

# Celtic Orthodox Church

Parish of St Gwenn, Wessex

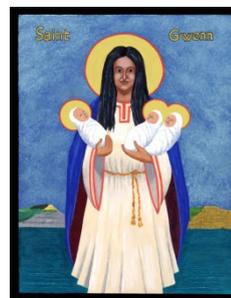
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## St Gwenn's News 52 FEBRUARY 2017

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### Services at St Gwenn's

Thurs 2 Feb – **PRESENTATION of Christ in the Temple**  
Divine Liturgy 9.30am



Sun 5 Feb – **EPIPHANY 5**  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Sun 12 Feb – **EPIPHANY 6**  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Sun 19 Feb – **EPIPHANY 7**  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Sun 26 Feb – **EPIPHANY 6**  
Last Sunday before Lent  
Divine Liturgy 10.30am



## From your Parish Priest

Greetings in Christ!

Nativity, Epiphany and Theophany behind us, and having reached the Sunday of the Wedding Feast at Cana, we bade farewell to our "white/gold" season of festivities and we are now in green until the beginning of Lent (1 March). Some people think of "green" periods – from now until Lent, then Ascension to Advent – as being dull, but this is far from the case. Not only are these "green" seasons liberally endowed with feasts of saints, but green is the basic colour of Nature, so we are living with a constant reminder of the beauty of God's Creation; very Celtic!

With the weather so kind to us during the week following Christmas, while we were staying with our friends in Cumbria, we were able to get out and enjoy the wonderful scenery both East and West of the Pennines. There is such a strong Celtic connection up there! On the Sunday that we were away I went to Mass at the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Appleby. I enjoyed the sermon and asked the parish priest, Fr Houghton, if he would be kind enough to send me the text so that I could share it with you. It follows.



Blessings to you all.

Fr Leonard

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### Mary, Mother of God by Fr Houghton (Thank you, Father)



*The Church of Our Lady of Appleby*

The feast of Mary, Mother of God, originates at the Council of Ephesus\* in AD431 in response to various heresies abounding in the Christian World at that time which revolved around Jesus being considered teacher, prophet etc, but *not* Son of God, thereby denying Mary as the Mother of a Divine Being.

Every man is born of woman in the flesh as a member of the race of Adam. He/she is also born of the Woman in the spirit if he/she is of the *redeemed* race of Christ, that is, is a baptised Christian. As Mary formed Jesus in her body, so she forms Jesus in our souls

One cannot go to the statue of a mother holding a baby, hack away the mother, and expect to have the babe. Touch her and you spoil Him. All other world religions are lost in myth and legend except Christianity. Christ is cut off from all the gods of Paganism because He is tied to a woman and to history; "Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate." Mary is our only saviour from an abstract Christ. It is easier to understand the meek and humble heart of Christ by looking at His Mother. She holds all the great truths of Christianity together as a piece of wood holds a kite.

Children wrap the string of a kite around a stick, and release the string as the kite climbs the heavens. Mary is like that piece of wood. Around her we wrap all the precious strings of the great truths of our Faith – the Incarnation, the Eucharist, the Church. And no matter how far we get above the earth, as the kite may, we always have need of Mary to hold the doctrines of the Creed together. If we threw away the stick, we would no longer have the kite; if we threw away Mary, we would never have Jesus, Our Lord. He would be lost in the heavens like the runaway kite, and that would be terrible, indeed, for us on earth.

Mary does not hinder our honouring Our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing is more cruel than to say that she takes souls away from Christ. That would mean that Jesus chose a selfish mother, He who is love itself! If she kept us from her son we would disown her! But is she, the mother of Jesus, not good enough for us sinners? We would never have had Our Divine Lord Jesus if He had not chosen her (for us too).

We pray to the Heavenly Father: "Give us this day our daily bread." Though we ask God for our daily bread, we do not despise the farmer nor the baker who help prepare it. Neither does the mother, who gives the bread to her child dispense with the Heavenly Provider. If the only charge Our Lord has against us on Judgement Day is that we loved His Mother then we will be very happy indeed!

As our love does not start with Mary, neither does it stop with Mary. Mary is a window through which our humanity first catches a glimpse of Divinity on earth. Or perhaps she is more like a magnifying glass that intensifies our love of her Son, and makes our prayers more bright and burning. God Who made the sun also made the moon. The moon does not take away the brilliance of the sun. The moon would only be a burnt out cinder were it not for the sun. All its light is reflected from the sun. The Blessed Mother reflects her Son; without Him she is nothing. With Him she is Mother of mankind. So in this dark world when mankind turns its back on the Light, Christ, we need to look to Mary to guide our feet while we await the sunrise.

