

The Orthodox Monastery of Saints Ninian and Cuthbert



Isle of Mull, Inner Hebrides, Scotland



The Hebrides

- around 150 main islands;
- less than 50 inhabited;
- total area: 7,200 sq kms (2,800 sq mi)
- total population: around 40,000

OUTER HEBRIDES

ISLE OF MULL

INNER HEBRIDES

Isle of Mull



- * that entire region of the Atlantic coast is a **Designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**.

Isle of Mull: the mountains



Isle of Mull: the mountains



Isle of Mull: Sunrise



Kilninian (Church of Ninian)



✱ the church is our property since 2010.

Kilninian History

- * built in **1755**;
- * on the foundation of a much older church;
- * a 1561 document: Kilninian belongs to the ***Monastery of St Columba, Iona***;
- * two implications: (1) Kilninian was originally a ***monastic place***
- * (2) it could be as old as the ***seventh century***

Kilninian recent history

- * belonged to the Church of Scotland;
- * deconsecrated in the 1980's;
- * bought by a group of Catholic monastics, who tried to re-establish a monastery;
- * 2010: the Catholic monks left Mull and donated Kilninian to the Romanian Orthodox Church, under the condition that the place will become a monastery.

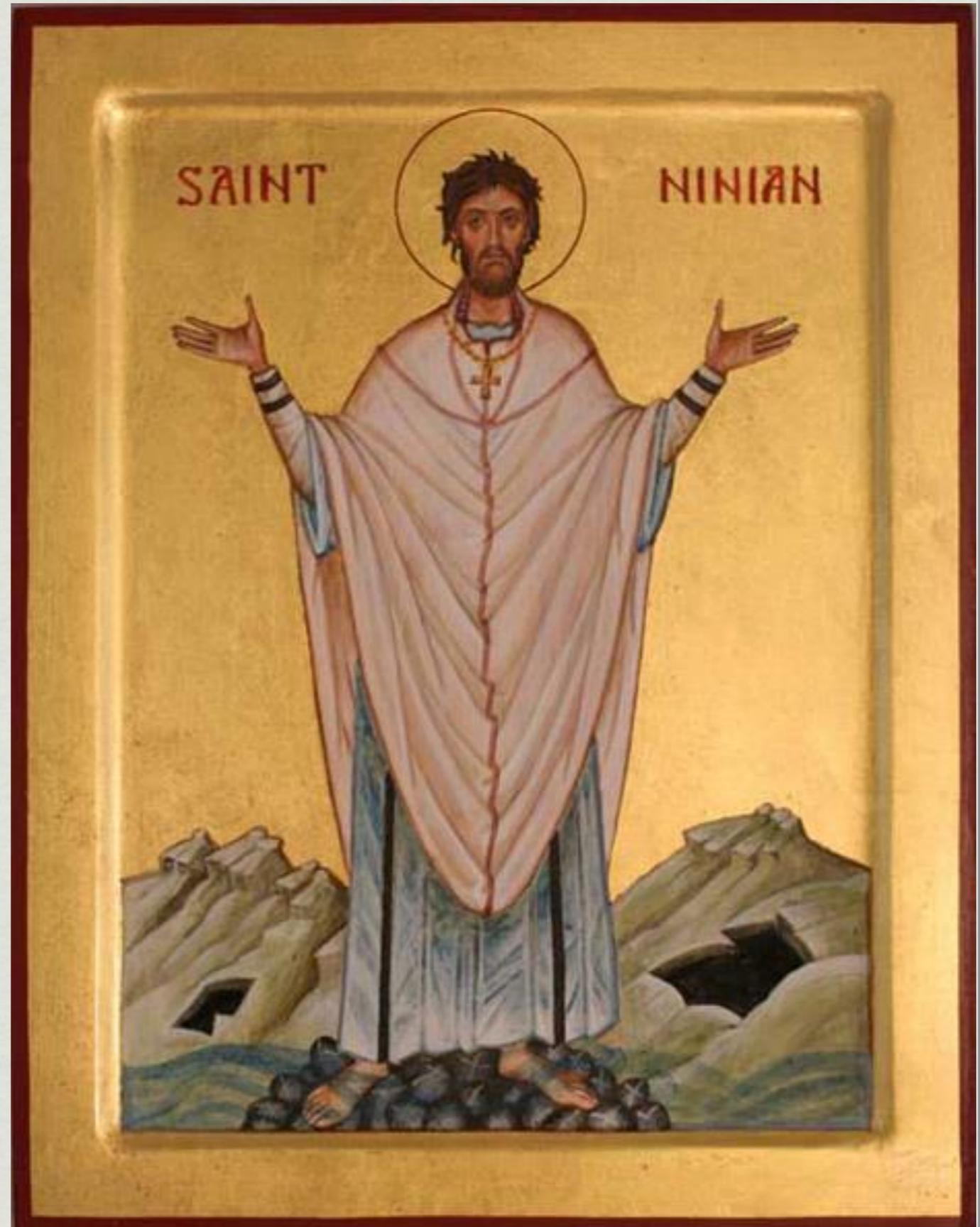
In June last year, **His Eminence, Metropolitan Joseph**, visited Kilninian for the first time, and gave me the blessing to found the first Orthodox monastery in the Hebrides in over a millennium.



