



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!*

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

St Gwenn's News No 162 – June 2026



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

June Liturgical Calendar

Mon 1 Jun	St Wite of Whitchurch Canoniconum
Thu 4 Jun	St Petroc of Padstow
Sun 7 Jun	PENT 5 – Liturgy: 10.30am
Tue 9 Jun	St Columba, Abbot Founder of Iona St Cyril, Archbp of Alexendria,
Thu 11 Jun	St Bartholomew and St Barnabas, Apostles
Sun 14 Jun	PENT 3
Mon 15 Jun	All Saints and Righteous of the Celtic Orthodox Church
Fri 19 Jun	St Jude, Apostle
Sun 21 Jun	PENT 4
Mon 22 Jun	St Alban, Protomartyr of Britain
Wed 24 Jun	Nativity of the Holy, Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John
Sun 28 Jun	PENT 5 St Maelvon of Ireland
Mon 29 Jun	St Peter and St Paul, All praised Leaders of the Apostles
Sun 5 Jul	PENT 6, St Gwenn of Dunmonia – Liturgy 10.30am

From Fr Leonard

As I write this in readiness for our June News we are in a heat wave, the hottest days of May ever recorded, the sun blazing down bringing out the glorious *chiroscura* of God's Creation. O that our Faith could shine forth so brightly.

Because we always include the first Liturgy of the following month on our Monthly Liturgical Clendar we actually see St Wite and St Gwenn on our front page this month. There has been a mystery and much debate across the centuries as to who St Wite actually is. Her relics lie in a sarcophagal shrine in the parish church of Whitchurch Canonorum, near us here in West Dorset; the dedication of the church is St Candida and Holy Cross. Because I am convinced beyond reasonable doubt that St Wite and St Gwenn are one and the same saint, that means we get two patronal festivals! We shall celebrate this on the St Gwenn date (5 July) as we actually have a Liturgy that day! However, because of the vexed question of who St Wite really was we will put the St Gwenn/Wite biography in this month's News. You may care to re-read it on the 5th of July!

Fr Leonard +

St Gwenn (St Wite) Short Biography



Icon of St Gwenn

Features of the icon: Three children who became saints. Standing on the sea across which she walked to Brittany. West Dorset cliffs near where she was martyred

Gwenn – by legend triple-breasted – was a daughter of King Budic II of Brittany, and was born around AD499. She was twice married. To her first husband, Fracan, cousin to King Cado of Dumnonia, she bore three children, all of whom became saints - Wethnoc, Iacob and Winwaloe. This was the reason for the legend of her having three breasts, one assumes. Her icon depicts her cradling these three children.

To escape grave pestilence around Dumnonia (the Celtic West of England), Gwenn settled at PlouFracan in Domnonée (France) where she later bore Fracan a daughter, Chreirbia.

After Fracan died, Gwenn married a Breton, Eneas Ledewig, to whom she bore another son, St Cadfan. Twice, however, Gwenn was kidnapped by Anglo-Saxon pirates and carried off to England, but on both occasions she escaped, walking across the Channel back to Brittany.

Towards the end of her life, she settled in the Marshwood Vale in Dorset at Whitchurch Canonorum, then in Eastern Dumnonia. She lived there for many years in her small hermitage, until, in the mid-6th century, the

Saxons wreaked their revenge, ransacking her home and slaughtering her.

This makes St Gwenn an extremely probable contender for the identity of the mysterious female saint whose bones lie in the shrine at the parish church of Whitchurch Canonorum. The shrine within the church has for centuries been a focus of healing miracles. The church there bears the dedication St Candida and Holy Cross. It is also traditionally known as the Church of St Witta or St Wite – which may or may not mean “white” in Early English. But Gwenn is certainly Welsh for white, as is Candida white in Latin.

Historical notes based in part on David Ford Nash's *Early British Kingdoms*.

