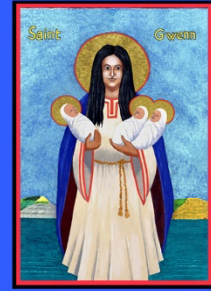




The
Celtic Orthodox Church
in Britain
Community of St Gwenn

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The **Celtic Orthodox Church** is an Ancient Christian Church, founded in AD37. It is the **original** Church of Great Britain, and its spirituality blessed our land for the first twelve centuries of the Christian era. Now it is revived!

St Gwenn's News No 140 – August 2024



**We celebrate our Liturgies at the
Woodbury Community Hall,
Woodbury Lane, Axminster
EX13 5TL**



Liturgical Calendar

Thu 1 Aug	Beginning of the Dormition fast for those who wish to observe it.
Sun 4 Aug	[PENT 11] Transfiguration (transferred from 6 August) Liturgy 10.30am
Sun 11 Aug	PENT 12 St Tugdual the New
Mon 12 Aug	St Clare of San Damiano
Thu 15 Aug	Dormition of the Theotokos
Sun 18 Aug	PENT13
Sat 24 Aug	St Bartholomew, Apostle and Martyr
Sun 25 Aug	PENT14 St Hilda of Whitby
Thu 29 Aug	Beheading of St John the Baptist
Sat 31 Aug	St Aidan of Lindisfarne St Columbanus
Sun 1 Sep	PENT 15 Liturgy 10.30am

From Fr Leonard

Greetings to you all!

Let us hope that our Faith in the Christ Who offers us salvation is more stable than the Summer (!) weather! We have a good day, we have a bad day, and so it goes on. Our Faith can take a similar course. The trick is, not to become alarmed when we have days of doubting – just pray anyway, the routine will, hopefully, lead us back. Think of soldiering on with prayer and bible reading being like putting up an umbrella on a rainy day.

Our first Sunday Liturgy at Woodbury Community Hall worked well. I am sure we have found a good solution to our homelessness and pray that more will join us there in due course. I'm including a photo of the "church" set up ready to begin the Liturgy.

Blessings and love in Christ

Fr Leonard +

St Gwenn's at Woodbury Community Hall



Metropolitan Marc's latest Pastoral Letter

Metropolitan Marc's recent Pastoral letter is substantially an historical record of the rebirth of the Celtic Orthodox Church. Part 1 deals with the beginning of our re-emergence in 1866 up until the beginning of Bishop Marc's primacy. Part 2 covers recent times and aspirations for the future. Part 1 follows. Part 2 will be in the September St Gwenn's News.



Primate Metropolitan Marc's Pastoral Letter No 2

PART 1

'Be the solid core of a wheel around which everything must turn... and so whatever may happen in the periphery, if the center is stable, the building will withstand all storms.' (Saint Mael of Holy Presence.)

Beloved brothers and sisters,

The restoration of the Celtic Orthodox Church potentially took place in Damascus in 1866. It will therefore celebrate its 168th anniversary in this year 2024, on 15 June. It seems essential to me to recall the beginnings of the history of the revival of our Church. We will see that we are still in the prophetic line of Bishop Jules Ferrette who was the instrument of God for the restoration of the Celtic Orthodox Church.

Bishop Thomas-Marie Ludgen, a Belgian bishop of our Church, who was once the bishop of Saint Tugdual when he was a priest, wrote a brief summary of the history of the restoration of the Celtic Orthodox Church in a small brochure¹ of which here are some excerpts that I will indicate between quotation marks.

"Towards the middle of the last century² within the Syriac Orthodox Church, Bishop Julius of Emesa, whose official title was Peter the Humble, was responsible for the external affairs of the Patriarchate of Antioch. He had been named 'universal metropolitan' or 'mafrian.' This prelate had conceived the idea of a movement for the reunion of Christianity, centered on the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and this project received the approval of the patriarch, His Beatitude Mohoran Ignatius-James II. Despite various attempts, this project was doomed to failure. Peter the Humble is better known in history as Ignatius-Peter IV of Antioch, because it was subsequently under this name that he ascended the seat of the Patriarchate of Antioch."



Peter the Humble

"On 2 June, 1866, Peter the Humble consecrated a French Dominican priest, Jules Ferrette, under the name of Mar Jules to whom was assigned the see of Iona in Great Britain with a view to the restoration of the ancient Celtic Church."

"Father Ferrette had, for a long time, devoted himself to the ideal of the union of the Churches; but, hampered by Rome at a time when the ecumenism of the Vatican was far from its current stage, he had placed himself under the jurisdiction of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, or Syrian Patriarchate. He was therefore named delegate of the patriarchate and sent to Western Europe to carry out his beautiful projects there."