- * Kilninian will also be the second monastery in the UK; the other one is St John the Baptist Monastery in Essex, founded in 1959 by Archim Sophrony Sakharov.

Saint Ninian

- ✿ St Ninian's community in Whithorn, founded around 397, is Scotland's first Christian monastic community.



St Ninian of Galloway

- ✱ What we know of St Ninian comes mostly from Venerable Bede's 8th century History, who based his account on oral traditions going back to the 5th century; these stories tell of a holy man named Nynia, who introduced the Christian faith into Scotland more than a century before the coming of Saint Columba.
- ✱ St Ninian is regarded as the first major preacher of the Gospel to the people living in Britain north of the Wall—that is, living outside the territory that had been under Roman rule.
- ✱ St Ninian also preached throughout southern Scotland, south of the Grampian Mountains and even the Lake District of England. Like St Patrick (a generation later) and St Columba (a century and a half later), he was a principal agent in preserving the tradition of the old Christian British Church and forming the character of Celtic Christianity.

*Rather than a founder of large monasteries, St Ninian was a bishop with a hermit's calling; we know that, for many years, he used a cave on the Solway shore south of Whithorn as a retreat. We celebrate St Ninian's Feast Day on the 16th of September, his date of departure to the Lord (in 430).





St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne

- ✿ St Cuthbert's popularity and the love which surrounds him and his cult surpass those of all other English Saints. He was a Northumbrian monk whose life was full of prophetic grace, who was visited by angelic hosts, leader of one of the major monasteries in seventh century England, converter of kings, a reluctant bishop and, above all, possessed by a saintly longing for a life of solitude and prayer.







