

SELECTED LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

PETER OF CANTERBURY (d. 607), abbot. First abbot of St. Augustine's (then called SS. Peter and Paul), Peter was probably the monk of that name who was sent by *Augustine to give news of the first Anglo-Saxon conversions to *Gregory the Great and who brought back to England Gregory's replies to Augustine's questions. Peter was sent later on a mission to Gaul, but was drowned in the English Channel in the bay of Ambleteuse (Amfleeet). The local inhabitants, according to Bede, buried him in an 'unworthy place' but, as the result of a prodigy of mysterious light appearing over his grave at night, translated his relics to a church in Boulogne with suitable honour. At St. Augustine's, Canterbury, his feast was kept on 30 December; other authorities give 6 January.

Bede, *H.E.*, I, 27, 33; *AA.SS.* Ian. I (1643), 334.

SIGEBERT (I) (d. 635), king of East Anglia and martyr. Virtually all we know of him comes from *Bede. During the reign of his predecessor Redwald (who had attempted to combine the worship of Christ with that of the Germanic gods in the same church), Sigebert went into exile in Frankia and became a Christian. He returned as king in 630, a very learned man (*doctissimus*), and with the help of Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury, introduced *Felix as bishop of East Anglia, based at Dunwich (or possibly Felixstowe) and enabled with royal endowment *Fursey to establish his monastery at Burgh Castle. Felix under royal patronage also set up schools in East Anglia.

Sigebert did not reign for long: he resigned in favour of Ecgic and became a monk, possibly at Burgh Castle. Meanwhile Penda, king of Mercia, the scourge of other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, made war on East Anglia. Sigebert's countrymen, fearful of the morale of the troops in battle, took him against his will out of his monastery and brought him to the army, hoping that the presence of one who had been a brave and famous general would allay their fears. He, however, refused to carry a weapon but only a staff. He was killed with Ecgic in the total defeat which followed. Sigebert, like some other Anglo-Saxon kings who died in battle, was venerated as a martyr. East Anglian liturgical books were destroyed in the Danish invasions and his feast has been variously assigned to 16 January and 27 September.

FURSEY (Fursa) (d. 650), Irish abbot or bishop. He became a monk in Ireland but left it as a 'pilgrim for Christ', coming to East Anglia c.630. King *Sigebert received him and his companions, especially *Foillan, kindly and gave them the old fortress of Cnobheresburg (Burgh Castle, Suffolk) with adjacent lands for a monastery. On the death of Sigebert in battle against Penda, king of Mercia, Fursey left for France. Again he was helped by a ruler, Erchinoald, mayor of Neustria, who gave him land for another monastery, which he built at Lagny-sur-Marne. He died at Mezerolles (Somme); his body was buried at Péronne (Picardy), afterwards called *Perrona Scottorum*, in another Irish monastery.

In 654 his relics were translated to a shrine 'in the shape of a little house', supposedly made by *Eloi. Another translation took place in 1056. Most of the relics remained until the French Revolution: a head reliquary survived even the Prussian bombardment of 1870. French, Irish, and English calendars (especially Canterbury, which claimed head-relics) attest his cult.

This was assisted by Bede's account of his vision of the after-life, one of the earliest of its kind. During a state of trance he saw visions of heaven and hell, angels and devils; on recovering he described his experiences and warned against future and detailed punishments for sins. Feast: 16 January.

AA.SS. Ian. II (1643), 35-55; Bede, *II.E.*, iii 19; *Vita Prima S. Fursey* in *M.G.H., Scriptores rerum hibern.*, iv, 423-49; W. Stokes, 'Betha Fursa', *Revue Celtique*, xxv (1904), 385-404; J. Hennig, 'The Irish Background of St. Fursey', *I.E.R.* (1952), 18-28.

PEGA (d. c.719), virgin, sister of *Guthlac. She lived as an anchoress at Peakirk (i.e. 'Pega's church') in Northamptonshire, not far from Guthlac's hermitage at Crowland. When he realized that his end was near (714), he invited her to his funeral. For this she sailed down the Welland, curing a blind man from Wisbech on the way. She inherited Guthlac's psalter and scourge, both of which, it was claimed, she later gave to Crowland. She went on pilgrimage to Rome and died there c.719. Ordericus Vitalis claimed that her relics survived in an unnamed Roman church in his day, and that miracles took place there. Feast: 8 January.