"As far as Western Europe and Britain in particular were concerned, the plan was to restore the ancient Celtic Church under its own patriarchate³ in communion with but independent of Antioch. In a letter dated 18 August, 1866 addressed to the general secretary of the Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity, the Bishop of Iona wrote: I am looking for men with experience in the ministry, to help me and examine with me the means of once again offering to so many disorganized Western Christian communities valid sacraments and an indisputable apostolic succession, so that their bishops, archbishops and patriarchs can one day, on an equal footing, sit with their brothers of the Eastern and Latin Church at the ecumenical council which will pronounce the end of the schism. They will not be asked to subscribe to any faith other than that which the Holy Spirit teaches us in the scriptures, for which the martyrs died, and which the ecumenical councils have sanctioned. I will never ask them to hate or despise the Mother Church by which they have been prepared for the service of the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Western Orthodox Church."

"The text of this letter was published in the Anglican periodical the Church Monitor on 15 September, 1866 (p.109). Later, on 28 April, 1922, (p.445), the Church Times, heir to the aforementioned periodical, published another magnificent article on the person, mission and work of Bishop Jules Ferrette: This prelate, who received the grace of the priesthood of a Roman cardinal and the gift of the episcopate of an ecumenical metropolitan of the holy Eastern Church, was appointed bishop of an island

¹ The Celtic Catholic Church known as "Apostolic Catholic" (Patriarchate of Glastonbury) Brief history of its origin and restoration.

² Nineteenth century.

³ Autocephalous jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church.

famous from the ecclesiastical point of view, where the light of the Gospel shone one day with particular brilliance. It is part of Bishop Ferrette's intentions, we learn, to activate the great enterprise of promoting Intercommunion between the East and the West. Thus, a work will be attempted which should have been accomplished long ago."

"Around 1870, Bishop Ferrette made the acquaintance of a learned Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Richard Williams Morgan, who had long been studying the glorious past of the Celtic Church and dreaming of its restoration. He had written numerous works, two of which were republished again in 1922 and 1923, notably, *The Blessed Paul in Brittany* and *History of Brittany from the Flood to the Year 700*. This clergyman had brought together a group of people sharing his views."

"The meeting between Bishop Ferrette and the Reverend Morgan was providential; As the conversation continued between Ferrette and Morgan, it soon became clear that Bishop Ferrette's mission to restore orthodoxy to the West and the pan-Celtic ideal of Morgan and his followers were logically complementary to each other. They therefore entered the path of achievements and in 1874, the mission of Bishop Ferrette found its fulfillment in the re-establishment of the ancient Celtic Church."

"Bishop Ferrette baptized, confirmed, conditionally ordained Richard Williams Morgan, and with the consent of the Patriarch of Antioch consecrated him bishop and enthroned him under the name of Mar⁴ Pelagius, as archbishop of Caerleon-upon-Usk⁵ thus becoming the first patriarch of the restored autocephalous Church, with jurisdiction over Britain and Western Europe.

It was under the pontificate of Mar Pelagius that several Anglican bishops notably Bishop F G Lee and J T Secombe, who had obtained valid orders in what was called 'The order of Corporate reunion,'⁶ joined the Church with their followers."

"In 1885, Bishop Leon Chechemian, titular bishop of Malatya in the Uniate Armenian Church, arrived in England. He had been a victim of Turkish persecution and fled to Great Britain where he continued his ministry among the Armenian colony of the United Armenian Catholic Church⁷ which eventually separated from Rome on 15 August, 1889. Upon his arrival, Bishop Chechemian had made the acquaintance of Mar Pelagius and eventually intercommunion was achieved between the ancient Celtic Church and the United Armenian Catholic Church."

"After the death of Mar Pelagius, at the age of 75, on 22 August, 1889, his successors in the patriarchal seat were:

- Mar Théophile (Charles Isaac Stevens) died 1917.
- Mar Jacques I (Dr Martin) died 1919.
- Mar André (André-Charles-Albert MacLaglen) who resigned in 1922 for health reasons, died 1930."

Mar André is described as "a man of inexhaustible charity who successively founded: The Gordon Memorial Day infant crèche; The Bootshine Brigade at Shaftesbury Memorial for homeless, abandoned, deaf, mute and crippled children, the Danish Kitchen for free soup and finally, The St. Andrew's Mission. He had sought out most of the independent bishops and had contacted each, individually, with a view to bringing about union with them and examining the possibility of grouping them all under the Celtic Patriarchate, either on the basis of total membership, or by affiliation.