Celtic Orthodox Church Reception

At our May Liturgy Neil Beckhelling – all the way from Kent – was received into the Celtic Orthodox Church, his baptism and communicant status having been deemed valid. He was met at the door of the 'church' and, having made his declaration of Faith was led to the altar where the blessing of the Holy Spirit was invoked:

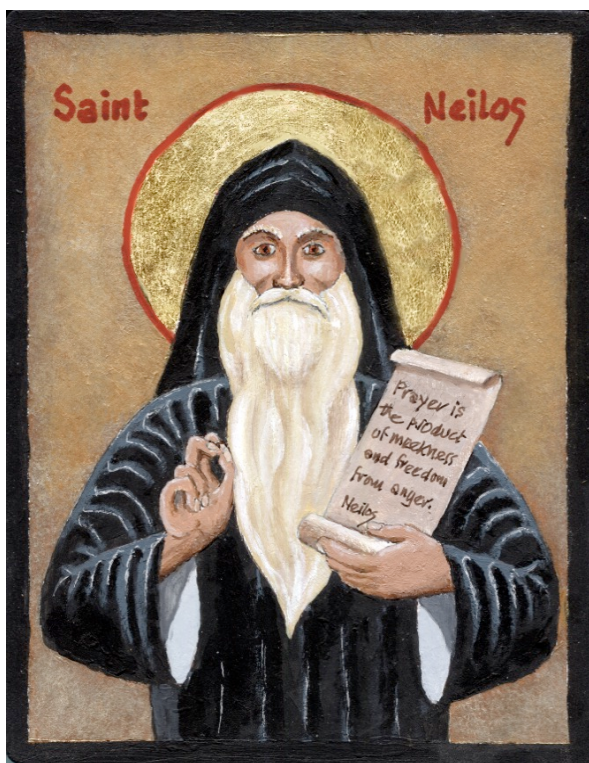
The Spirit of Wisdom!
The Spirit of Understanding!
The Spirit of Knowledge!
The Spirit of Fortitude!
The Spirit of Counsel!
The Spirit of Piety!
The Spirit of Fear of the Lord!

Neil then proceeded to chant the New Testament reading.

Neil has taken the Orthodox name of Neilos/Nilus, about whom, see below. We welcome Neilos and wish him every blessing.



Our Holy Father Nilus/Neilos the Ascetic of Sinai



Nilus/Neilos, born in the 4th century, served as Prefect of Con-stantinople during the reign of the Emperor Theodosius. He was married and had two children, a son and a daughter. Despising their eminent worldly position, Nilus and his wife agreed to take up the monastic life in Egypt, she taking their daughter to a women's monastery, he taking their son to Mount Sinai.

Together Nilus and his son Theodoulos lived in hesychia on the slopes of the mountain with the other monks, who spent their lives in solitude, only gathering once a week to partake of the Holy Mysteries. One day, some Saracen raiders attacked the monks, killing many and capturing others; Nilus' own son Theodoulos was among those taken.

Nilus, to overcome his sorrow at losing his son, redoubled his prayers and ascetical labours, and became widely-known for his

gifts of prophecy and discernment. He wrote more than a thousand letters and spiritual treatises, including some defending his spiritual father St John Chrysostom, who had been unjustly exiled.

After many years at Mt Sinai, St Nilus found his long-lost son alive. Father and son together were ordained to the priesthood by the Bishop of Elusas, who had been caring for Theodoulos.

Saint Nilus reposed in peace around the year 430. His relics were later returned to Constantinople and venerated at the Church of the Orphanage. His feast day is 12th November.

Troparion for St Neilos

By a flood of tears you made the desert fertile, and your longing for God brought forth fruits in abundance. By the radiance of miracles you illumined the whole universe! O Holy Father Neilos, pray to Christ God to save our souls!



Lord, in your mercy: Hear our Prayers

For our Patriarch His Beatitude Metropolitan Marc, Bishop Nicolas and all our clergy and people; For Bishop Martin (French Orthodox Church) and his clergy and people; For Bishop Gregoire (Orthodox Church of the Gauls) and his clergy and people;

FOR THE UNITY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH [Our shameful disunity is an affront to the Gospel we preach]

For His Majesty King Charles III, the Royal Family, our Government and all in authority; For the Heads of State and Leaders of every land, and that all may work towards the resolution of conflict.

FOR THE PEACE OF THE WORLD [It is difficult to recognise that those who cause and perpetuate war are creatures of God]

For those who suffer as a result of war, for the sick, the bereaved, the displaced, the homeless, the starving, the persecuted, the marginalised, and for all who suffer in any way, especially those known to us.

For Joan and Carole, and all who have died recently, and for Dominic, Fr Kentigern, Eve, Pamela, Suzie, Monk Dcn Cwyfan and Sylvia, whose anniversaries of reposing fall this month.