Lovely Lady dressed in blue, teach me how to pray;  
God was first your little boy – you know the way!

\*The Council of Ephesus gave Our Lady the formal title *Theotokos* – bearer of God, usually rendered Mother of God – to ratify the doctrine that her Son was indeed *God*, as Fr Houghton points out. It was not intended as a title to elevate Mary herself, albeit that her role in God's plan for our redemption is of paramount importance, but rather to stress the Divinity of Jesus. *Ed*

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## Celtic Prayer

Fr Houghton also sent this prayer with his sermon. He doesn't cite the source.

Mary the Gate,	but Christ the Perfect Day
Mary the Path	but Christ the Heavenly Way
Mary the Fountain	but Christ the Cleansing Flood
Mary the Cup	but Christ the Saving Blood
Mary the Grape	but Christ the Sacred Wine
Mary the Plant	but Christ the Mystic Vine
Mary the Food	but Christ the Living Bread
Mary the Rose	but Christ the Rose Red Blood
Mary the Temple	but Christ the Temple's Lord
Mary the Shrine	but Christ is God Adored

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## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

For the first time in this area the Orthodox Church was invited to take part in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Our neighbour Fr Deacon Filip, Antiochian Greek Orthodox, led an evening Molieben (service of supplication) at Lyme Regis Anglican church, and we hosted the service of the Ninth Hour here at St Gwenn's one afternoon, followed by three meditations related to the theme of Reconciliation.

The various services were reasonably well attended, but mostly by people from the host churches. Hopefully we can try for greater inter-denominational participation next year. We were pleased to welcome an Anglican and two Free Evangelicals at St Gwenn's. Fr Leonard attended most of the services to make our presence in the Vale more widely known.

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## Presentation of Christ in the Temple

On 2nd February we celebrate the Feast of the **Presentation** of Christ in the Temple. It is, perhaps, better known in Orthodoxy as the **Meeting** in the Temple because the child Jesus was met by Simeon and Anna. And then again, the Feast is sometimes called the **Purification** of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her forty days since childbirth being up – a less fashionable title these days. Or yet again, **Candlemas**, as we light candles recollecting Simeon's words, "To be a Light to lighten the Gentiles." There is something to be learned from each of these titles.

Let us *present* ourselves at the altar of Christ. Let us *meet* him there and be nourished and *purified* by His Body and Blood, that we may have the grace and strength to fulfil His will for us in our lives.....and to *present* Him, the *Eternal Light*, to the world.

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## From St Seiriol's Hermitage, Anglesey



Our Monk Deacon writes:

"What is this life, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare." So the poet William Henry Davies wrote. The problem is, in the hurly burly of life with deadlines to meet or employers and clients to satisfy, bills to pay, etc, standing and just observing what's around us can be a tall order. Aha, I hear, easy for you to say, as you are monk. This is true now. However, when I was practising professionally, my working year was divided up into appointments on a cyclical basis from week one through to week eight, then back to week one, so I am very aware of how life can be unbelievably stressful.

This week, as I ambled along at the speed of rocket propelled snail (I need gentle exercise according to the doctors) with Nellie my Labrador, the above line of poetry wandered into the vacuous space that is my mind. From that moment, as I looked across at Snowdonia, covered in snow, I could really begin to see all the contours in sharp relief. It was majestic!

It has been so calm and quiet here of late, not even a zephyr moving the foliage. The lake and the estuary at high tide were like glass. Although most of the waterfowl were still as statues, it would seem, from what I saw, that love is in the air. And the daffodils are poking their heads out.

Work has started on renovating the inside of the Hermitage. A whole make over is intended. I will take before and after photos. I have the best part just helping; I am the tea boy and push a broom about now and again.

Fr Deacon Cwyfan

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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 Bishop Paul and the Monastery at Toms Brook. For the growth of the parish there.

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

For PEACE and stability in our troubled world. For an end to the horrors of religious extremism and radicalisation. For all persecuted Christians and other religious and ethnic groups. For the refugees forced to flee their troubled homelands and those endeavouring to deal with the refugee crisis.

For America and its people as they begin a new chapter in their history.

For all in sickness, sorrow or distress, especially those on our prayer lists and on the hearts of all who read this. Please continue to remember Fr Deacon Cwyfan who awaits news his probable by-pass surgery.

For the departed – Alan, Henry, Clifford, Joy, Joyce, Sylvia, Pauline, Olga, and Rose (Bp Paul's Mother).

