



The Celtic Orthodox Church in Britain

Community of St Gwenn

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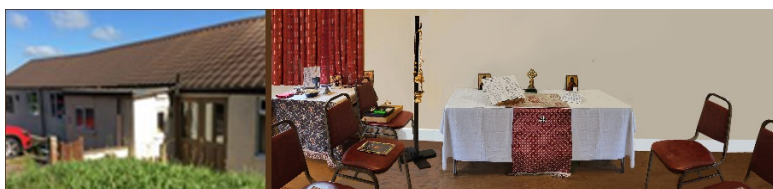
www.stgwenns.org



*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 152 – August 2025



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

August Liturgical Calendar

Sun 3 Aug	PENT 8/Transfiguration [transferred from 6 August Liturgy: 10.30am
Wed 6 Aug	Transfiguration of the Lord (We shall observe on 3 rd Aug)
Sun 10 Aug	PENT 9
Mon 11 Aug	St Tugdual the New, founder of the Holy Presence Monastery, Saint Dolay
Tue 12 Aug	St Clare of San Damiano
Fri 15 Aug	DORMITION of the Holy Theotokos
Sun 17 Aug	PENT 10
Sun 24 Aug	PENT 11, St Bartholomew, Apostle and Martyr
Mon 25 Aug	St Hilda of Whitby
Fri 29 Aug	Beheading of the Holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist St John
Sun 31 Aug	PENT 12, St Aidan of Lindisfarne, St Columbanus of Ireland
Sun 7 Sep	PENT 13, Forefeast of Nativity of the Holy Mother of God

From Fr Leonard

Warmest greetings in Christ our Lord!

It was wonderful to witness Fr Patrick's first Liturgy for us in July, and with Fr John as his concelebrant I was able to take a welcome back seat and allow the depth and beauty of our Liturgy to flow into me and recharge my 'spiritual battery.'

And with Fr John contributing to the St Gwenn's News this month I will similarly take a break and make my editorial contribution short!

Blessings and love in Christ to you all

Fr Leonard +

Fr John's Ramblings

I suspect I'm not alone in finding that it takes me longer to park in an empty car-park, than an almost full one! (In our family we use the term 'empty car park syndrome.') It's not limited to car parks; in many areas of life, lots of choice can slow down decision making. A 'choice of one' can sometimes be a gift. It's like that with a Newsletter article. The subject is open, so I could write about anything; the danger of course is that I can lack focus and end up sharing the ramblings of my mind, with scarce a useful thought in any of it! On this occasion though, that is exactly what I've decided to do, so here goes.



I think triggered initially by a TV programme on pilgrimages and the early Saints of the Celtic tradition, it's been the focus of my reading for some months now, and of course, the recent Canonisation of His Beatitude Mael is an added focus. I never met Metropolitan Mael, but those who did are still very much with us and have always spoken warmly of him. Words like 'Holy' and 'Saintly' have always been part of their descriptions. I will leave it to those who actually knew him to speak more of this particular 'Saint,' rather than me go into third hand reiteration.

In the New Testament, of course, whole Christian communities were referred to as 'Saints' – the 'Saints in' this place or another. So clearly Sainthood is never intended just to be the calling of a very few, but is the calling for each of us. So what does being saintly mean? In particular what does it mean for you and me. The church acknowledges certain individuals as having lived exceptional lives. The canonisation process is a public acknowledgement of that and I guess an invitation for us to focus on their way of living in the hope that it may inspire us to do likewise. However I do think we need to be cautious, for while such particular people may be a source of great inspiration to us, you and I are not called to be Saint Columba, Aiden or even Mael. Maybe Columba was called to stand up to his waist in the Iris We're not called to be someone else, we are called to be 'us,' the unique individual that God has created and called us to be.

So what does our personal version of living a holy life actually look like? It's too easy sometimes to link holiness with going off on a long pilgrimage, living as a hermit in some isolated spot, remaining in endless prayer, trying to live the life of a religious: but, what does it look like for Laura living in a high-rise flat as a single mum on benefits with special needs children? What does being a saint look like for her? How do you become a saint when your daily work is on a road construction unit, or in the midst of the noise and grime of some industrial plant; how do we become a Saint in such situations? I was just musing on this question when I was almost run off the road by someone driving far too fast in a huge 4x4! A couple of hours later in a supermarket car park I observed an altercation between someone driving a very upmarket sports car and a pedestrian, who the car driver thought should've got out of his way. Those experiences reminded me that this question is universal. ("It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven," said Jesus). Laura in her high rise flat, or the young woman trying to live on the minimum wage and struggling to find adequate accommodation have to wrestle with the same question that the apparently 'privileged' wealthy professional, who has been

bred into a mindset of entitlement and is surrounded with people for whom everything is measured in terms of material wealth: when I'm being at my most generous, aren't each equally hard?

The question is hardly unique, I suspect you've heard it a number of times. The trouble is that an orangutan could pose the question, the problem is in finding an answer – for there is no universal answer. We can only search for a personal one and that requires wisdom and discernment and sometimes a good deal of help. How someone else is living their life is essentially none of our business. The question, and the challenge, is how should we be living ours? In finding our answer I would suggest that the Celtic tradition has much to offer.

A good deal of the history I was taught at school was simply incorrect. How many of us were taught that Augustine brought Christianity to England when he came with the authority of the Pope. The reality is that Christianity was alive and well here for many, many, years before Augustine set foot on our shore. The Celtic Church was different, diverse but well established. What Augustine brought was a brand of 'Imperial Christianity.' It came too with a good deal of judgementalism and a one size fits all approach. It was fiercely resisted, even long after the Synod of Whitby; it took years for the Roman Church effectively to reach dominance.

