



# Celtic Orthodox Church

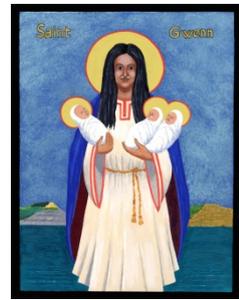
Parish of St Gwenn, Wessex

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## St Gwenn's News 47 SEPTEMBER 2016

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### Services at St Gwenn's

Sun 4 Sep – **PENT 16**  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am\*\*



Thurs 8 Sep – **Nativity of the Holy Mother of God**



Divine Liturgy 10.30am\*\*



Sun 11 Sep – **PENT 17**  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am\*\*



Wed 14 Sep – **Exaltation of the Holy, Precious and Life-giving Cross**



Divine Liturgy 10.30am\*\*



**Sun 18 Sep – PENT 18**  
**Divine Liturgy 10.30am\*\***



**Sun 25 Sep – PENT 19**  
**Divine Liturgy 10.30am\*\***

\*\* **Please note** that all Liturgies at present will subject to Fr Leonard's health. Please check before coming. The Liturgies will be shorter, and probably without sermons, for the time being.

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**From your Parish Priest**

Greetings in the Name of our Lord!

I am preparing this News in the clear blue-skied, sun-drenched, beauty and peace of Saint-Dolay in Brittany. I'm here for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of the Celtic Orthodox Church. I will give a short account of proceedings later in this News.

As always when I come to the Monastery of the Holy Presence, I carry you all in my heart, and pray that something of the peace and love found here may be yours also. And so, from a full heart I pray for:

Blessings upon you all.

Fr Leonard

\*\* Please forgive the necessity to shorten Liturgies for a while and perhaps even cancel. Hopefully my health issues will be resolved soon.

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**Silence – The Jesus Prayer**

Continuing my thoughts on the value of SILENCE. In July I quoted Abba Isidore of Pelusia: "A person who lives rightly helps us by **silence**, while one who talks too much merely annoys." And I followed that by saying that we need to expunge our thoughts and allow the stillness of the presence of God to fill our minds and our hearts. (We do well to keep a limit on the amount we speak in general, not just in prayer.)

It may seem contradictory, but many Christians find that the best way to enter 'silence' is by repeating over and over again the Jesus Prayer, or similar words or phrases. These words act like an anchor, keeping the 'boat' of our mind 'moored' with God rather than drifting away in the current of distractions. Once the words we recite become second nature to us they can flow almost subconsciously so our 'active' mind, our soul, can focus on God. Just God – not asking, not even thanking – just God, the presence of God. We will have done our asking and thanking, our soul searching and confessing, our adoration and praising, beforehand, or we will do it later. In 'silence' we contemplate God. And remember, the spiritual 'silence' we seek is not the absence of sound – that cannot always be achieved, welcome as it may be – we are seeking the mental absence of distracting thoughts.

This is not easy, and to some it may not come, but persevere. The time set aside to seek God pleases Him and will benefit our souls.

Obviously this prayer will work best once the words are learned by heart. Don't concern yourself with breathing – just let it be natural. There is a way to harness your breathing to the prayer, but first master the prayer itself, then ask about breathing if you wish.

The Jesus prayer can be said with or without a prayer rope. Most people find that the gentle moving of the fingers from knot to knot with each repetition of the prayer aids concentration.

Here are various forms of the Jesus Prayer. Choose one that suits, or adapt one to suit yourself. The essential elements are **Jesus** (this is, after all, known as the Prayer of the Name) and **mercy**.

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.* (most common usage)

*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.*

*Lord Jesus, have mercy.*

*Jesus, mercy.*

*Q Lord Jesus, grant us mercy.* (rhythmic version for use like a mantra – my favourite!)

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## **150th Anniversary of the Revival of the Celtic Church**

It was in 1866 that the Syrian Orthodox bishop Mar Boutros (Boutros ibn Salmo Mesko) who later became Patriarch Peter-Ignatius IV consecrated Bishop Julius (Jules Ferrette) and commissioned him to establish in Europe an independent Orthodox Church in the Celtic tradition. Our present Church is the fruit of an Apostolic succession which has come down to us. Notable in the restoration of our Celtic heritage has been the spirituality and writings of St Tugdual who founded our Monastery of the Holy Presence in St Dolay. This Celtic heritage has been further developed under our late Primate, His Beatitude Metropolitan Mael, and continues to be enriched by our present Primate, His Beatitude Metropolitan Marc who is to be thanked for organising such an impressive anniversary celebration which took place over three days.

### **Saturday 13 August**

In the marque provided for the occasion there were four presentations/lectures.