⁴ Title of bishops of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

⁵ Wales.

⁶ <https://www.orderofcorporatereunion.org>

⁷ United Armenian Catholic Church.

It was a failure. Everyone will prefer to remain king in their little castle, choosing the swarm of small, tiny groups rather than the formation of a strong autocephaly under a canonically constituted patriarchy which had 50 years of history behind it. Eventually he was forced to abandon his efforts due to the approaching ravages of disease."

- Mar Jacques II (Herbert-Jacques Monzani-Heard) succeeded him but he also resigned for health reasons in 1945. (died 1947).

In the spirit of Mar André: "Knowing that faith without works is dead, Mar Jacques founded a religious and chivalrous order called the Order of Saint James, dedicated to works of charity and piety, and which did excellent work among the poor and needy. He had managed to secure help from restaurateurs, who had agreed to grant substantial discounts to members of the order who wished to pay for the meals of the poor people they sent there."

"Towards the end of 1929, Mar Jacques became aware that an attempt had already been made to establish the apostolic succession of Bishop Joseph-René Vilatte⁸ (7) in Great Britain, through an organization called the Order of Antioch, founded in the United States by Bishop Lloyd, primate of the American Catholic Church, who had been consecrated in 1915 by Bishop Villatte, and who succeeded him in 1920."

"Also in 1930, another rite arising from the apostolic succession of Bishop Villatte was established in England when the African Orthodox Church of this same rite established Bishop Frédéric-Charles-Louis Harrington as primate of the British Orthodox Catholic Church. He met Mar Jacques in 1938 and the two prelates tried to work together to achieve the unification of their Churches. Meritorious work, but which suffered another failure."

"The turn of events proved materially disastrous for both James and the Church. The house in Ilford (Essex) occupied by the patriarch was completely destroyed by bombing during German air raids and there was a loss of valuable documents and archives. Mar Jacques then found himself plunged into the tragic material situation implied by the loss of all these possessions. The work of the Church itself found itself cruelly tested; evacuations, deaths, destruction, dispersion of parishes, changes of addresses, etc. caused the permanent loss of many members of the Church."

"Mar Jacques considered it necessary to bring together in council the different branches of the Celtic Church resulting from the two apostolic successions and thus the council of London was convened, which was held on October 7, 1943. The various Churches decided to assemble again on March 18, 1944, during a Celtic Church synod. Finally, by an act passed on March 23, 1944 at noon, the various Churches present decided to unite with the Celtic Church. It was decided to give it a general name with a more universal scope, that of "Apostolic Catholic Church", and to have it presided over by the patriarch exercising the functions of Catholicos, head of the Western Catholice, while the patriarchate would henceforth be attached to the ancient seat of Glastonbury. Mar Jacques resigned as patriarch."

- Mar Georgius I (Huges-Georges de Willmot-Newman died 1979) was elected to succeed Mar Jacques.

"This memorable ceremony took place on April 10, 1944, in Saint Andrew's Cathedral in London {...} In continuation of the policy of Catholic reunion of Churches inaugurated by Bishop Ferrette and continued by the first patriarchs of the Celtic

⁸ Joseph-René Vilatte was born on 24 January, 1854 in Paris and died on 1 July, 1929 in Versailles (France). Joseph-René Vilatte was elevated to the episcopate on 25 May, 1892 in the Notre-Dame de la Bonne Mort Cathedral in Colombo (Ceylon) by Mar Julius I (Antonio Francis Xavier Alvares), under the authority of a bull of Mar Ignatius Peter IV (127th Patriarch of the Succession of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch) dated 29 December, 1891.

Catholic Church, Mar Georgius strove to achieve new unions and, in 1946, he obtained the support of the Old Catholic community of America." When he died in 1979, his nephew took over.

- Mar Seraphim (William Henry Hugo Newman-Norton).

The Church was then called the 'Glastonbury Patriarchate.' In 1994, Mar Seraphim left the Glastonbury Patriarchate, with its clergy, to enter the Coptic Orthodox Church. He was consecrated metropolitan of the British Isles. The former British Eparchy became an English-speaking Coptic diocese under the name British Orthodox Church. This unilateral decision, taken without consulting the synod of bishops, was not followed by the French eparchy. There were then only two eparchies in the patriarchate. Those of the United States and Belgium no longer existed.



Abba (Mar) Seraphim

- Bishop Mael (Paul de Fournier de Brescia) succeeded him in 1994 (died 2014).