Antiochian Orthodox

St Fursey's Antiochian Orthodox

Christian Parish Church Stalham

Archdiocese Of the British Isles And Ireland Parish Priest Fr Stephen Weston

Archbishop: His Eminence

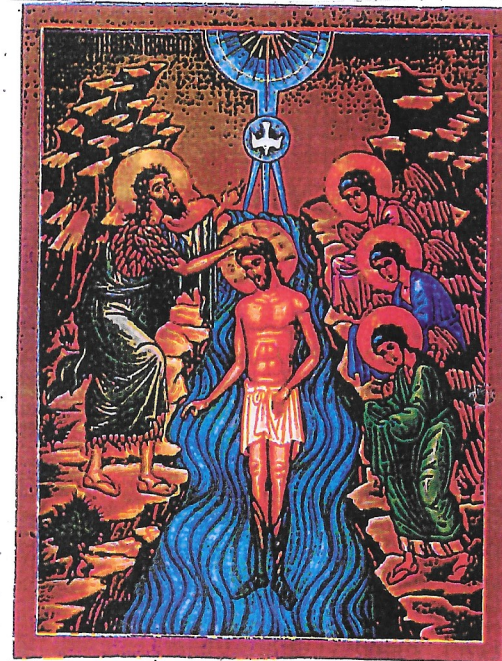
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Metropolitan Silouan Oner

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COMMUNITY PROGRAMME & NEWSLETTER

January 2025



The Epiphany, or the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan (January 6th)

Troparion

WHEN thou wast baptized in Jordan, O Lord, then was made manifest the worship of the Trinity for the Voice of the Father bare witness to thee, naming thee his beloved Son; and the Spirit in form of a dove made good the certainty of his word. O Christ our God, who wast manifested and hast enlightened the world, glory be to thee.

**BRITISH ORTHODOX SAINTS
COMMEMORATED IN
JANUARY.**

- 01 Elvan and Mydwyn, Missionaries
- 03 Fugatius and Damian, Missionaries
- 06 Peter, Abbot of Canterbury
- 07 Brannoc of Braunton, Monk
- 08 Athelhelm, Archbishop of Canterbury
Ethelbert, Bishop in Ireland*
Pega, Anchoress
Wulsin, Bishop of Sherborne
- 09 Adrian, Abbot of Canterbury
Berhtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury
- 10 Sethrid, Abbess in France
- 12 Benedict, Abbot of Wearmouth
- 13 Kentigern (Mungo), Apostle of North-West England
- 15 Ceolfwulf, King of Northumbria, Monk
- 16 Fursey of East Anglia, Missionary
- 17 Mildgyth, Virgin
- 18 Wilfrid, Missionary and Martyr in Sweden*
- 22 Berhtwald, Bishop of Ramsbury
- 25 Sigebert, King of East Anglia, Martyr
Thordgyth of Barking, Nun
- 28 John the Wise of Malmesbury
- 30 Bathild of Chelles, Queen*
- 31 Adamnan of Coldingham, Monk
Wilgils, Hermit

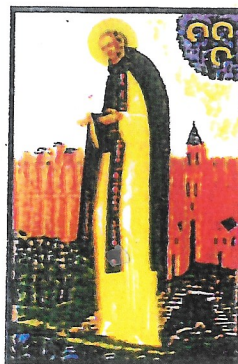
TROPARION OF ST. FURSEY.

Establishing thy monastery in a Roman fortress
thou didst teach men that the Orthodox Faith is
a true bastion against the onslaughts of every evil
force O Father Fursey.

Where fore pray to God for us that we may all be
bastions of the Faith standing firm against the rising
tide of falsehood that our souls may be saved.

KONTAKION OF ST. FURSEY.

Thou didst need the walls of stone to defend the Faith
against its pagan enemies, O Father Fursey, but pray
for us that we may have a spiritual wall around us to
defend the Faith against its enemies. Following thee
and praising thy eternal memory we stand firm against
every error ever singing; Rejoice beloved of God,
our Father Fursey.



