



The Celtic Orthodox Church in Britain

Community of St Gwenn

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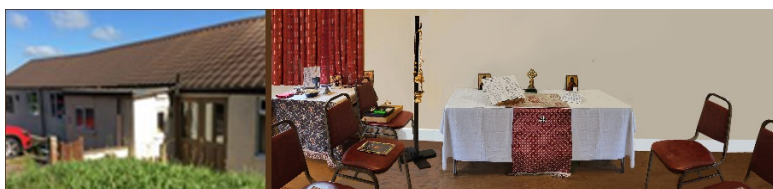
www.stgwenns.org



*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!*

Parish Priest – Fr Leonard Hollands Asst Priests – Fr John Francis, Fr Patrick Mary Fr Deacon Tugdual Meharg

St Gwenn's News No 151 – July 2025



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

July Liturgical Calendar

Sat 5 Jul St Gwenn Teirbron of Dumnonia [our Patron Saint]

Sun 6 Jul **PENTECOST 4 – Liturgy: 10.30am**
[Fr Patrick presides for us for the first time]

Sun 13 Jul PENT 5

Tue 15 Jul Great Prince Basil of Russia, Equal to the Apostles

Thu 17 Jul Great Martyr Margaret of Antioch

Sun 20 Jul PENT 6 – Holy Prophet Elijah



**and, at our Monastery and Cathedral at Saint
Dolay in Brittany, the Canonisation of His
Beatitude Mael, former Patriarch of the Celtic
Orthodox Church.**

[see article below]

Tue 22 Jul Holy Myrrh-bearer, Mary of Magdala, Equal to the Apostles

Fri 25 Jul Dormition of Righteous Anna, Mother of the Virgin Mary

Sun 27 Jul PENT 7

Mon 28 St Samson of Wales

Thu 31 Jul St Joseph of Arimathea, Founder of the Church in Celtic lands

Sun 3 Aug **PENT 8/Transfiguration** [transferred from 6 August]
Liturgy: 10.30am

From Fr Leonard

The peace of the Lord be with you all!

First, an important and significant look back at June, when Deacon Patrick and I went to our monastery in Brittany for a little over a week. **Father Patrick returned a priest**, Bishop Marc having ordained him at the Liturgy on Sunday 15th June. Congratulations and every blessing on your priestly ministry dear Father Patrick.

Axios (called) Many years!

If you missed the live-streaming of the ordination you can see highlights on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83XFFb05tG4>



Fr Patrick addresses the people for the first time as a priest

During our stay at the monastery we were taken on two day-pilgrimages. The first was to St Anne d'Aury, the third most popular pilgrimage site in France, after Lourdes and Lisieux. This is the place where Saint Anne, the grandmother of Jesus, appeared to a ploughman, Yvon Nicolazic, and said to her "I am the mother of Mary." She led him many times (a disposed hand holding a candle) to a field where, in March 1625, digging revealed a statue of Saint Anne in the ruins of a chapel. She continues to give her protection to the little Commune.



The church at St Anne d'Aury

The second visit was to one of Brittany's many Calvaries. The Calvary at Montfort is a depiction of the hill of Calvary where Jesus was crucified built in Pont-Château, Brittany, by St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. It was built in 1709-1710 with the enthusiastic participation of the local people. However, political adversaries of St Louis Marie convinced King Louis XIV that the Calvary was a fortified structure that could be used by the English in case of an invasion. The king ordered its destruction. The Calvary was rebuilt in 1821 by Abbé Gouray, the parish priest of Pont-Château, and further modified later. Over time, the site expanded to include numerous chapels, stations of the cross, and other monuments, becoming a large complex and a popular pilgrimage site. I found one particular sculpted face of Jesus deeply moving. It was also quite emotional to sing the resurrection troparion in the empty tomb.



The Monfort Calvary at Pont-Château

On another day we visited our sister Monastery of St Clotilde where we were made most welcome but we had to sing for our supper! More accurately, we were invited to lead some impromptu prayers after which we were treated to afternoon tea. We were invited into the scriptorium where an iconography class was in progress. There was some really good work was in progress.



At the Monastery of St Clotilde

And, to end where I started, the main event, the *raison d'être* for our visit, was Fr Patrick's ordination. It was a very wonderful week and we were so well looked after. We are deeply grateful to Bishop Marc and all at the Monastery of the Holy Presence for making us so welcome. God bless you all.

Should you wish to see some highlights of our Brittany Odyssey, this is the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-NAYPagxTM>

Blessings and love in Christ to you all

Fr Leonard +

From Fr Patrick

Starting the month off we have the feast of the Visitation of the Mother of God, where an unborn child – St John the Forerunner – meets the, as yet unborn, Incarnate Word of God. Much could be said concerning the treatment of the unborn in this modern world, where too often the news of a child is not received with joy. What a tragedy! For where there are no lambs, one day there will be no sheep.

However, sticking with the joy of St John and St Elizabeth, his elderly mother, I am reminded of what psalm 84:5 says: "Blessed are those whose strength is in You, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage."



Having not long returned from pilgrimage to our cathedral home, and two other local French pilgrimage sites (one to visit the relics of St Anne and the other the Calvary of Brittany) I am still able to keep in mind that our lives here on earth are but a short pilgrimage in preparation of our final destination, where we find our resting place or Sabbath in Christ.

Our Lady, the Holy Theotokos, is a perfect image of what this pilgrim journey should look like. One totally fixed on nurturing God the Word within ourselves taking good care not to cause harm to ourselves or the Light within us, lest, through neglect and lack of watchfulness we begin to lose track of our purpose and final destination. Through this neglect we might begin to believe that our home is here on earth and become distracted until our lives become quite the opposite to one full of the Light of Christ. We must, as the psalmist teaches, find our strength in the Lord and set our hearts on the pilgrimage. Notice the psalmist doesn't say "on the destination of pilgrimage," but rather, "whose hearts are set on pilgrimage."