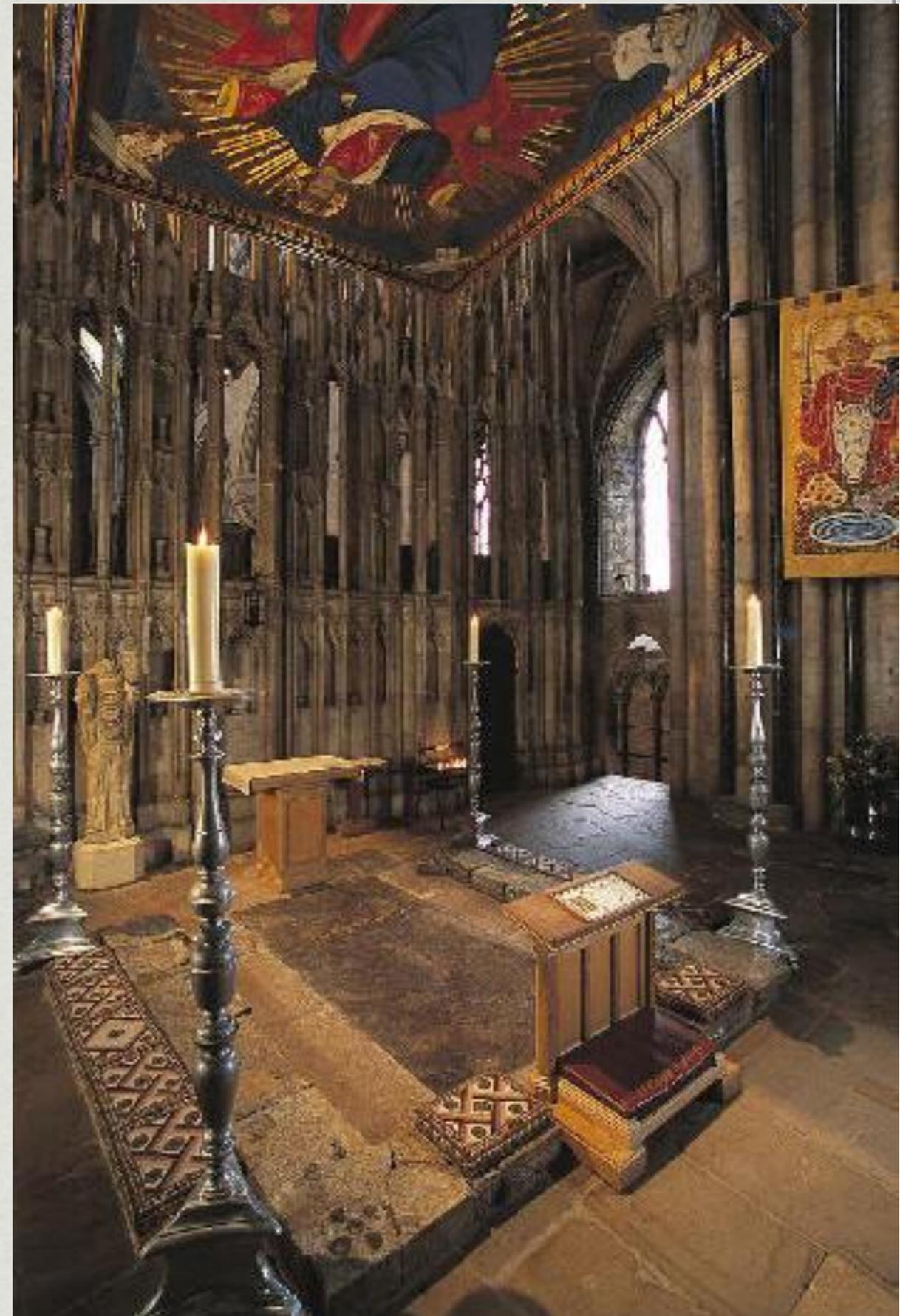


- * One of the most beautiful stories concerning St Cuthbert reveals something of the depth of his prayer life.
- * As the Saint had the habit of leaving the monastery after dark, the Elder asked one of the brothers to follow him.
- * The monk saw St Cuthbert head toward the sea-shore and get into the cold waters of the North Sea, where he would spend the whole night in prayer.
- * When the day broke, St Cuthbert returned to the shore and collapsed on the sand, while several otters covered him and dried him with their bodies.
- * When asked why he was doing this, St Cuthbert said: 'so that I always have death in front of me, and thus never lose sight of God during my prayer.'



- * In 676, Cuthbert at last entered the life of solitude he had always longed for, establishing a little hermitage on the Farne Island, a long row away from Lindisfarne.
- * From this time, we know another story concerning his life of prayer: because he found that the sound of the waves disturbed his prayer, the Saint build a circular wall surrounding him; later on, because he felt the beauty of the sky took his attention from God, he completely covered his fort, thus becoming Christianity's perhaps only hermit and recluse at the same time.