SERVICES IN JANUARY 2025

(In the Parish Church unless otherwise stated)

Fri Jan 3 rd	Forefeast of the Theophany Royal Hours 9am with Reading from Fathers. Parish Church Royal Hours 6 th Hour 12 Noon (St Fursey's Chapel) Vespers 4pm (St Fursey's Chapel).
Sat Jan 4 th	Saturday before Theophany Vespers for Our Lord's Baptism 4pm (With Readings).
Sun Jan 5 th	Theophany of Our Lord (by Anticipation) Great Blessing of the Waters Liturgy of St John Chrysostom 9:30am. Blessing of Stalham Staithe waters 12 Noon.
Mon Jan 6 th	3 rd Hour 9am reading from Fathers St Fursey's Chapel.
Sat Jan 11 th	VESPERS 4PM (St Theodosius the Great).
Sun Jan 12 th	29th Sunday after Pentecost (St Tatiana) Divine Liturgy 9:30am.
Thurs Jan 16 th	Patronal Festival of St Fursey Divine Liturgy at St Fursey Chapel 10am. (also St Sigebert King & Martyr 635).
Sat Jan 18 th ^t	VESPERS 4PM. St Athanasius & St Cyril.
Sun Jan 19 th	30th Sunday after Pentecost Sunday of the Ten Lepers. Divine Liturgy 9:30am.
Sat Jan 25 th	VESPERS 4PM St Gregory the Theologian.
Sun Jan 26 th	31st Sunday After Pentecost Sunday of Zacchaeus Divine Liturgy 9:30am.
Thurs Jan 30 th	Synaxis of the Ecumenical Teachers St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian, and St John Chrysostom. Divine Liturgy of St Fursey, Chapel 10am.

Daily Services in St Fursey's Chapel (Neville Road).

These are normally 3rd hour 9am with a reading from the Fathers, **Monday & Friday** (in the Parish Church on Tuesday and Thursday). Vespers daily at 4pm. Local Readers are very welcome but please ring 01692 581849 to make sure it is still on.

NB: Fr Stephen has some time off on Wednesdays and Saturdays to spend with Rosalind. Confessions by appointment before or after services.

Community News & Notices

ANDREW AS CHURCH WARDEN

Ever since St Fursey was founded Andrew has acted as Church Warden and has been a great help in many ways. Several weeks ago, he had a nasty fall in his garden and damaged his back. As a result he could not do his job as church warden so he felt the need to resign. We thank him for all that he has done. His priority is to get better and return to the Liturgy. He is making progress but it is slower than he would like.

There are many jobs to be done, both inside the church and outside. John and Mark have a very good team; their latest task was to erect the new church notice board on the boundary of the church property and the public path. They have agreed to continue with the jobs that need to be done. John has agreed to be co-ordinator of these jobs and to arrange other members of the church to do them.

THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS

It is the custom in the Orthodox Church for the faithful to have their homes blessed at Theophany with the Holy Water that has been Blessed at the Theophany Liturgy. Please let me know if you would like your home blessed (Fr Stephen 01692 581849).

ST FURSEY'S PATRONAL FESTIVAL JANUARY 16TH

We commemorate the Repose of St Fursey in Péronne in France 650 and ministered in Norfolk from Burgh Castle, circa 630 – 645 before going to France. We will have a Liturgy in St Fursey Chapel on Thursday January 16th at 10am; NOTE: Later time followed by

light refreshments. Our celebration will continue the following Sunday in the Parish Church.

BIBLE STUDY

We have had a short break over the Christmas and New Year and will resume on Thursday January 9th studying St Paul's letter to the Hebrews. Those who come regularly are very keen, which is very encouraging.

YOUTUBE

The Gospel is being preached worldwide via modern technology! We now have 300 subscribers. The last four Sunday sermons reached 230, 300, 280, and 100 viewers respectively. The sermon on "God Does Not Do Coincidences" reached over 3700 views!

If you have not already done so, please subscribe to "Orthodox Norfolk" / #Orthodox Norfolk and support Father Stephen as well as St Fursey's Church: John!

Michael & Family

Michael and his family, with Georgia, Miles, Brad, and baby Charlotte.

Michael and his family came to St Fursey's having been received into the Orthodox Church by Fr Fotis, at the Greek Orthodox Church in Yarmouth. He encouraged them to come to us so that the children could grow in their faith in an English context. It was lovely having him and his family at St Fursey. As a result of an incident in his teens he has recurring headaches. He became very ill in November and had to be taken to Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge and very sadly he died on 13 November. I assisted Fr Fotis at his funeral on 9 December and seven people attended from St Fursey's. Georgia and the family are being well supported by St Spyridon Church and they get a lift to the church in Gt Yarmouth for the liturgy. We extend them our love and prayers and hope to see them sometimes.

