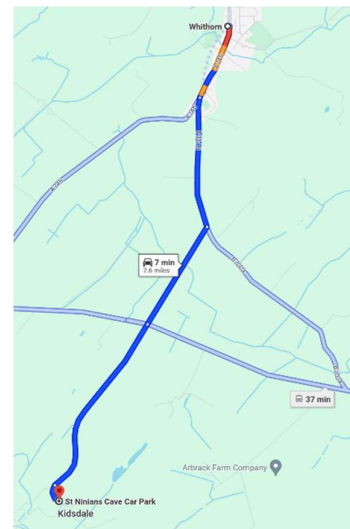
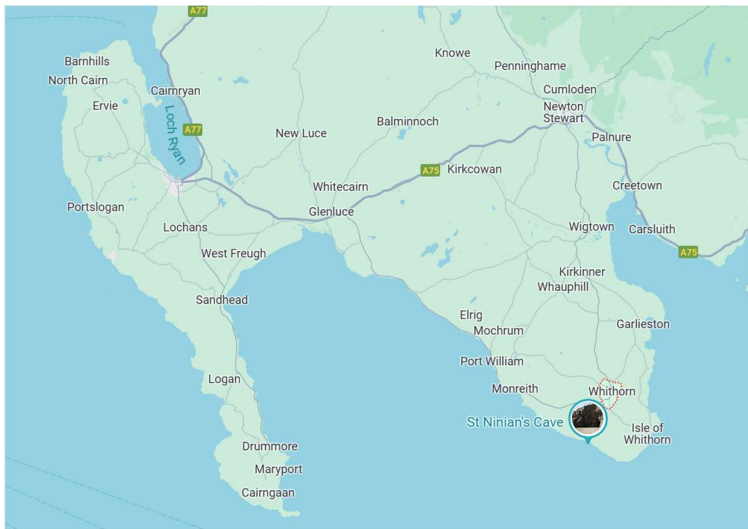


NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE TO SAINT NINIAN'S CAVE SUNDAY 30th AUGUST 2026

On the last Sunday of August each year, a Galloway diocesan pilgrimage to St Ninian's Cave, Whithorn takes place and Mass is celebrated on the shore at Port Castle Bay where Saint Ninian is said to have retreated for prayer. St Ninian, son of a Roman chieftain, was ordained bishop in Rome and returned to proclaim the Gospel in south west Scotland around 397.

While there was a strong tradition of pilgrimage to the burial place of St Ninian in Whithorn before the Reformation, only in 1924 was the pilgrimage resumed in its modern form.

Mass will be celebrated outdoors on the beach of Port Castle Bay at 4 pm on Sunday 30th August 2026. The principal celebrant will be Bishop Frank Dougan, Saint Ninian's successor, and he will be joined by other bishops and priests from Scotland. A well-established footpath about one mile long takes you through the glen to the shore, and to be in place for Mass at 4 pm it is recommended to begin the walk by 3 pm. Pilgrims are invited to visit the church of St Martin and St Ninian in Whithorn on the way to the beach. The Sacrament will also be available on request by approaching a priest on the shore or in the town before Mass begins.



The walking path to St Ninian's Cave begins about 2½ miles from Whithorn village. There are signposts on the B7004 road for St Ninian's Cave. There is ample parking for cars and coaches. Stewards will be on hand to direct the parking. Portable toilets are available at the car park. Strong shoes should be worn for walking through the glen and on the pebble shore. Suitable clothing should be worn according to the weather since the congregation will not be under cover. First aid will be available.

For those unable to walk to the shore, Mass will also be celebrated at 4.45 pm in the Church of St Martin and St Ninian in Whithorn village. The celebrant will be Bishop Joseph Toal.

There are some small cafes and tearooms in Whithorn village but you may wish to bring a packed lunch. There are public toilets on the approach to the Priory, and portable ones behind the church of St Martin and St Ninian.

The Whithorn Trust operates a visitors centre which will be open on the day of the National Pilgrimage and more information can be found at www.whithorn.com. A visit to the centre includes the chronological story of the development of Whithorn, the upper Gallery "Whithorn Cold Case" exhibition and special exhibition "Face to Face with Whithorn's Bishops", now including facial reconstructions of Bishops Henry and Walter and the magnificent Whithorn Crozier; the ticket also includes access to the Iron Age roundhouse reconstruction via guided tour, and the Historic Environment Scotland Museum of early mediaeval carved stones. The ruins of the medieval cathedral are behind the Whithorn Trust visitors centre.

Parishes bringing a group of pilgrims, especially if travelling by minibus or coach, are asked to register their group by contacting whithorn26@rcdg.org.uk. Should anyone need further information, please email the same address.