blachernae
Sun 3	Pentecost 3, All Saints of Britain
Mon 4	S Andrew Rublev
Tue 5	S Athanasius of Athos, Relics of S Sergius
Wed 6	S Sexburga, Abbess of Ely
Thu 7	Great Martyr Kyriaki, S Hedda Bp of the W Saxons
Fri 8	Appearance of Kazan Icon of the Theotokos
Sun 10	Pentecost 4
Mon 11	Great Martyr Euphemia the All-praised
Tue 12	S Veronica who was healed by Christ
Wed 13	Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel, S Mildred of Minster
Fri 15	Equal to the Apostles Vladimir, Enlightener of Rus, S Swithin the Wonderworker, Bishop of Winchester
Sun 17	Pentecost 5, Fathers of the Fourth Council, S Margaret (Marina) of Antioch in Pisidia, Passion Bearers Nicolas, Alexandra & family
Mon 18	Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth & Nun Barbara
Tue 19	Uncovering of relics of S Seraphim of Sarov S Stephen King of Serbia & his mother S Militsa
Wed 20	H Prophet Elias (Elijah), New Martyr Maria Skobtsova
Fri 22	H Myrrh-bearer Mary Magdalene
Sun 24	Pentecost 6, Martyr Christina of Tyre
Mon 25	Dormition of S Anna, Mother of Theotokos
Tue 26	Martyr Parasceve of Rome
Wed 27	Great Martyr & Healer Panteleimon
Sun 31	Pentecost 7, S Joseph of Arimathea
August	
Mon 1	Procession of the Life-giving Cross, Seven Maccabean Martyrs
Tue 2	Translation of Protomartyr Stephen
Fri 5	Martyr Oswald King of Northumbria
Sat 6	Holy Transfiguration of Jesus Christ
Sun 7	Pentecost 8
Tue 9	Holy Apostle Matthias
Wed 10	Martyr & Archdeacon Lawrence of Rome
Sat 13	S Tikhon Wonderworker of Zadonsk
Sun 14	Pentecost 9, Parish celebration of Dormition
Mon 15	Dormition of Mother of God
Tue 16	Translation of Icon <i>Not Made By Hands</i> S Gerasimus Wonderworker of Cephalonia
Thu 18	Repose of S Helen, Patron of this Parish
Sun 21	Pentecost 10, PARISH FEAST
Tue 23	S Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons
Wed 24	New Hieromartyr Kosmas of Aetolia
Sun 28	Pentecost 11, S Augustine of Hippo
Mon 29	Beheading of S John the Baptist, S Sebba King of the East Saxons
Tue 30	S Alexander Patriarch of Constantinople

A fuller list of the month's Feasts and Fasts is available on request