Every Blessing to our Readers Father Stephen

Sermon of Patriarch John X
Sunday Liturgy, Church of the Holy Cross, December 15, 2024

Beloved,

" Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong, Let all that you do be done with love" (1 Cor. 16:13-14). With these words, I begin, and with these words, I address our dear children in this cherished homeland. I extend my hand to yours during these delicate times, so that together, we may place our hope in the Almighty Creator, the Father of Lights and God of all consolation, to wipe away every disturbance from our hearts, crown them with His holy hope, and strengthen us to seek a better tomorrow.

We stand on the threshold of a new phase, perceiving the dawn of a homeland we all love and cherish. We are on the brink of renewal, which we desire to be radiant with hope and crowned with light. Here in Damascus, from the Straight Street, from Al-Mariamiyya, the neighbor of the Umayyad Mosque, we declare to the world: as Christians, we are from the soil of Syria and from the Cedars of Lebanon, from the majesty of Qasioun Mountain, the expansiveness of Homs, the legacy of Aleppo, the waterwheels of Hama, and the gushing springs of Idlib, from the sea of Lattakia and the Euphrates of Deir ez-Zor. We are not guests in this land, nor did we come to this land today or yesterday. We are from the ancient roots of Syria and as old as the jasmine of Damascus. We are from Apostolic Antioch, from this land that has adorned the world with the name of Jesus Christ. We proclaim this and engrave it as a covenant, saying it to our children, to our brothers, to our partners in the homeland, and before our Creator, Who willed that we exist on this earth alongside others, alongside our Muslim brethren, with whom we seek the pleasure of the Lord of the worlds, the Master of heavens and earth. I have said it before, and I repeat it now: *"My Muslim brothers, between the 'we' and the 'you,' the 'and' (in Arabic, 'waw') falls away, leaving only 'we you' and 'you we.'"* Together, we are the bearers of a shared history with all its ups and downs, and our destiny is one.

In Syria, we are in a homeland of national partnership, a partnership that has always been, and will remain, with God's will, unified—unified by its soil and, above all, by the unity of the hearts of its people, from all spectrums. As Christians, we have extended our hand since the very beginning, and today, we extend it to all components of this nation. We are the sons of Syria—the dream every Syrian aspires to. And the Syria we envision is:

- **Syria: A Civil State:** A state where all are equal in rights and duties, including the preservation of personal status laws for each of its components.
- **Syria: A State of Citizenship:** We do not seek our citizenship as a favor from anyone. We are an integral part of this national fabric, a fabric that transcends the logic of majority and minority, adopting instead the logic of role and mission. Just meters away from us stands a church or the home of John of Damascus, who once served at the Umayyad Court. We come from the Church of the Patriarch of Mercy, Gregory Haddad, whose funeral procession was attended by all of Damascus—Muslims and Christians alike.

- **Syria: A State of Coexistence and Civil Peace:** We extend our hand to everyone, as we have always done, and we call on both the near and the far to safeguard civil peace and national partnership. We urge everyone to look towards a bright future, one that we build together with aspiration, consideration, and hope. We say this not to commend the past but to hope for a promising future. We say this as we embrace the freedom from hearing our church bells, which have always, and will always, resonate alongside the minarets, calling together upon the Most High, seeking and striving to be one heart.
- **Syria: A State of Law and Respect for Religions:** For how can it be otherwise when all its components are on the same boat, a boat that rejects the logic of protectionism and subjugation. We say this with our eyes fixed on a homeland that enshrines the rule of law, respects religions, and upholds human dignity—the foundation upon which its honor is built.
- **Syria: A State of Respect for Collective and Individual Freedoms:** Responsible freedom based on a state of civil institutions that ensures equality for all and calls for the involvement of women and youth in rebuilding Syria. In addition, it ensures that all Syrians are equal in front of the law, and that all of them have the right to participate in political life and hold public posts on the basis of competence without any discrimination.
- **Syria: A State of Democracy:** A state where sovereignty belongs to the people, the law is the arbiter, and power transitions peacefully.
- **Syria: A State of Respect for Human Rights:** Ensuring the independence of the judiciary and equal opportunities for all its citizens, emphasizing adherence to international human rights law and rejecting all forms of violence, hate speech, and discrimination.

The ultimate guarantor for achieving all these aspirations is the Constitution. Therefore, the process of drafting the Constitution must be a holistic and inclusive national endeavor.

