

Holy Hierarch Nathalan of Tullich

Commemorated: January 8/21

By Dmitry Lapa – source: OrthoChristian.com

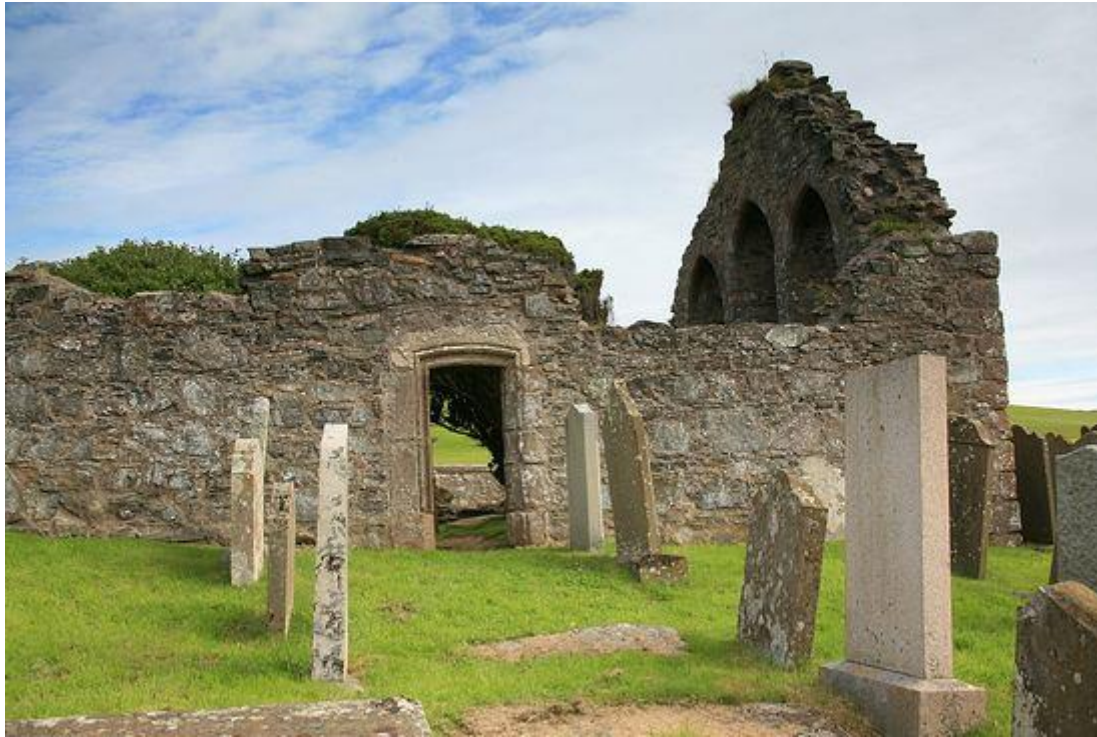


Ruins of Chapel of Sts. Mary and Nathalan in Stonehaven

St. Nathalan (born in the early seventh century, died 678) hailed from a noble family in eastern Scotland. Deciding to dedicate his life to the service of God, he distributed his large estate among the poor. After that the saint became especially famous for the fact that he earned his living by ploughing up the land, “which brings you closer to Divine contemplation.” St. Nathalan used to say that work in the field was in some sense a sort of penance for him. The saint cultivated the land and grew vegetables, feeding the people during a disastrous famine. He combined his labours in the field with ascetic labours: he continually prayed, fasted and led a solitary life in utter poverty. At the same time he excelled in having a profound knowledge of both secular and Divine sciences.

St. Nathalan successfully preached the Word of God to pagans. On becoming a bishop in Scotland (probably near Aberdeen), the holy bishop settled in Tullich not far from what is now Aberdeen, where he continued to earn his living by the labour of his hands, living in poverty and distributing all his earnings to paupers. The original name of Tullich was Tulachnathlak which meant “the knoll of Nathalan”.

(After the Reformation the saint's name was removed from the place-name and it was renamed Tullich). St. Nathalan built many churches, for example in Tullich, Bothelim and Colle. As a bishop the saint of God actively struggled against Pelagianism, and it is much to the credit of Nathalan that this heresy did not affect Scotland. St. Nathalan of Tullich is mentioned in early Irish calendars. He is still venerated in the Scottish county of Aberdeenshire of which he is one of the chief apostles and patrons.



Cowie

Kirk (photo from Mapio.net)

After the repose of Nathalan his relics were enshrined at the church of Tullich, where a great many miracles occurred. There is a typically Roman Catholic legend telling how this saint became a bishop. Once a violent wind ruined the ascetic's harvest and the hermit began grumbling at God for the misfortune that befell him. At once realizing his sin, he with tears repented from the bottom of his heart. The saint put one of his feet and his arms into irons and threw the key into the River Dee. On doing this he resolved to make a pilgrimage to Rome to atone for his sin. As soon as he reached the gates of Rome a youth who was selling seafood offered him a fish – and the key to the irons was found in its stomach. Learning this, the Pope of Rome decided to consecrate St. Nathalan a bishop.



Tullich

Kirk, Aberdeenshire (photo by Colin Smith)

In Tullich, pilgrims can still visit the ruins of the church (now called Tullich Kirk) that was once erected by Nathalan. To the north of the town of Stonehaven in Aberdeenshire survive the ruins of a chapel in honour of Sts. Mary and Nathalan – the saint may once have built a church there himself. The structure is also known as “Cowie Chapel”. It overlooks the North Sea and is regarded as one of the oldest ecclesiastical structures in the area. There is also the ancient Coull Kirk in Coull, Aberdeenshire, which was originally built by Nathalan.



Coull

Kirk, Aberdeenshire