- * In A.D. 684, his fiftieth year, Cuthbert was elected bishop. Only when a large delegation including the king of Northumbria himself sailed to his island hermitage to plead with him did he accept the burden laid on him. However, after less than two years he returned to his hermitage, three years before his death on March 20th, 687.
- * St Cuthbert's body was buried at Lindisfarne, but in 875, fearing a Viking invasion, the monks carried it away. His relics, buried in the monastery church, had been found to be incorrupt and the source of several miracles. The community took up the saint's body in its wooden coffin and carried it away, taking other relics as well, including the famous Lindisfarne Gospel book. Thus began a long pilgrimage which continued for many years – indeed, for generations – before they settled at last at Durham. There in the 12th century the coffin was opened once more and the saint's body found to be still incorrupt.



Kilninian: Present situation



- ✦ The church is a grade-B historical monument.

Legal Implications for a Historical Monument:

- * it is against the law to change the use of the building;
- * we cannot alter its original architectural structure;
- * we **are** allowed to paint the interior walls;

Legal Implications for an Outstanding Natural Beauty Area

- * new buildings are strictly regulated by the Argyll and Bute Council & Historical Scotland Commission;
- * new buildings (when approved): should not affect the scenery; must not be seen from the road; should be smaller or equal in size with the neighbouring buildings; must preserve the architectural style of the area and must use local building materials.

What all these legal limitations mean for Kilninian:

- * in over ten years, the Catholic monks were not given a building permission and could not find any land for sale;
- * our own first application was rejected;
- * we now have the pre-approval for our second application: their rules & an architect with experience working in the Hebrides;
- * we have applied for the official building permission;
- * we need the land on which to build.

The Land situation

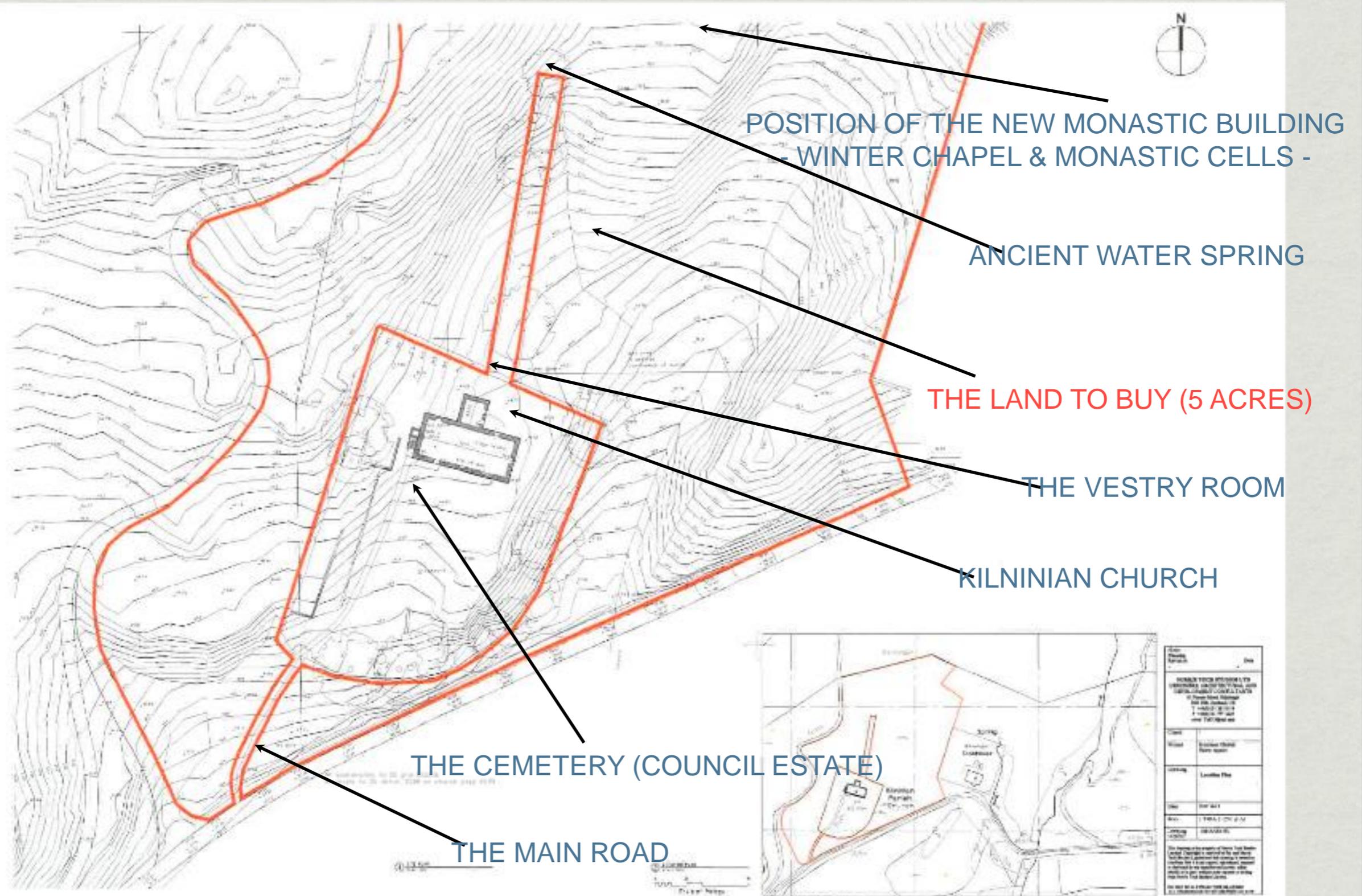
- ✿ At the moment, the church has no land, no toilet and no running water.
- ✿ Kilninian is surrounded by an ancient cemetery, which belongs to the local Council.



