



Celtic Orthodox Church

Parish of St Gwenn, Wessex

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St Gwenn's News 74 – JANUARY 2019

Services at St Gwenn's

Sun 6 Jan – EPIPHANY

Tone 1

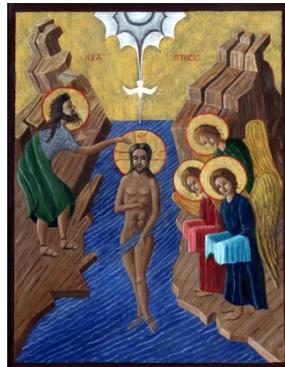


Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Sun 13 Jan – THEOPHANY

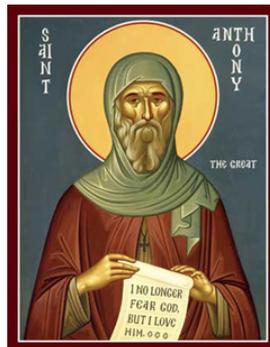
Tone 2



Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Thurs 17 Jan – St Anthony the Great of Egypt



Divine Liturgy 9.00am



Sun 20 Jan – THEOPHANY 1

Tone 3

Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Fri 25 Jan – Conversion of S Paul



Divine Liturgy 9.00am



Sun 27 Jan – THEOPHANY 2

Tone 4

Divine Liturgy 10.30am



From your Parish Priest

Greetings! **Happy New Year!**

It doesn't seem possible that it was nineteen years ago that we celebrated the new Millennium. One wonders will we, this time *next* year, all be granted 20 20 vision! if only!! For now, let me wish you all a very blessed 2019. May the Lord be your help and support and guide you in all you do; and may He keep you safe and healthy.

But I am ahead of myself: I do hope that the Christmas we shall be celebrating as this News sheet goes out will be a deeply joyous festival with its true meaning fully acknowledged and made part of our celebrations, and, indeed, part of our lives. The Incarnation of our God, the 'Emmanuel,' the 'God with Us' is a crucially significant factor in mankind's relationship with God. Without the Incarnation, the Word made flesh, there would be no Salvation through Calvary and the Resurrection; and no Immortality. And as we celebrate Jesus' birthday let us not forget His Blessed Mother whose cooperation was needed to fulfill God's plan for our Reconciliation – may God give us grace also to cooperate with Him and be reconciled, for it is with Grace, God's Grace that we are saved. Let us beware lest we turn away from that Grace.

I know that many of you passionately wanted to leave the European Union. How frighteningly precarious the achieving of this has become, and what confusion and chaos we are now in. Don't worry; I'm not becoming political, just sharing how much we need prayer this time.

The Lord be with you!

Loving blessings to you all,

Fr Leonard+

“Not a lot of people know that!”

The Mother of God, Mary Most Holy, features on many of our Christmas cards, but, sadly, she remains something of a stumbling block to many Protestant Christians. I have felt inspired to highlight a couple of common misconceptions which relate to her.

1 Ye Watchers and ye holy ones

This excellent and rousing hymn contains a verse which thousands of Protestants happily sing, totally unaware that they are praising Mary. The writer, Athelstan Riley (1858-1945), cleverly paraphrases the most popular Orthodox *megalynarion* (hymn praising or magnifying Mary):

Megalynarion

More honourable than the Cherubim,
and more glorious beyond compare than the
Seraphim,
without defilement you gave birth to God the
Word.
True Theotokos we magnify you!

Ye Watchers and ye holy ones

O higher than the Cherubim,
More glorious than the Seraphim,
Lead their praises, Alleluya!
Thou Bearer of the eternal Word,
Most gracious, magnify the Lord,
Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya
Alleluya!

2 Immaculate Conception? Original Sin?

It is absolutely amazing how many people, even some Christians (!!), think that the term *Immaculate Conception* refers to Jesus' miraculous virginal conception through the power of the Holy Spirit. Of course it is *not*. The conception referred to is Righteous Anna's conceiving Mary, our Blessed Lady.

The possibility, even probability, of Mary's having been free from sin from birth, or even conception, has been hinted at by some of the Fathers of the Early Church, or at least, they have sometimes said things that could, retrospectively, imply the concept, but the idea of an 'immaculate' conception was not specifically mentioned until the 12th or 13th century. But this was not a view subscribed to by all. In the Roman Catholic Church the Immaculate Conception has only been formal dogma since 1854 when it was declared *ex cathedra* by Pope Pius IX. The Orthodox Church does not subscribe to this doctrine.

To clarify the Orthodox position - we are *all* conceived without sin, *personal* sin. The Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception states that Mary was conceived free from ORIGINAL SIN, but that is based on the flawed Augustinian concept of Original Sin. This Latin Western view is that we all inherit Adam's *guilt*, and are tainted with his sinfulness. The Orthodox view, however, is that we all suffer the *result*, or punishment, of Adam's sin, that is to say, mortality, but *not* his guilt. Thus, there is no 'original' sin free from which Mary, or any of us, need to be conceived.

Mary's sinlessness, her purity, her immaculate life, etc, are as a result of her personal obedience to God's will and her strength and resolve to commit no personal sin. If we make Mary different - immaculately conceived - then we take away from her free-will choice not to be sinful.

On the Feast of the Conception of the Theotokos by Anna the Orthodox celebrate the miracle that sterile Anna conceived in her old age.

Whatever view we take we must surely all agree that Mary, the Mother of God, was an exemplary model of a faithful servant of God, giving us, through her cooperation in God's plan, an example to endeavour to follow in our obedience to the will of our Saviour.

Fr Leonard

For our Prayers

For our Primate Metropolitan Marc, Bishop Paul and all the monastics, clergy and people of the Celtic Orthodox Church.

For the Unity of Christ's Church throughout the world; for a greater willingness for Christians to rejoice in what they hold in common....and for a greater understanding of the importance of Mary, the Mother of God's, place in God's plan for Salvation.

That 2019 may see PEACE in our troubled world; that the love of God may touch the hearts of all.

For our Country as we prepare to depart from the European Union.

For all for whom this New Year will not be happy.

For all in sickness, sorrow or distress; for those devastated by conflict; for the persecuted; for the starving – especially in YEMEN; for refugees; for hostages; for the homeless; for those affected by storms, flooding, earthquake or fire.

For the departed – Sybil, Archpriest Michael, Fr Anthony, oblate, Alan, Brenda, Fr John, Eric, Sylvia, Bob, Ted, Chrissie and Brenda whose anniversaries of reposing fall this month.

Memory Eternal.

