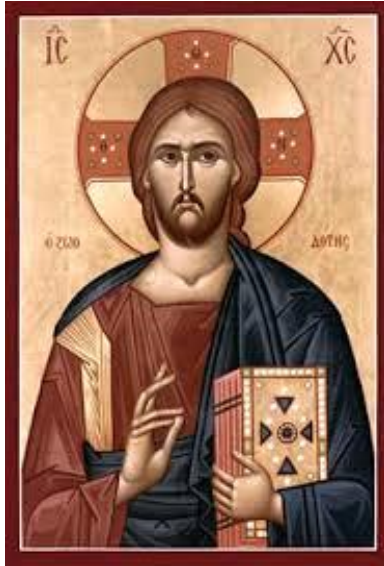


## HOLY ORTHODOXY IN BASILDON: THE FIRST TEN YEARS



This Friday, **23<sup>rd</sup> October**, the **Holy Feast of Saint James [Jakob] the Brother of the Lord**, marks the **TENTH ANNIVERSARY** of the first Divine Liturgy in Basildon.

### ORTHODOX MISSION TO BASILDON

Our first Divine Liturgy was served by **Father Alexander Haig**, as a missionary endeavour of Saint Helen's Colchester. Although that first Divine Liturgy was attended by a mere seven people, and at first our new community grew slowly, it soon became apparent that the people here thirsted for a full cycle of holy services, and to weld together as a new parish.



All Saints, as it was before the Orthodox arrived - quite unrecognisable today!

### A PERMANENT HOME

We underwent a somewhat peripatetic existence, until late in 2012 we secured our permanent home of **ALL SAINTS, North Benfleet**. From the first, this was obviously the home that God intended for our us. Tired, scruffy and unloved as it was, All Saints had a leak-free roof, possessed everything that we required, even boasting a pair of rare pre-deformation bells; and moreover was rent-free! We are licensed for *exclusive* Orthodox usage of All Saints for the next century.

We retained the original dedication of this mediæval brick and stone church as it undoubtedly sits upon a pre-conquest foundation, sited so closely adjacent to an Anglo-Saxon manor house. Thus, did almighty God return this ancient place of worship to its *rightful and intended* congregation- the local, Orthodox faithful! A great deal of hard physical and spiritual work had begun. . .

At this time, **Father Alexander Tefft** became our visiting priest (serving monthly Esperinos and Divine Liturgy), and very soon **weekly holy services** commenced. The **inaugural Divine Liturgy**, in our new home, together with Dedication and Blessing, was served on **2<sup>nd</sup> March 2013**. That morning, the evil-one tried his

damnedest but completely failed to dispirit us - our electricity supply failed (it didn't properly work again until 11<sup>th</sup> January 2015!), holy eikons fell down, and the temperature inside the holy temple remained at a toasty -1° Centigrade!



Oraia Pili, looking into the Holy Altar, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018

## **POOLING RESOURCES, PULLING TOGETHER**

The past eight years at All Saints have seen us blessed in so many ways. People come and go, but our core community remains close, and All Saints enjoys a palpable sense of love, faith, duty, and fellow struggling. Materially, we have also been blessed to overflowing. The following are especially noteworthy:

- **constructing of eikonstasis and amvon**
- **remodelling of the interior of the Holy Temple**
- **removal of pews**
- **construction of division wall between nave and narthex**
- **construction of kouvouklion for the epitafios Christos**
- **installation of holy eikons**
- **rugs (in the hieron) and carpets (in the nave) fitted**
- **analogia supplied**
- **horos installed**
- **Holy Temple repainted throughout, cracks filled**
- **essential structural repairs carried out**
- **wooden floor relaid**
- **pangari installed**
- **installation of a new heating-system**
- **new electricity supply installed**
- **removal of weeds in churchyard, planting of flowers and shrubs**

..these things, plus many others, together with full **liturgical utensils, four sets of priest's vestments, sticharia for servers, cloths and dressings for the holy temple**. . . , all were given *gratis*, by the Orthodox faithful, out of their own pockets, to the glory of God.

## **A NEW PARISH**

In the spring of 2015, after two-and-a-half years at All Saints, we were granted full **parish** status; our new priest, **Father Jakob** serving his first Divine Liturgy on **17<sup>th</sup>**

**May 2015.**

It is always a joy to be at All Saints. We have, until the recent restrictions, gathered together after the holy services to share food and fellowship; many of us linger, for we do not enjoy leaving each other or our holy temple!

### **OUR OWN 'MISSION' - TO TILBURY**

Drawing from our own formative experience, we commended our *own* missionary activity in **December 2017**, to **Tilbury** in south-east Essex (the ancient *Tilaburg*, from where **Saint Cedd** [FD 26<sup>th</sup> October] evangelised the pagan East Saxons). It was a joy to discover that the roman catholic priest at Tilbury was Fr. Paul, who had been so friendly and helpful in securing our first place of worship in Basildon; he and his people welcomed up with open arms. We serve a monthly Divine Liturgy in Tilbury, mostly to a small congregation of Romanian families.





**H.E., Archbishop Silouan, serving Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at All Saints,  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2019**



**The Nave at All Saints, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020**



**Holy Annunciation, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018**



## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Our community continues to grow - 40 to 50 people now regularly worship at All Saints every Sunday, with ever-increasing hundreds attending at each Holy Pascha. People travel to be with us from as far away as Surrey and Hertfordshire, they are mostly young in age (Fr. Jakob is one of the oldest of us!), they come from varied social backgrounds, and are a beautiful mixture of widely differing ethnicities. We oppose ethno-centrism in any form, whether English, Greek, Romanian, Russian. Instead, we are fully engaged in developing and strengthening our life in Christ.



**The Holy Altar at All Saints, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020**



## **PRAYER**

One of our greatest blessings is that we are a community of prayer. Prayer is central to life at All Saints. Our **PSALTER GROUP**, in which - we **pray the entire LXX Psalter *daily***, is a rare, beloved, and God-blessed pearl of great price.

## **FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS**

There are simply too many to name them all. However, a special mention must be made of our beloved and God-appointed **Archbishop, Saiyedna Silouan**; our **parish trustees; choir and servers**; all **who help** - (baking prosfora, sewing, cleaning, tidying, painting, constructing); the **Lyon family** who have been thoroughly supportive of us and were instrumental in our acquiring All Saints. And, most especially, we are grateful for **all those who pray for us**.

For the above - more *obvious* - blessings, we are grateful, but also for the many setbacks, struggles, irritations and difficulties, which have slowed us down, drawn out our tears, deepened our prayers, and humbled us. Even the "covid pandemic" provides countless opportunities for Orthodox Christians to testify to the Truth, to show the Holy Church as a refuge, and that Christ, the physician of our souls and bodies, is truly **risen from the dead**.

For all these things we offer **all gratitude and glory and worship to Christ our God!**

Happy Tenth Anniversary!  
Many Years!

In XP,  
the sinner and unworthy presbyter,  
Father Jakob  
Parish Priest, All Saints Orthodox Church, North Benfleet