The Land situation: buying land

- * very difficult to find a seller, especially nearby;
- * last September we signed a contract with the Torloisk estate;
- * 5 acres of land surrounding the Church;
- * cost: 65,000 pounds (100,000 dollars);
- * two options: to buy the land (payment until September 2014) or to start paying rent (4,000 pounds / year).

The land



What owning the land means to the future of the monastery:

- * we can draw drinking water from the spring on the property (at the moment, there is no running water);
- * we can build a septic tank (at the present, there are no toilets on the property);
- * we can build the future monastic cells;
- * we can offer accommodation for pilgrims coming to the Monastery or going to Iona;
- * Orthodox monasticism can return to the Hebrides.

The future: the monastery building

- South-side view -



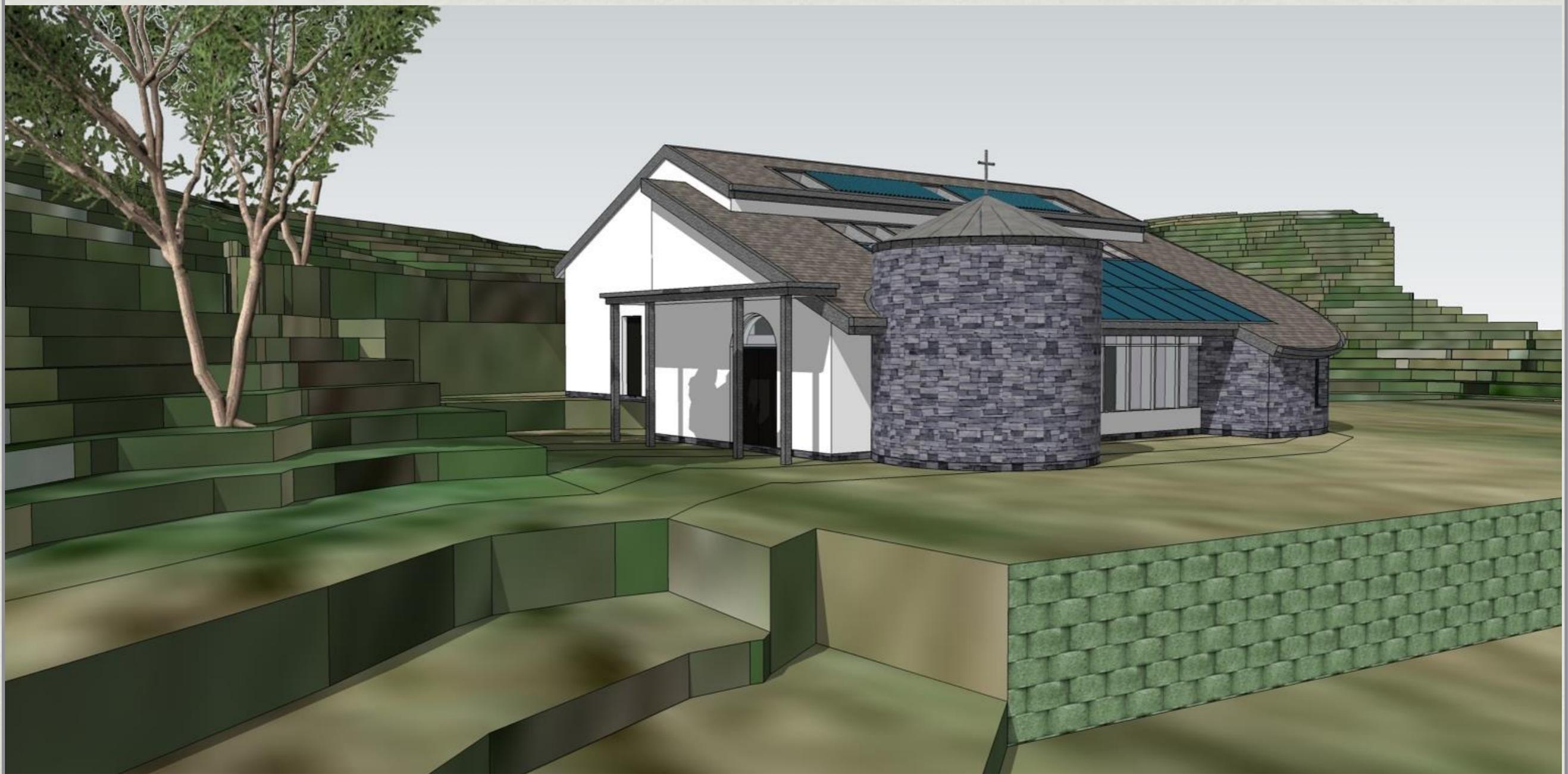
The monastery buildings

- North-side view -



The Winter Chapel & New Monastic Cells





- * our architect has experience building on the Isle of Mull;
- * we use local, Hebridean stone;
- * alternative energy sources.

Until then:



✱ Kilninian's Vestry Room

Legal matters: Kilninian Trust

- * The monastery is governed by Kilninian Trust;
- * A registered UK Charity (in process);
- * the Trustees: British residents; at the moment, we have two Romanian nationals and three British nationals, including a non-Romanian English Orthodox priest (Fr Prof Andrew Louth).