Bishop Mael

Seeing that the French eparchy had remained faithful to the long history of the Church of its fathers, and because Bishop Mael was much loved, a large part of the British clergy returned under his jurisdiction. Bishop Mael took the title of primate and abandoned the title of Mar which is that of the Syriac Orthodox bishops. It was under his leadership that the Celtic Orthodox Church finally became the Church we know today and he made the Holy Presence Monastery the spiritual and missionary centre of the entire Church.

In 1977, Bishop Mael brought to the Church the ecclesial and monastic structure that it lacked. In 2002, he restored the rite that the Church

had lost since the 9th Century using the discoveries and studies of learned liturgical researchers. Thus, quite naturally, the Sainte-Présence monastery, the Sainte-Clotilde of California monastery and the Notre-Dame-du-Signe parish form the centre of the entire Celtic Orthodox Church in the very spirit and form of the Christian communities of the ancient Celtic Church. Bishop Mael died on 20 July, 2014, the feast of the Prophet Elijah.

- Bishop Marc (Jean-Claude-Roger Scheerens), your servant, succeeded him on 5 October, 2014 on the solemnity of Saint Francis of Assisi.

As we saw above, Bishop Jules Ferrette, pushed by the Holy Spirit, wanted to restore to the Church of England an authentic apostolic lineage, in order to contribute to the end of the division of the Churches. His ecumenical project was hotly contested but, providentially, he met the Reverend Richard Morgan. The consecration of Mar Pélagius in 1874 thus marked the real beginning of the rebirth of our Church.

At that time, the Celtic Orthodox Church was still far from having recovered its rite and its great ascetic and spiritual tradition. God knows that men need time and favourable circumstances that will allow the awakening of a Church that has been asleep for 650 years. The real end of the sovereignty of our Church can be considered to date from the day when the perpetual fire, which burned at the monastery founded by Saint Brigid in Kildare in Ireland, was extinguished in the year 1220. It was a symbol of the presence divine, of the spirit and of the great Celtic tradition which existed since

time immemorial. The extinction of this flame marked the break with the ancestral roots of the Celtic Orthodox Church.

Let us remember that our Church is an apostolic foundation of Saint Joseph of Arimathea, disciple of Christ to whom he offered his tomb for his burial. Even today, the site of the great Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset, England, bears witness to this foundation. Another disciple of Christ, Saint Aristobulus also came to Britain to join him in the year AD63.

To be continued

St Gwenn's Finances

When we were worshipping at St Mary the Virgin church, Marshwood, the 'rental' arrangement was very informal – we simply gave St Mary's our collection; sometimes it was generous, sometimes not so or nothing. St Mary's were content.

Now that we are at Woodbury Community Hall we are committed to a regular hire charge. This is paid by bank transfer so a cash collection is no longer helpful. We have, therefore, re-established a bank account for St Gwenn's and would appreciate it if regular giving and any donations are now paid into that account. Here are the details:

Account name: Rev RL and Mrs PJ Hollands*

Sort Code: 07 02 46

Account number: 00099980

As was the case when we had a similar arrangement at Morcombelake, any surplus over and above rent and church expenses will be given to our chosen charities – Barnabas Aid, Tear Fund, Medicine without Borders, specific appeals, etc. We can consider other worthy causes.

* To open an account in the name of St Gwenn would involve bank charges and red tape. The account we have set up is separate from our personal current account and regular statements will be issued to contributors.



Lord, in your mercy: Hear our Prayers

For our Patriarch, Metropolitan Marc, Bishop Nicolas, and for all our clergy. For all who proclaim Christ and for the Unity of the Church.

For the further growth of the Celtic Orthodox Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

For our country, and for the new government. For an end to 'party politics' getting in the way of integrity, truth and the wellbeing of the people.

For America as it prepares for the election of a new President.

For an end to the conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Yemen and all other places of conflict and unrest; and that TRUE PEACE and HARMONY may prevail.

For those suffering in any way – the sick, the bereaved, the homeless, the lonely, the persecuted, those suffering the effects of Climate Change, the marginalised and for those who live in fear or with anxiety.

For the departed – for Graham and all who have died recently; for Paul, Trevor, Betty, Vicky, Roma Holocaust victims, Fr William, Jenny, Rev Roly – Fool for Christ, June, Jill, Cardinal John, Josie, Cyril, Bob, Peter, Fran, Chris, Geoffrey, Beshlie, Tony, HE Metropolitan Kallistos, George, Grace, Papa Spiros, Ray and Des, whose anniversaries of reposing fall this month.

Memory eternal.

