

Osyth - Queen, Monastic, Martyr: one of Colchester's local Saints

In last month's Newsletter, I mentioned that we had been presented with an icon of Saint Osyth, and that I would tell you about the Saint this month. I mentioned that the iconographer is Patsy Fostropoulos, the wife of a well known Priest in Clapham, south London. Khouria Hilary and I have numbers of connections with them, and our daughter Margaret is his choir director. Presbytera Patsy is a skilled artist, and studied iconography under celebrated teachers. I have long hoped that we would one day have an icon by her.

Osyth was among the fairly early converts to the Orthodox Christian faith among the English but both parents had become Christians and she was brought up in the faith. The English - a mixture of Angles and Saxons and other tribes who had come to settle among the British of these islands - started turning to Christ about 600 AD, with Augustine of Canterbury as one of the first Apostles of the English, who arrived just a few years before.

Osyth came from royal stock and married Sighere, one of the joint kings of Essex (there were then seven Anglo-saxon kingdoms in

England). Sighere was also a Christian, but his faith was rather thin, a topping over his underlying and continuing paganism. Osyth on the other hand was deeply committed to Christ.

Essex was hit by a plague and some of Sighere's people complained

that the plague had come because he had deserted the pagan gods for Christ. So he abandoned the Christian faith.

This was too much for Queen Osyth, and she decided she must separate from her husband and enter the monastic life. He - generously, it

must be acknowledged - gave her some land on one of the inlets on the Essex coast to support her and her companions.

They established a Holy Monastery on the site where the village church of St Osyth now stands, just this side of Clacton, and devoutly led the

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SERVICES OCTOBER 2022

(in St Martin's Church unless otherwise stated)

- **Saturdays:** Great Vespers 4.30 pm (except 15 October)
- **Sundays:** Matins 9.45 am, Holy Liturgy 10.30 am
- **Saturday 1 October, Protection of the Holy Theotokos:**
Holy Baptism 10.30 am *St Helen's Chapel*
- **Friday 7 October, St Osyth, Martyr:**
Holy Liturgy 9.30am *St Martin's Church*
- **Tuesday 11 Oct, St Ethelburga, Founder of Barking Abbey:**
Holy Liturgy 9.30am *St Helen's Chapel*
- **Saturday 15 October, Martyr Lucian, Presbyter of Antioch**
Holy Baptism 4.30 pm *St Helen's Chapel*
- **Wednesday 19 October, St Frideswide of Oxford**
Holy Liturgy 9.30 am *St Helen's Chapel*
- **Wed 26 Oct, St Dimitrios the Myrrh-gusher of Thessalonica**
Holy Liturgy 9.30 am *St Helen's Chapel*
Holy Baptism 10.45 am *St Helen's Chapel*
- **Tuesday 1 November, SS Cosmas & Damian of Mesopotamia**
Holy Liturgy 9.30 am *St Helen's Chapel*

Memory eternal! We mourn

HER LATE MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

thanking God for her love for and service for her country and the Commonwealth, and especially for her deep Christian faith. Our Archbishop wrote a fine tribute to her, which was read in church and placed on the board.

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. St Martin's is 100m down behind the Town Hall. St Helen's is 200m down behind the George Hotel. Nearest car-park NCP Nunns Rd, behind Fenwicks department store, and very close to St Martin's. Little street parking available.

SERVICES IN ST MARTIN'S CHURCH

Saturday: usually Great Vespers 4.30 pm Sunday: Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Confessions: Saturday 5 pm, after Vespers, or by arrangement

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

Parish Priest: Father Alexander (Alistair) Haig

17 Maidenburgh Street, Colchester CO1 1UB

01-206-530-530 Mob: 07-947-047-201 Eml: parishpriest@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk

Deacon: Father Mark Shillaker 07-917-161-295 Eml: markshillaker@gmail.com

Readers: George Harrison 07-869-488-842, **Catalin Fliscu** 07-815-682-820

Churchwardens: Dusan Radunovic 07-880-778-385, **Jon Kanaar** 07-596-221-079

Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen: Registered Charity No: 1134418

IBAN: GB05BUKB20226780219819 Bank Account Sort Code: 20-22-67

Bank Account No: 50349364

Appeal Account No: 80219819

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

Appeal Website: <http://orthodoxcolchesterappeal.org.uk>



St Osyth, continued

monastic life there for many years.