Jean-Pierre Rivron dealt with the Monks of St Columban in the Retz area of Brittany. He made much reference to St Philibert.

Professor Ivan Foletti gave a fast paced and enthusiastic presentation on Art and Liturgy in antiquity, dealing with the period from the Temple in Jerusalem up to the 4th and 5th centuries.

After a tasty (vegetarian) lunch Professor Matthieu Smyth gave two illuminating lectures, the first on the Spirit of the Celtic Liturgy – it is his prolific research that has helped us formulate the form of Liturgy that we use in the Celtic Orthodox Church today.

Secondly he spoke of the history of Chant as used in the ancient Church. In this he was ably assisted by Professor Damien Poisblaud who has studied ancient chant and its oral interpretation, fascinatingly demonstrated by his distinctive voice. We moved to the church for the chant examples for the better acoustics.

After all the ancient chant with its somewhat oriental tonality, we came back to the modern evenly tempered scale and key structures (universally favoured since 18-19th centuries) when we sang Vespers!

After our dinner we gathered in the church where His Beatitude Marc gave a stirring address on the history of the restoration of our Church and the Celtic spirituality that we so cherish. St Tugdual's influence was very much to the fore. We are all followed to pursue the way of true LOVE; a love of Christ that pervades every part of our lives. (I hope that in due course we may receive the text of this address)

### **Sunday 14 August: St Tugdual**

At 10am we had the Festal Liturgy of St Tugdual, founder of our monastery. The service started with a procession, carrying St Tugdual's reliquary, to the new stone Celtic cross at the top of the drive into the monastery. It is a remarkable work of art wonderfully carved with typical Celtic decoration. St Tugdual's relics were placed before the cross and HB Marc solemnly blessed the cross. Back in church the Liturgy was as beautiful and uplifting as ever and with wonderful additional music for St Tugdual.

Then came lunch – all our meals were *al fresco*.

In the afternoon there was music from a couple of groups treating us to jazz, traditional Jewish and traditional Gypsy music. It was all very accomplished and most enjoyable.

After Vespers and dinner there was the Grand Concert. Jann Fanch Kemener, a famous Breton singer, and Anne Aufret, also a renowned singer, and exponent of the Celtic harp, supported ably by a violinist and accordion player, treated us to some wonderfully performed and evocative Breton music. I am sending a sample mp3 with this News.

### **Monday 15 August: Dormition of Our Blessed Lady**

At 10am we had the Festal Liturgy for the Falling Asleep of the Mother of God. Again the music was beautiful and spiritually arousing with much additional music for the Dormition.

A long row of tables was set up in the shade along the drive – the sun was blazing down from a still cloudless sky – for our vegetarian lunch; again extremely tasty.

After a relaxing afternoon chatting and recollecting the wonderful Celebrations we had been blessed to share, proceedings ended with Solemn Vespers of Our Lady.

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I hope to have some images of these festivities to put in next month's St Gwenn's News. In the meanwhile you can see a video presentation by visiting <http://www.eoc-coc.org/medias/videos/> Be warned, however: unfortunately You-tube, to which you will be directed, follows this video with some less than seemly video options.

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## Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (2nd Aug)

Fr Leonard attended the gathering at the Roma Holocaust Memorial in Hyde Park. More details will be given in the October St Gwenn's News.

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### For our Prayers

For our Primate Metropolitan Marc and all our monks, nuns, clergy and people, and for the future of the Celtic Orthodox Church, and the Western Orthodox Communion. For the growth and renewing energy of Celtic spirituality, especially as inspired by St Tugdual, in the world today.

For Bishop Paul, at St Dolay for the Celebrations, that he may be richly blessed, now residing at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Presence, at Toms Brook, Virginia, in the establishing of this new haven of Celtic Orthodox spirituality.

For our own Parish of St Gwenn, for our commitment and growth, and for the community in which we minister. For our outreach in Devon.

For all in sickness, sorrow or distress, especially those on our prayer lists and on the hearts of all who read this. Also for those suffering through the forest fires in California and flooding in various parts of America, and for those who lost their lives. And now also for the people of Italy following the devastating earthquake; the dead, the bereaved, the injured and suffering, the shocked and homeless.

For the health of Fr Leonard, please, that God's work may continue in our parish.

For PEACE and stability in our troubled world, especially **for an end to the horrors of religious extremism, radicalisation and persecution**. For **the refugees** fleeing from troubled homelands and those endeavouring to deal with the ever growing **refugee crisis**.

For the Unity of Christ's Church – the unity He came to give us, and which we continue to shatter.

For the departed – our loved ones and those whose anniversaries fall this month: Angela, Grace, Graham, Fr Raphael (COC), John, and Trisha.

