



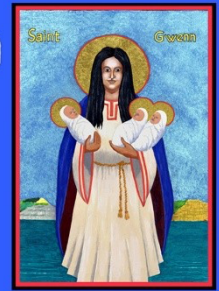
The Celtic Orthodox Church in Britain

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 166 – October 2026



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

October Liturgical Calendar

Thu 1 Oct	The Protecting Veil
Fri 2 Oct	Guardian Angels
Sat 3 Oct	Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite, Bp of Athens
Sun 4 Oct	PENTECOST 19 – St Francis of Assisi and The Feast of Creation – Liturgy 10.30am
Fri 9 Oct	St James, Son of Alphaeus, Apostle
Sun 11 Oct	PENTECOST 20, St Philip the Deacon, Apostle of the Seventy
Sun 18 Oct	PENTECOST 21 St Luke Apostle, Evangelist
Fri 23 Oct	St James the Brother the Lord, Apostle
Sat 24 Oct	St Raphael the Archangel
Sun 25 Oct	PENTECOST 22 St Clotilde of California, Nun
Mon 26 Oct	St Cedd, Bp of Lastingham, St Alfred the Great, King
Wed 28 Oct	St Simon and St Jude, Apostles, Martyrs
Sat 31 Oct	St Aristobulus, Apostle of the Seventy
Sun 1 Nov	PENTECOST 23 ALL SAINTS – Liturgy 10.30am

From Fr Leonard

Autumnal greetings!

We are moving towards the end of our Liturgical year, as our Celtic Orthodox New Year will begin on 12th November. As a consequence, I have been deeply immersed in the annual task of preparing the Liturgical Calendar and Lectionary for 2026-2027 – see below.

Some of you will be aware that I have an interest in etymology, annoyingly so some would say, but the origin of the very word itself is the clue to my interest; the Greek *etymon* – 'true self.' Many words we regularly use have become divorced from their true meaning, or maybe from one true meaning which has become rarely used. Does exquisite pain mean wonderful or beautiful pain and thus a nonsense? No it means exquisite in its now rarely used meaning of intense or deeply felt. Where am I going you wonder?

On 4th October we celebrate the Feast of Creation – also the Feast of St Francis of Assisi. Various ancient customs respecting Creation and the Seasons are regarded as pagan because they come from a tradition that is not Christian or has not been Christianised. Can the observance of these customs be compatible with the Christian life? I have a Christian Romani friend, active in Church work, who observes the ancient seasonal feasts. I knew the late Dr Mangala Frost, Orthodox Christian Scholar from a Hindu background who wore the beautiful saris of her birth culture and had the bindi on her forehead. Neither is/was pagan.

There is so much of paganism which is deeply in accord with the Christian Faith, especially in Celtic Orthodox spirituality where we see God so clearly in His Creation, the same Creation revered by 'pagans.' This same affinity with Nature is found in St Francis of Assisi who is especially revered in our Church despite not being Celtic.

No, I'm not preaching paganism, but I am suggesting a lesson in etymology. Forget for a moment what the word pagan has come to mean and go back to its Latin source, *paganus* – meaning "country dweller" or "civilian." Basically, we could say the traditions of ordinary people. May more 'ordinary people' open their eye to the glory of God in His Creation, the creation their forebears have revered for millennia.

Blessings and love in Christ

Fr Leonard +

The Celtic Orthodox Church A statement from the website of our Swiss parish



Saint Nicolas-de-Flue et Saint Francois Church, Les Vêrines, Switzerland

The Celtic Orthodox Church was originally an Apostolic foundation in the British Isles. It remained sovereign for twelve centuries, and although the vicissitudes of history caused it to lose its sovereignty, it did not disappear from the memory of the peoples it had Christianised.

It spread its influence throughout Europe through monks such as Patrick, Brigid, Columba, Brendan, Samson, Amand, Fare, Columban, Gall, and so many others, lifting up a Europe that had been battered by the fall of the Roman Empire between the 5th and 8th centuries. By including the term "Celtic" in the name of our Church, we wish to live out this spirituality and this spirit, so close to that of Saint Francis of Assisi. We firmly believe that God has not called us to division but to unity through the path that is unique to us.

The name of our church also includes the term "Orthodox," to emphasize our deep desire to conform to the history and tradition of our forefathers. At no time have we wished to use this term unjustifiably to align ourselves with any of the major Orthodox Churches, whether Byzantine or pre-Chalcedonian.

Restored in 1866, our Church has never ceased to reclaim its memory and reconstruct its traditions, its Rite, and its spirituality. For several years, we have worked closely with theologians and scholars from various Churches, notably the Roman Catholic Church.

We profess the original faith of the first three Ecumenical Councils recognized by all Christians and accept the dogmatic declarations of the four subsequent major Councils. We fully adhere to the doctrinal agreements resulting from ecumenical dialogue among Christian denominations.

