

NEWSLETTER

for the Churches of St Arvans, St Mary, Penterry,
St Deiniol, Itton, St James, Devauden & Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg
forming part of the Severn Wye Ministry Area

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

St Arvan's Church is open during the day both for worship and private prayer, Following the lifting of Covid restrictions, Holy Communion may once again be received in both kinds, although there is, of course, no obligation to do so. Our live-streamed services are as follows: Sunday Eucharist at 10. a.m., and a reflection & celebration of Night Prayer on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. They can be accessed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/vicaragecello1/> and are available to watch at any time The St Arvans Parish website can be found here: <http://www.starvanschurch.org.uk/>

Please help to keep us informed of anyone who is in need or is isolated over the next weeks and months, and anyone in need of our prayer and support
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27th August 2023
The Twelfth Sunday
after Trinity
Proper 16

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray and to give more than either we desire or deserve: pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be for ever, and my deliverance will never be ended. [51. 1-6]

Reader / This is the Word of the Lord
Response / Thanks be to God

Psalm 138

R/ O Lord, your love endures for ever;

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise. I will bow down towards your holy temple and praise your name, because of your love and faithfulness; For you have glorified your name and your word above all things.

R/ O Lord, your love endures for ever;

When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me. All the kings of the earth will praise you, O Lord, when they have heard the words of your mouth. They will sing of the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord. Though the Lord be high, he cares for the lowly; he perceives the haughtiness from afar.

R/ O Lord, your love endures for ever;

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me. The Lord will make good his purpose for me; O Lord, your love endures for ever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

R/ O Lord, your love endures for ever;

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans [12. 1-8]

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually

we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord
Response / Thanks be to God

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
You are Peter and on this rock
I will build my Church.
And the gates of the underworld
can never hold out against it
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

[St Matthew 16. 13–20]

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ

A Prayer of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.
(The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament)

For Your Prayers

For the Church, that what we believe may be seen as central to our lives
For Amy & Matthew, & all those recently married and those preparing for marriage.
Those who suffer as a result of the climate emergency
Responsible stewardship of our planet
For compassion and responsibility in those elected to govern us.
The people of Ukraine
For migrants & refugees, and all forced to flee from their homelands

For the Church:

For the bishops of the Church:
Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth, Philip, Episcopal Visitor of the Society of the Holy Cross in Wales, Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury. & for all who hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles.
All bishops, priests and deacons and all baptised Christians
For the reunion of all Christians: for Pope Francis, for Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, & for the leaders of the Reformed traditions
For the Severn Wye Ministry Area, for its priests, licensed lay ministers and all its people.

For the Sick & those in need:

Roy Staples, Ralph Hamilton, Sylvia; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Elisabeth; Michael; Lisa; Anne-Louise; Nick; Helen; Abigail; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron; Ken Reece

For the Departed:

The recently departed; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall this week:
Tanya Blanchard

The Jereboam Interview

We continue our series of extracts from the Jerusalem and Galilee Gazette, an imaginary first-century newspaper. Week by week the correspondent Jereboam interviews various people whose lives have been affected in some way by Jesus Christ and his teaching.

Our thanks to the Parish of St Catharine's Chipping Campden & to the author for permission to reproduce 'Jereboam'

Rabbi Joseph

Jereboam: Today I am speaking with Rabbi Joseph, who will be well known to many of our readers in Caesarea Philippi. Rabbi Joseph, you've recently taken an interest in the teachings of Jesus, haven't you?

Rabbi: Yes. Many people had spoken to me about him enthusiastically. Finally last week I was able to attend one of his...well, "meetings" seems too grand a word for it...one of his sessions.

Jereboam: And your reaction?

Rabbi: I was quite bowled over, to tell you the truth: such integrity, such humility – and such an engaging man. But really, you know, a lot of his teaching isn't that different from what the rest of us might say, if only we had the courage of our convictions. During the past week I've realised that lots of passages from the Scriptures relate very closely to Jesus' message, except that he doesn't water them down, as other people tend to do – myself included. Take, for example, a couple of texts that I've read in the last few days: "The Lord is my light and my help" and "You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you". Now what Jesus would say, if I've grasped him correctly, is: "The Lord AND NOBODY ELSE is my light and my help" and "You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you ALL THE TIME." He just gives it to you straight.

Jereboam: I must say I'm surprised at his popularity, given the uncompromising nature of his message.

Rabbi: I couldn't agree more, but look at them all, young and old, flocking to him. You know, I'm often told I need to make my teaching more relevant to modern life. Well, Jesus turns all that on its head: it's not a question of him making

himself relevant to modern life – he challenges you to make modern life relevant to his message.

