

THE NEW ICON OF ALL THE SAINTS OF THE ISLES

Available from Orthodox England, A5 (half A4) format.

Price: £5 or \$10 for 10 copies, post free. Please send cash in carefully sealed envelopes to:
12 Garfield Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 7PU, England



The ever-memorable Archimandrite David of Walsingham, was known to many of us. Some fifty years ago now, Mark Meyrick (as he then was) was received into the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) from Anglicanism. He soon came under the influence of earlier ROCOR missionaries, indirectly of St John of Shanghai, and directly of another former Anglican, Fr Lazarus (Moore).

Fr Mark, as he had by then become, went to live, serve and paint icons near the Roman Catholic/Anglican shrine at Walsingham in Norfolk. This had come into being in the Middle Ages, following a typically Catholic apparition of the Virgin Mary in 1131. From there Fr Mark issued a much-appreciated annual Orthodox calendar and spread the veneration of local saints who had been forgotten by almost everyone except for some English Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics. He also had many short hymns to native, especially Celtic, saints written.

In particular, it is to Fr Mark that we owe several icons of local saints painted at that time, and, above all, his inspired Icon of All the Saints of the British Isles and Ireland. (Not merely ‘of the British Isles’, because that would exclude Ireland, and not merely ‘of Great Britain and Ireland’, because that would exclude islands like the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and many others).

Fr Mark lived very poorly, without the resources to study Church history and hagiography. He had to rely on outdated scholarship of the Anglo-Catholic variety. Fr Mark tended towards the unhistorical concept that the only pure historical Church in the British Isles was the ‘Celtic’, accepting the myths of a non-existent ‘Celtic Church’. His Icon of All the Saints of the British Isles and Ireland therefore included many obscure and even legendary figures, such as Sts Fugatius and Damian, St Socrates and Stephen and St Joseph of Arimathea (not legendary, but his presence in Britain is). Therefore, for instance, the apostle of Ireland, St Palladius, was omitted from his Icon – presumably because he headed a mission sent from Rome.

Fr Mark also omitted from his Icon many other very major saints. These included St Ethelbert of Kent, St Chad, St Botolph, St Benedict Biscop, St Wilfrid, St Edfrith of Lindisfarne, St John of Beverley, St Ceolfrith, St Bede the Venerable, St Willibrord, St Oswald of Worcester and St Walstan in England. He also overlooked major Irish saints such as St Enda, St Finnian, St Ita, St Finbar and St Columban; major Scottish saints like St Flannan, St Fillan, St Comgan and St Ronan; major Welsh saints like St Cadoc, St Cybi, St Paternus and St Teilo; and major Cornish saints like St Rumon, St Piran and St Samson. Finally, the order in which he portrayed the 105 local saints whom he selected for the Icon is sometimes surprising geographically. This has been corrected as far as possible in the new Icon which we have commissioned, which includes 110 local saints, giving 120 figures in all.

In the new Icon, entirely inspired by the old one, we have made a conscious attempt to select the major saints of the Isles, differing in about one third of cases from Fr Mark’s choices. Apart from Christ the Saviour, the Most Holy Mother of God, the Holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John and the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, four Apostles are included because of their

links with these islands. These are the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul because they are said by ancient, pre-medieval sources to have come to Roman London, the Holy Apostle Andrew, Patron-Saint of Scotland, and the Holy Apostle Aristobulus of the Seventy, because he evangelised in Britain. On the Icon there also appears St George the Victorious, the second Patron-Saint of England. Here too are some different choices from those of Fr Mark.

Having grown up without any Church background, in the 1960s I had been haunted by the presence of then unknown and quite mysterious, forgotten saints who lived around me. These were especially Sts Edmund, Albright (Ethelbert), Audrey, Botolph, Cedd and Osyth. Back in the 1970s, without any support, I had begun researching the lives of such Saints of the Isles and writing their lives, using all the academic sources, but in an accessible and Orthodox way. I commemorated them using a revised version of Orloff's translation of the General Menaion, which I had photocopied at Cambridge University Library. That was a vital missionary tool.

Seeing the extraordinary lack of services to local saints, some thirteen years ago, I then began composing some services to them in the hope that others would compose better ones in due course. I also encouraged another, far more able than myself, to compose many more such services. Seeing another crying need, some nine years ago, I composed the service to All the Saints of the Isles, which was inspired by the service to All the Saints of the Russian Lands. This was again out of local need. Since then, this service to all the Saints of the Isles has found acceptance in many jurisdictions, both in these islands and in North America, usually on the third Sunday after Pentecost.

Altogether, twelve saints are listed from Wales, ten from Ireland and fourteen from Scotland, making thirty-six saints. Together with the sixteen Celts who enlightened England, in effect this means that fifty-one saints (St Palladius was Gaulish) or nearly half the saints portrayed, are in fact Celtic. This has been balanced to reflect the Anglo-Celtic nature of these islands, since there are fifty-one who are English. Some may still question why there are only fifty-one Celtic saints. Most of the problem here is to do with their Lives. Unfortunately, a great many Celtic saints have no life (or else a fictional one, sometimes written almost 1,000 years after they lived). As a result, we often do not know which century they lived in, where they lived, what they did, or even if they were male or female and how to spell their names.

In other words, we have tried to select saints, of whom we have more than just a name and a late legend. This means saints who are well-known, either internationally, nationally or else regionally, rather than those who have only ever been known or even heard of in a tiny area or tiny village. This does not of course in any way mean that a parish cannot add its own locally venerated saints. Indeed, we have also been careful to include saints known in relatively small areas, like the Isle of Skye, the Hebrides, the Orkneys, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, so that these areas should not feel left out in some way.

We have not included contemporary saints associated with these islands. These include: The New Martyrs Alexandra and Elizabeth (both grand-daughters of Queen Victoria - the catechism of the former began in Windsor Castle), St Nikola (Velimirovic) and St Justin (Popovich) (both of whom studied at Oxford), and St John of Shanghai, whose diocese included these islands for twelve years. We feel that their associations with the Isles were too brief and none of them reposed here.

Inside St John's Orthodox Church in Colchester, we have a chapel dedicated to all the local saints, with their icons and copies of the services to them. It is our hope that this new Icon of all the Saints of the Isles will also find acceptance among the native peoples of these Isles and their descendants overseas. As for the inspired Fr Mark, later Archimandrite David, a pioneer and working without support in very difficult conditions, who preceded me in the missionary work of ROCOR, we can only pray with immense gratitude:

To the ever-memorable Archimandrite David – Eternal Memory!

Archpriest Andrew Phillips,
St John's Orthodox Church,
Colchester, Essex

All Saints Sunday 2012