About Fr. Seraphim Aldea

My history with the UK started in 2003, when I was awarded a Chevening (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) scholarship for an MA at Warwick University, Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies. It was during this time at Warwick that I got to know more about the Hebrides and fell in love with the place. After I got back from Warwick, I went straight to Rasca monastery in Bucovine, Romania.

I should mention perhaps the brief pilgrimage I made to Moscow before going to the monastery. I studied in Moscow for three winters (literally!) between 1999 and 2001, and it was during my time there that I returned to the Church.

 I often hear stories of conversion that took long and painful years; with me, it all happened in an instant, that instant when I first saw the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God, in the Tretyakov Gallery. At breakfast that day, I was a non-believer; when the night fell that same day, I was praying for the first time, before a small copy of that icon (which I carry with me at all time).

After my pilgrimage to the Vladimir Icon, I enter the monastery and was tonsured as a monk in 2005 (on the Feast of Annunciation; March 25). Later that same year, on the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross (September 14), I was also ordained a priest.

In 2009, I was granted an AHRC scholarship for doctoral studies, so I returned to England and started working on my PhD at the University of Durham. After defending my thesis in March, 2014, I was awarded a Leverhulme postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Oxford, Department of Theology and Religion. My work at Oxford will begin in January 2015, and will last until the end of 2017.

By then, God willing (and with your support), we hope to buy the land surrounding the church and to build the accommodation needed to move on Mull permanently. The great thing about my fellowship at Oxford is that I shall have enough money to support myself, so I can now say to you all that I every single penny (and every single cent) of your donations will go exclusively towards funding the monastery. Glory be to God for all things!

The orthodox monastery of all Celtic Saints

The monastery of St. Ninian and St. Cuthbert is the first Orthodox monastery in the Hebrides in over a millennium and the first Orthodox monastery in the UK since 1959.

The existing Church dates back to 1755 and is built on the ancient location of a 6th century Celtic monastery. More recent history of the church includes the few years when Fr. Stephen and his small community tried to found a Catholic monastery around Kilninian. When they changed their plans and moved instead to mainland Scotland, they very generously donated the church to the Orthodox Church, under condition that Kilninian would still be used as the home of a monastic community.

At the present moment, with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph, we have started the necessary work in order to turn Kilninian into the first Orthodox Monastery in the Hebrides. This includes restoration work for the church itself and building work for a small number of new cells for the future monastics. This will be a monastery for nuns, with services held in the English language.

It was also decided that the Church will remain dedicated to Saints Ninian and Cuthbert, while the Monastery will celebrate the Feast of All Celtic Saints (the second Sunday after Pentecost). Sts. Ninian, Columba, Aidan and Cuthbert, our Celtic Orthodox Saints, have lived on the Hebridean Isles of Scotland in the early centuries after Christ.

The monastery owns the church and the surrounding five acres of land. A monastic community of nuns is waiting and praying to inhabit the monastery. Father Serafim is trying to raise funds to build the living quarters on this land. Contributions are US tax deductible and can be sent to the Sister Monastery in Colorado; checks should be written to: **Protection Monastery / SCOTLAND Monastery, P.O. Box 416, Lake George, CO 80827**. Alternatively, donations can be made online, via PayPal (all major cards accepted), at http://mullmonastery.com/donate/us-donations/

Please consider making a contribution towards the founding of this historic monastery; you can help bring Orthodoxy back to the Celtic Islands and re-establish a 6th century Orthodox monastery! No amount is too small for the Glory of God and His Saints!