Many people have had fairly different experiences with pilgrimage, as some may rush quickly through the journey missing opportunities to grow through trial. Yet others understand that the journey and process is just as important as the destination. Let us not see our pilgrimage on earth as just 'busy work' until we get to be with the Lord, rather let us be reminded that, like Our Lady's journey, it too can be wearisome and at times difficult to the point we believe we can no longer press on forwards. However, let us imitate Our Lady, who put her trust in God, who then gave her the strength to endure and nurture Christ within her.

Let us therefore, ask our Lady together with St John and St Elizabeth, to help us find joy in our pilgrimage of life while being watchful to allow Christ to grow in us. As St John proclaimed, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

THE CANONISATION

Saint Mael – His Beatitude, Metropolitan of Dol, and Titular Bishop of Iona

On Sunday 20th July our late Primate of blessed and fond memory, will become a saint of the Celtic Orthodox Church. It seems appropriate, especially for our newer members who never had the privilege and blessing of knowing him, if we learn about his life. The following is heavily based on Bishop Marc's biography of Bishop Mael.

Bishop Mael was born in 1923 (Paul de Fournier of Brescia) in America to a French family. He grew up to be a sensitive, profound man, totally given to God's work. He was naturally reserved, and humble; he shed tears when he had to accept the charge of bishop.



In 1935 entered High School, then from 1936 to 1939, he was at a Minor Seminary with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. In 1940 he entered Bates University, Maine. It seemed he was destined for a writing career. He had already published collections of poems and short stories during his studies.

In 1942, he became a novice with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, but, in 1943, doubting his vocation, he left the Seminary and worked for a time in a factory. The Second World War, when the United States engaged in the European and Pacific war against Japan saw many American men volunteer for duty. He joined the Navy.

In July 1947, he moved to France, and from then until 1973 he worked in an amazing number of different jobs; Scouting, a department store, an office, bookbinding, Juvenile Courts, antiques dealer, decorator and teacher

During all these years, he studied tradition, notably Celtic-Druidic. His spiritual quest led him to make a retreat every year in the Trappist monastery of Orval in Belgium. It's here he had the revelation that he is to found a community.

In 1974, with two other brothers, in a cave at the mountain of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert he made monastic vows. Later that year he was ordained a priest in the Celtic Orthodox Church.

It is now clear that Fr Paul has charisms that are difficult to describe, but which were decisive in his profound conversion. He is much influenced by the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi. In 1976, he was appointed Archimandrite and Vicar Episcopal by Bishop Iltud, then in charge of the Celtic Orthodox Church.

In 1977, Fr Paul left with two companions, brothers Jean and Marc, to restore the old hermitage of St Tugdual in Brittany. The early days there were extremely Spartan. Fr Paul had become the heir of Saint Tugdual's mission to restore the spirituality of our Celtic Fathers and found the monastery of Sainte-Présence. In doing this Bishop Mael profoundly reformed the Church by giving it a solid structure and a clear spiritual direction.

A community quickly formed around the monastery of St Presence, and, in 1980, Fr Paul was consecrated bishop by Abba Seraphim (Newman-Norton), then primate of the Celtic Orthodox Church. Fr Paul took the name, Mael.

In 1994, he became Metropolitan of Dol. 1994 was also the year Abba Seraphim left the Celtic Orthodox Church to come under the jurisdiction of the Coptic Orthodox taking some of his British priests with him (most of these soon asked to be received back into the Celtic Orthodox Church). The Holy Synod then chose Metropolitan Mael as the new primate. He is inducted into this new ministry, in 1995.

Under his pontificate, the Church was profoundly reformed. Saint Tugdual's influence – the essential of his spirituality of "the Absolute of God" – was apparent as was the influence of St Columbanus and St Francis. Celtic monasticism finally comes back to life under his apostolate.

During the last ten years of his life, Primate Mael, despite the cancer that was decreasing his strength, continued his mission to restore fully true Celtic Spirituality. In the last year, the disease worsened and he was bedridden. Nonetheless, he wrote a final pastoral letter. Its writing took several months, because he wanted it to have the weight of a spiritual testament. It begins thus: "As I prepare to join the house of the Father, I feel the need to do the balance sheet of forty-one years in the service of our mother the Celtic Orthodox Church."

The end was a slow agony, yet very peaceful, until, barely perceptibly, he reposed in Christ on 20th July 2014. His remains now rest in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Sign, adjacent to his monastery.

I am not able to share the numerous miraculouss events which occurred during Bishop Mael's long life (I have seen testimony to two) which have led to his canonisation, but something may be revealed at the Canonisation.

The Canonisation (20.07.25) will be live-streamed. If you would like to receive the link for this please contact Presbytera Clare: meganJ210618@outlook.com



Lord, in your mercy: Hear our Prayers

That we may allow Christ our Saviour into our pilgrimage through life.

For our Patriarch His Beatitude Metropolitan Marc, Bishop Nicolas and all our clergy and people.

For Fr Patrick as he begins his priestly ministry.

For our King, the Royal Family, our Government and all in authority.

For true and lasting Peace to come to Ukraine, Gaza, Iran and all places of war and dissention.

For all who seek to halt Climate Change, and that all of us may do our utmost in our lives and homes to 'be green.'

For the sick, especially those on our hearts at this time.

For all who have died recently, and for Roy, Presbytera Rachel, Mary, Jean, Jeremy, John, Jenny, Bp Gerald, Beryl, HB Mael, John, Fr Tony, Neil, Alfreda, Rob and Betty, whose anniversaries of reposing fall this month.