So going back to the question, how do we find an answer, or at least a way, or even a place to put our first step? Part of the difficulty I suspect, is that when we are asked a question we immediately go up into our head and start thinking about it to get an answer. Perhaps our mind gets thrown back to the wilds of Northumberland and Saint Aidan, or maybe drawn into the remote Woodlands of Brittany, maybe we even dream of a regular deep prayer life to match any religious; until we notice the pile of washing, or its time to get the children from school, or the 20 things I promised to have done by today, or whatever. So how do we begin from where we actually are?

Perhaps a pilgrimage might be helpful – no, not something like a long pilgrimage in Spain or climbing up an Irish hill on our knees, no, something harder than that: maybe we need the hardest and longest pilgrimage on earth, and that is to travel the 12 or 18 inches from our heads to our hearts! For that pilgrimage we have to leave our ego and our solutions and instead open ourselves up to become vulnerable and receptive to that deep still voice within us; the voice that will gently guide us to reach towards what we can become. The early Celtic Christians acknowledged that this was not easy, which is why they developed the idea of a 'soul friend' an 'Anam Cara' (see *Anam Cara* by John O'Donohue if you're not familiar with it, or reread it if you are), someone to walk alongside us to help us develop that discernment. Finding the right person can be like looking for hen's teeth, but it's worth the effort. Once on that path maybe then we can really start living.

St Irenaeus, the second-century theologian said: "The glory of God is a person fully alive." That is what we are called to be, 'fully alive,' living the life that God wants for us.

Every Blessing.

Fr John +

*Deacon Tugdual, Diakonnisa Susanna and their friend Bessie went to our monastery to join in the weekend of events culminating in the **CANONISATION of His Beatitude Metropolitan MAEL.***

Deacon Tugdual writes:

Our pilgrimage started on Thursday 17 July with a ferry, crossing the English Channel from the Port of Poole to Cherbourg – then a long car journey across and down through Brittany to our accommodation at the Oasis in Saint Dolay. Being late evening when we arrived we went straight to bed, and experienced thunder and lightening all night!

On Friday morning we arose to the continuing rain but with big smiles as we were greeted by the monks and their big smiles. The immediate highlight was the Consecration of the New Altar in the recently extended Cathedral of Notre-Dame-du-Signe by our Primate, His Beatitude Metropolitan Marc. Lunch followed, with introductions to the visiting Bishops – Bp Martin (French Orthodox Church), Bp Gregoire (Orthodox Church of the Gauls) and our own Bp Nicholas from Switzerland.

Saturday morning the Liturgy was followed by a community lunch. I reckon there were in the region of 200 attend-ees!! In the afternoon, a conference was given on the life and work of Bp Mael. It concluded with a 'round table' discussion on the Testimonies of the Holiness of Bishop Mael.



Sunday (20 July – the twentyfirst anniversary of Bp Mael's reposing) started with the Proclamation of the Holiness of Bp Mael and his sainting. Seamlessly, the concelebrated Liturgy followed. After this there was another community lunch. In the afternoon a video presentation showed the main events in the life and work of Saint Mael. We were again invited to eat with the resident and visiting clergy. We then visited Monk Deacon Cwyfan's grave and prayed.

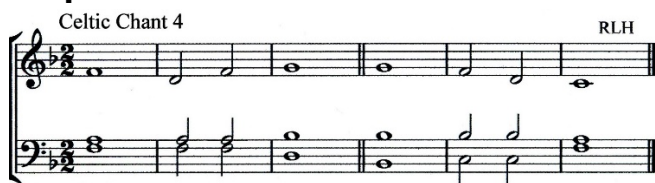
Monday morning, over breakfast, we gave our thanks and took our leave to journey home.



In Honour and Memory of Saint Mael of Saint Dolay

From now on the feast of St Mael will be kept on 20 July each year. An icon has been created by Sister Theodosi and will, of course, reside in the Cathedral. I am assuming copies will become available in due course. A troparion has been written for liturgical use.

Troparion



O Saint Mael, you suffered the mystery of the Passion and the Cross, through your ho/ly stig-/mata; * you, who loved God above all, receiving ineffable super-/natu-/ ral/ gifts. || Humble/ and wise/ Shepherd, * spiritual beacon/ of your /Church; || with a simple word, you soothed souls/ in di-/stress; * Pray to Christ our God, that He may grant us the/ grace of/ salvation.



Lord, in your mercy: Hear our Prayers

For our Patriarch His Beatitude Metropolitan Marc, Bishop Nicolas and all our clergy and people. For the UNITY of Christ's Church.

For His Majesty King Charles III, the Royal Family, our Government and all in authority.

For true and lasting Peace to be achieved in Ukraine, Gaza, Iran Sudan Yemen and all 110 places of war and dissention in the world.

For a deeper commitment by all nations and each of us individually to halt Climate Change, and respect God's Creation.

For the sick, the bereaved, the homeless the starving and all who suffer in any way, especially those known to us.

For all who have died recently, and for Trevor, Betty, Paul, Vicky, the Roma Victims of the Holocaust, Fr William, Jenny, Fool for Christ Roly, June, Jill, Doug, Cardinal John, Josie, Cyril, Bob, Dorothy, Peter, Fran, Chris, Geoffrey, Beshlie, Tony, His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos, George, Grace, Papa Spyros, Ray and Des whose anniversaries of reposing fall this month.