We do not actively seek formal recognition from the world, but first and foremost a conversion of the heart and a return to the purity of the evangelical life and evangelical poverty. To this end, we desire to live in deep and genuine unity with all our brothers and sisters in Christ within each of our communities. With God's help, we strive to live out the word of Christ with deep respect for all of creation that the Lord has placed at our disposal, loving all human beings from the bottom of our hearts, regardless of their nationality, religion, or denomination. We also try, with our limited means, to come to the aid of those in need, both here in our villages and throughout the world. Furthermore, we wholeheartedly adhere to the words of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, who teaches us that "to be poor means to allow oneself to be enriched by the poverty of Christ and not to desire to be rich with riches other than those of Christ."

In this context, we hope that our Church will remain a humble place of welcome, reconciliation, forgiveness, and charity in Christ, and that our actions and our liturgical life will be a living witness to God's absolute love for all people and for all of creation. Being able to pray together to the Lord our God, together with all Christian denominations, seems to us to be vital and indispensable for the salvation of the world. That our Church welcomes all Christians throughout the world, without distinction, regardless of their doctrinal differences,* so as to allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, seems to us essential for fulfilling God's commandment: "May they all be one!"

We deeply regret that certain major Churches do not wish to live in communion with our Church. The Celtic Orthodox Church recognises all Christian Churches — without judgment, without condemnation, without exclusion — but simply and solely in communion in Christ and in God's love and profound peace. We are convinced that all Christians throughout the world are called to live in mutual respect, in fraternal communion in Christ, just as Jesus taught us.

May the Lord our God guide us on the path to His Kingdom. May His will be done.

Fall, Leaves, Fall Emily Brontë

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.

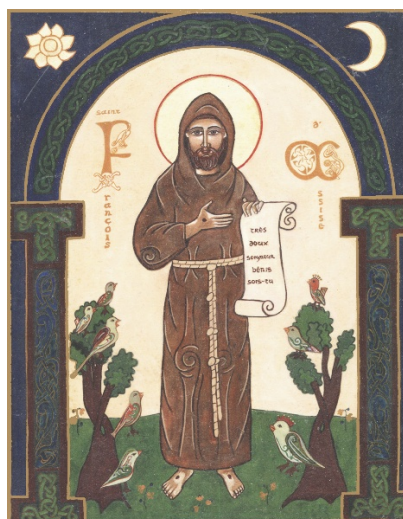


Protecting the Environment, God's Creation

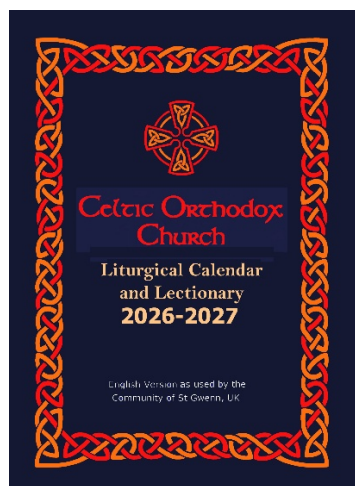
The beginning of this month focuses us on Creation and Protection. The 1st October is the Feast of the Protecting Veil. The origin of this feast is the appearance of the Mother of God at Blachernae in the tenth century. She prayed, with the people there, then took off her veil and spread it over them as a sign of protection and thus averted a barbarian invasion. So on this feast we give thanks for the protection and intercession of the Theotokos. Many now specifically seek her protection for the environment, and this links us with St Francis of Assisi, and the Feast of Creation, both celebrated on 4th October. St Francis and the Celtic Orthodox Church each holds God's Creation in the highest regard as revealing the Creator through His Creation. Accordingly at the Liturgy on 4th October we shall celebrate all these aspects.



The Protecting Veil



St Francis of Assisi



COC Liturgical Calendar and Lectionary 2026-27

In English, this Calendar/Lectionary gives the Sundays according to Celtic Orthodox usage, along with all Feast days and Celtic (and other) saints observed for every day of the year. It also gives biblical references for three daily readings throughout the year. These broadly accord with the Liturgy readings used at the COC Cathedral in Brittany.

It is coil bound, softback, at £10.00 plus delivery, and can be obtained direct from the printers at:

www.lulu.com enter reference **ID 95m8468**

Available internationally



Lord, in your mercy: Hear our Prayers
Most Holy Theotokos , Protect us
Holy St Francis, pray for us

As we pray for our Patriarch His Beatitude Metropolitan Marc, Bishop Nicolas and all our clergy and people, for the Unity of the Church, peace in the world and for all who suffer, let especially GIVE THANKS for GOD'S CREATION and pray that we may be better people within it. And so, with St Francis we pray:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is error, the truth;
where there is doubt, the faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

And, in conclusion we remember with thanks those who have gone before us, leaving this part of God's Creation to enter into the fulness of HIS LIGHT in Christ our Saviour.

All those who have died recently, and Leslie, Steve, Eva, Charles, Ellie, Eric, Fred, Penny, Monica, Margaret, Leslie, June, Metropolitan Gabriel, Derek, David, Christine, Jean-Pierre and Rodney, whose anniversaries of reposing fall this month.

Memory eternal