Kilninian Trust: Objectives

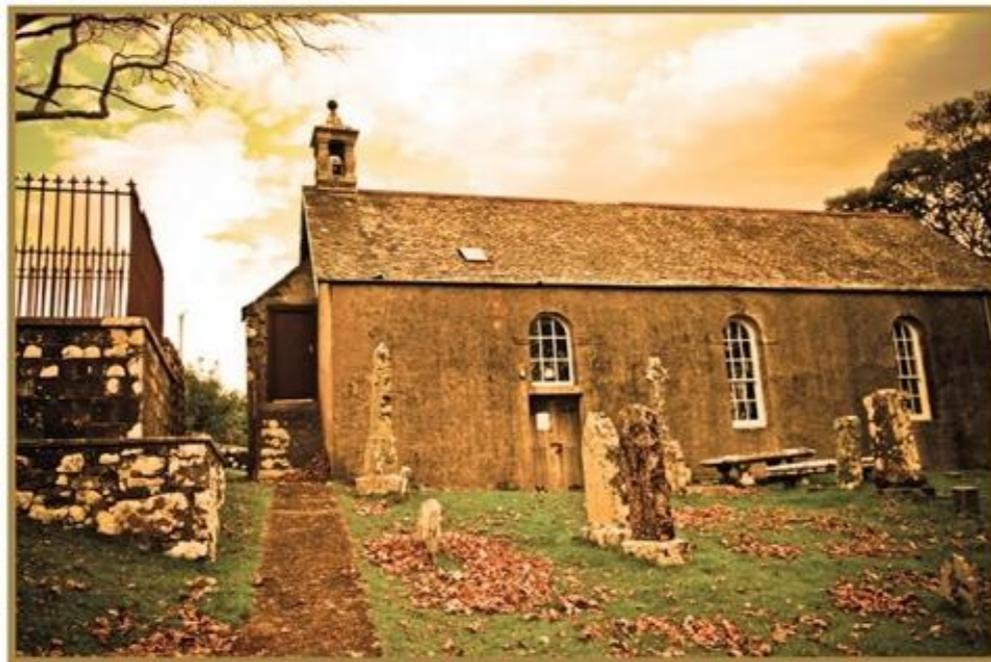
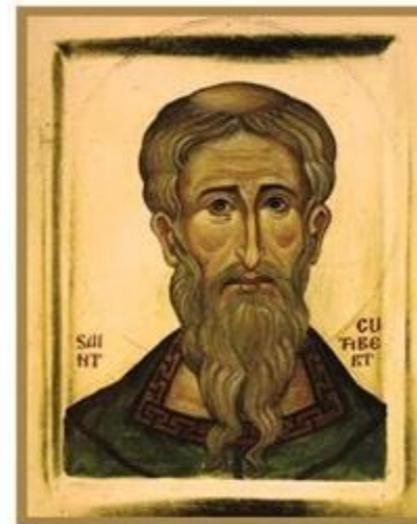
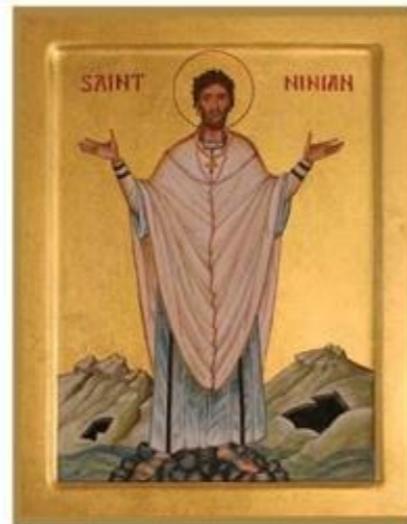
- ✱ to support the return of Orthodox monasticism in the Hebrides;
- ✱ to promote Orthodox worship in the English language;
- ✱ to support the Orthodox parishes in the UK, of all ethnic and cultural traditions;
- ✱ to organise and support pilgrimages to St Columba's Monastery on the Isle of Iona, by offering accommodation and a place of worship;
- ✱ to re-introduce the local population to their ancient Celtic Orthodox Christian roots;
- ✱ to publish and distribute written material (books and journals); to organise icon-painting workshops; to organise Christian retreats.

The neighbouring Isle of Iona & the Monastery of St Columba



- * To get to Iona, one must first get to Mull;
- * The two isles are ten minutes away by ferry;
- * Mull Monastery can offer a place of rest and worship for the pilgrims to Iona.

mullmonastery.com
PLEASE SUPPORT US!



'Sts Cuthbert and Ninian icon©Aidan Hart'

✳ In English: www.mullmonastery.com

✳ In Romanian: www.manastireamull.com