Jereboam: So you'll continue your interest in his teaching?

Rabbi: Definitely: we can all learn, even at my age.

Jereboam: I'm glad to hear that.

Thought for the Week

“Since love grows within you, so beauty grows. For love is the beauty of the soul.”

St. Augustine

THIS WEEK

Keys are central to readings for the Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time. The first reading from Isaiah offers the story of the faithful servant Eliakim, who will be given the keys for his master's palace. Paul's brief reading from the Letter to the Romans is a moving prayer filled with awe at the depth and unknowing ways of our Lord. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus asks his followers what people are saying about him. Then he asks the real question, “Who do *you* say I am?” Peter's direct answer, “You are the Christ” prompts Jesus' reply that Peter would be given the keys to the kingdom of heaven and would be the rock upon which his church would be built.

This week we have the Memorial of St. Augustine and the Memorial of the Passion of John the Baptist.

The first readings this week are from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, the oldest book in the New Testament. The letters are affectionate and frank reminders of the humiliation and challenges that Paul met in preaching to this community he loved so much. These readings are a reminder that the letters of Paul were just that - letters to teach, encourage and support early communities of Christians.

Matthew's Gospel this week includes stories of Jesus strongly challenging the Pharisees. He saw how they made people's lives so difficult by their insistence on the rules and appearances while neglecting mercy and good faith. He chides them for paying attention to the extraneous and not the message: “Blind

guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!” His criticism grows stronger: “On the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.” Jesus teaches about preparation: Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.“ In the parable of the ten maidens who go out to meet the bridegroom, many of the women did not prepare for the meeting and do not have enough oil for their lamps and Jesus says again, “Stay awake.” Saturday's gospel is the dramatic story of the three servants who are given resources by their master and rewarded or punished for what they did with the resources they had.

Next Sunday we see a glimpse of the Prophet Jeremiah who understands the pain of following the Lord and decides not to speak the Lord's name again, “but then it becomes like fire burning in my heart.” St Paul's letter to the Romans encourages those ancient Romans - and us - not to conform to this age but to discern the will of God. In St Matthew's Gospel, Jesus corrects his disciples' resistance to his own passion and death, telling them that if they try to save their lives, they'll lose them. “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

A homily for Trinity 12

+ In today's Gospel Jesus asks his disciples: *‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’*

And it's an important question, perhaps the most important of all. Jesus doesn't ask it in a casual way - just throwing out a request for gossip, but - because who he is is so central to his mission, he wants to know what people are saying about him. And his disciples respond by saying, *‘Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’* - that is, someone in a long line of those who had witnessed to the reality of God and have proclaimed it to the people of Israel, and who in popular religious feeling of the time were somehow expected to return and herald the liberation of the people of God at the end of the world.

But Jesus doesn't leave it at that: he says to his disciples - and I suppose

this means those closest to him, the Apostles: *‘But who do you say that I am?’* That is, it's all very well to repeat what other people are saying about me, but you - who are closest to me, who know me best - who do you say that I am?

And Peter's response is very clear: *‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’*

Peter recognises that Jesus isn't simply one of the long line of prophets, but is the Christ - literally ‘the anointed one’ who stands in a completely unique relationship with the Father - essentially the confession of faith which we ourselves will repeat (in a more developed form put together by the Church Fathers) when we stand and say the Nicene Creed in a few minutes' time.

Peter's declaration of faith has the ringing quality of truth - as Jesus himself says of an insight, not just acquired naturally by living in close proximity with him, but by a divine revelation which brings human understanding, a knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures and sheer gut instinct together. It stands with that other statement of belief made by Peter's fellow Apostle, Thomas in St John's Gospel when he is finally confronted with the reality of Christ's resurrection: “My Lord and my God.” And the *timing* of Peter's statement here is also important, because it happens just before the Transfiguration, when he and the other apostles, James and John, see Christ in his glory as an anticipation of the Resurrection and seen in the company of Moses and Elijah. In other words Christ is not only the latest in the line of God's messengers - or the reincarnation of one of them - but is himself the fulfilment of everything that had been promised by God from the beginning. And, allied with the Transfiguration, is Jesus' prediction of the necessity of his own death in order to fulfil his divine mission. And he follows it up with the his call for all his followers to unite themselves to him in his death and resurrection: to die to ourselves in order to live for him and with him. So – let's go back to the beginning - that question of Jesus: *‘But who do*

you say that I am? has an importance far beyond its immediate context - in other words it's addressed to us as well as to his first disciples - it's *the* existential question which is addressed to every individual in every generation: 'Who do *you* say that I am.'