This eastern coast of England was subject for long period to attacks by foreign pirates, loosely called Danes or Vikings, and one day they sailed up the creek, pillaged the monastery, and killed Osyth and her Nuns.

Legends grew up that Osyth was at the well, a little way inland, and that after she was beheaded she carried her severed head back to the monastery. Anyway, she died about the year 700 AD, and has generally been venerated as a Holy Martyr.

Later, when her husband King Sighere died, their son Offa became king but his reign was short, and he took himself off as a pilgrim to Rome, where he died—he too is venerated as a Saint.

The monastic life in the district probably closed down with this Viking raid, but centuries afterwards, after the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, the site was resettled by “canons” (a type of monk) and it became a thriving community, erecting substantial buildings.

When monasteries were closed by King Henry VIII they were turned into a private mansion. That fine gatehouse and private house remain in use today.

The stories of the founding Saint and the monastery have been preserved over the centuries, and devotion to St Osyth is found today, in different forms, among Anglicans, Catholics and Orthodox.

One story in particular was told: she was said to have consecrated her life to Christ, and escaped marriage to Sighere when at their wedding feast he saw a deer outside the hall and went off to hunt it, and that she thereby retained her virginity. She was often venerated as a Virgin Martyr, but this story is totally inaccurate, for we know she gave birth to Offa.

St Osyth was a godly and prayerful woman, and we do well to ask her prayers for ourselves and all the Christian people of Essex.

St Osyth's feast day this year is Friday 7 October, and there will be a Holy Liturgy in St Martin's on the at 9.30 am.

It is hoped that we might arrange a Parish pilgrimage to the holy Saint next Lent, taking with us our beautiful new icon painted for us and presented to us by the fine iconographer Patsy Fostropoulos (see last month's Newsletter).

THE GREAT MARTYR DIMITRIOS THE MYRRH-GUSHER OF THESSALONIKA is much loved - by the Greeks especially but also by Orthodox believers generally. Little appears to be known about his life-story, but he gave his life for Christ in the Great Persecution at the beginning of the 4th century in Salonika in northern Greece. Christians immediately after his martyrdom asked his help and prayers and with the end of persecuting he was seen as one of the Saints especially worthy of devotion. His name has been given to many children. *Liturgy Wed 26 Oct 9.30*

Sunday 4 December
His Eminence Metropolitan Silouan
WILL VISIT OUR PARISH AND
ORDAIN DEACON MARK
TO THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD
TO SERVE AS ASSISTANT PRIEST
OF THE PARISH
YOU ARE INVITED TO THIS VERY IMPORTANT
OCCASION IN OUR PARISH LIFE
9.45 AM
MATTINS (ORTHROS) &
HIERARCHICAL LITURGY
WITH ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Here and there

LISA KOKONAS of Ipswich has sadly died at a comparatively young age, and leaving young children. She herself was not Orthodox, but the rest of the family was Orthodox. Her husband Michael is the son of the late George Kokonas, and stepson of Maria Kokonas of Clacton. It is a very hard blow for the family, and we remember in our prayers Lisa and all who are so sadly bereaved. Memory eternal!

HERITAGE DAYS: There was considerable interest in both St Martin's and St Helen's over the two days 10/11 September, when the two churches were open to the public along with many other notable buildings. The numbers attending St Martin's were 154, and St Helen's 115. Thanks to those who acted as stewards: They were very good and efficient, and added a great deal to the visitors' experience of our lovely buildings and in their at least slight contact with the Holy Orthodox faith.

STEWARDS: Joseph (Bryan) Davenport has started opening St Martin's on Wednesday mornings 11.00 am to 1.00 pm, with the help of a small number of stewards. If anybody else would like to assist in this work on other days of the week, please have a word with Joseph. St Helen's Chapel is normally open every day to pilgrims and visitors, but at present St Martin's is open only when stewarded.



THE PROJECT

At long last, work can be seen done in St Martin's: wooden steps have been installed in front of where the iconostasis will be built.

Praise to God! However, do understand that there is much work going on in the background, which will become visible in the future. Thus, work on the 'kitchen' area should start relatively soon. Other works are the iconostasis, and heating and lighting.