We must also emphasize that Christians are not to be used as material for media exploitation. It is essential to be mindful of how to handle media and social media platforms, especially regarding the many rumors they spread irresponsibly.

Furthermore, we stress the importance of distinguishing between caution and prudence on one hand and fear on the other. We do not interact with our fellow Syrians in fear, for love is the bond that unites us all. As the Evangelist John says, *“perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).*

As we approach Christmas, the season of the hope brought by the Newborn in a Manger, I ask God to protect Syria and inspire those responsible for its leadership during this phase, for the good of this country and its kind-hearted people who deserve life and see hope reflected in the eyes of their children. From this hope, we look forward today, affirming and keeping in mind that *“God is in her midst; she shall not be moved.”* Blessed be His name forever. Amen.

THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

Vespers

On Lord, I have cried, *eight stichera are sung:*

TONE TWO

(by John the Monk)

The Forerunner beheld our Enlightenment, who has brought light to all mankind, draw near for baptism: and he rejoiced in soul while his hand trembled. And he shewed Him to the people, saying: 'Behold, the Redeemer of Israel, who sets us free from corruption.' O sinless Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

The hosts of angels were filled with fear, as they saw our Deliverer baptized by a servant and receiving witness through the coming of the Spirit. And the Father's voice was heard from on high: 'He upon whom the Forerunner lays his hand, the same is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'¹ O Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

The streams of the Jordan received Thee who art the fountain, and the Comforter descended in the form of a dove. He who bowed the heavens,² bowed His head, and the clay cried aloud to Him that formed him: 'Why dost Thou command of me what lies beyond my power? For I have need to be baptized of Thee.'³ O sinless Christ our God, glory to Thee (*twice*).

Wishing to save man gone astray, Thou hast not disdained to clothe Thyself in the form of a servant. For it befitted Thee, as Master and God, to take upon Thyself our nature for our sakes. For Thou, O Deliverer, hast been baptized in the flesh, making us worthy of forgiveness. Therefore we cry unto Thee: O Christ our God and Benefactor, glory to Thee (*twice*).

Glory be to the Father . . . Both now . . .

(by Byzas)

Thou hast bowed Thine head before the Forerunner and hast crushed the heads of the dragons.¹ Thou hast descended into the waters and hast given light to all things, that they may glorify Thee, O Saviour, the Enlightenment of our souls.

From a sermon by Saint Proclus of Constantinople, bishop.

(Sermo 7 in sancta Theophania, 1-3: PG 65, 758-759)

THE WATERS ARE MADE HOLY

Christ appeared in the world; and, bringing beauty out of disarray, gave it luster and joy. He bore the world's sin and crushed the world's enemy. He sanctified the fountains of waters and enlightened the minds of men. Into the fabric of miracles he interwove ever greater miracles.

For on this day land and sea share between them the grace of the Savior, and the whole world is filled with joy. Today's feast of the Epiphany manifests even more wonders than the feast of Christmas.

On the feast of the Savior's birth, the earth rejoiced because it bore the Lord in a manger; but on today's feast of the Epiphany it is the sea that is glad and leaps for joy; the sea is glad because it receives the blessing of holiness in the river Jordan.

At Christmas we saw a weak baby, giving proof of our weakness. In today's feast, we see a perfect man, hinting at the perfect Son who proceeds from the all-perfect Father. At Christmas the King puts on the royal robe of his body; at Epiphany the very source enfolds and, as it were, clothes the river.

Come then and see new and astounding miracles: the Sun of righteousness washing in the Jordan, fire immersed in water, God sanctified by the ministry of man.

Today every creature shouts in resounding song: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.* Blessed is he who comes in every age, for this is not his first coming.

And who is he? Tell us more clearly, I beg you, blessed David: *The Lord is God and has shone upon us.* David is not alone in prophesying this; the apostle Paul adds his own witness, saying: *The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all men, and instructing us.* Not for some men, but for all. To Jews and Greeks alike God bestows salvation through baptism, offering baptism as a common grace for all.

Come, consider this new and wonderful deluge, greater and more important than the flood of Noah's day. Then the water of the flood destroyed the human race, but now the water of baptism has recalled the dead to life by the power of the one who was baptized. In the days of the flood the dove with an olive branch in its beak foreshadowed the fragrance of the good odor of Christ the Lord; now the Holy Spirit, coming in the likeness of a dove, reveals the Lord of mercy.