Every age - every historical era - perhaps even every generation - has had its own view of what we might call the "who, what and why" of God. Human culture changes, evolves, uses the kinds of imagery and story-telling which is relevant to its needs and its situation. That's inevitable, of course - the message is one which we need to be able to understand, even if the reality remains the same. But that's not an invitation to have our own subjective or esoteric opinion of who Jesus might be. It's quite clear from the Lord's reply to Peter's response, 'You are the Christ, the son of the living God' that not every opinion of him is equally valid: '*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.*'

But what this is, is an invitation to reflect upon our own relationship with Christ. Who do we think he is?. How do we encounter him in our lives? Who is Jesus for us? It's an invitation to reflect on a tradition of faith which says quite clearly that he is God's own answer to the deepest questions and longings of the human heart. It's an invitation through prayer and service to explore and deepen that relationship

'Who do you say that I am' is a crucial question for each one of us. And we can only answer it both by what we say and - *crucially* - what we do - by the way we live our lives. +

Services in our Churches:

TODAY:

27th August 2023:

The 12th Sunday after Trinity

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
Hymns (*New English Hymnal*)
388; 427; 357; 457
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St Deiniol's, Itton

*The Eucharist will be celebrated
this week each day (except Monday)
at 9 a.m.*

NEXT SUNDAY

3rd September 2023:

The 13th Sunday after Trinity

9 a.m. Family Service at Devauden
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St Mary's, Penterry

Readings at the Eucharist:
*Jeremiah 15. 15-21; Psalm 26. 1-8;
Romans 12. 9-21; St Matthew 16. 21-28*

What's On

St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat

2.30-4 p.m. at the Meeting Rooms
Everyone Welcome

Saturday 9th September

*And every second Saturday
of the month*

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

**St Arvans
Vicarage Garden
Late Summer Barbecue**

**Now Today!
SUNDAY August 27th
7 p.m.**

Tickets £12

Please bring your own chairs
and drinks

In aid of St Arvans Church funds

**Devauden Photography
Competition is here
again!**

The 12 best photos will star in the
2024 calendar, and will be displayed in
the church in September.

Photos must be taken within 5 miles of
the Wesley Statue on the village green
in Devauden, and have been taken
since 1st July 2022.

Closing date: 4th September.

Email your entries
to devauden.photos@gmail.com

St James Church, Devauden invites you to

Sponsor a Slate

to help much needed roof repairs.
£10 per slate. Forms available from
Devauden Village Shop.
Please help to preserve this wonderful
listed building.

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**Friday 15th September:
Autumn Fashion Show**
in the St Arvans Memorial Hall.
7.30pm.

Tickets £10 to include a glass of wine.
Tickets available from Jean Papps
or in church, or from
starvanschurchnews@btinternet.com

In aid of St Arvan's Church

Ministry Area Prayer

Dear Lord,
we thank you for the opportunity
to work together as a Ministry Area.
May we engage with each other
with faith and encouragement.
May we manage each situation
with wisdom and mutual respect.
May we serve with integrity,
creativity and purpose.
May we speak with openness
and gentleness.
May we offer our gifts, time
and finances with generosity.
May we face each challenge
with courage and the desire
to grow through it.
May we all be drawn deeper
into our relationship with you
and be known as your disciples.
Help us to show your love, proclaim
your Good News and grow your Kingdom
in this place.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
our Lord and Saviour. **AMEN**

A Prayer for Ukraine

written by Ukrainian Christians

O Lord our God, look down with
mercy on the Ukrainian people.
Protect and save them from the unjust
aggressors who seek to subdue them.
Grant them steadfast trust in your
mercy and protection.
O Mother of God, who gave us your
miraculous icon at Zarvanytsia,
intercede for the Ukrainian people,
who run to the shelter of your mercy
in their times of need.
O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on
us. Grant peace and protection to the
people of Ukraine. Give them strength
and courage to defend what is good,
right, and holy. Keep them safe from
harm and provide for all their needs,
both temporal and spiritual.
Hear our prayers, O Lord, and deliver
us from distress, for You are merciful
and compassionate and love mankind.
To you we give glory: the Father,
the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

**The Severn Wye Ministry
Area Prayer Group meets
each Thursday at 7.30 p.m.
In one of our churches
All are welcome!**

31st August

St. James, Devauden

7th September

St. Mary's Priory, Chepstow

14th September

St. Deiniol, Itton

21st September

St. Christopher, Bulwark

28th September

St. Andoenus, Mounton