

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
Fr Michael Gollop,
The Vicarage, St Arvans
01291 622064;
Mobile 07867803479
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

1st October 2023

**The Seventeenth Sunday
after Trinity**

Proper 21 A

The Collect

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through 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 Ezekiel

The word of the LORD came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die. Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

[18. 1-4, 25-32]

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

Psalm 25, 1 - 9

**R/ Remember, O Lord,
your compassion and love.**

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;
my God, I put my trust in you;
let me not be humiliated,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
Let none who look to you
be put to shame;
let the treacherous be disappointed
in their schemes.

**R/ Remember, O Lord,
your compassion and love.**

Show me your ways, O Lord,
and teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all the day long.

**R/ Remember, O Lord,
your compassion and love.**

Remember, O Lord,
your compassion and love,
for they are from everlasting.
Remember not the sins of my youth
and my transgressions;
remember me according to your love
and for the sake of your goodness,
O Lord.

**R/ Remember, O Lord,
your compassion and love.**

Gracious and upright is the Lord;
therefore he teaches sinners
in his way.

He guides the humble in doing right
and teaches his way to the lowly.
All the paths of the Lord are love
and faithfulness
to those who keep his covenant
and his testimonies.

**R/ Remember, O Lord,
your compassion and love.**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians [2; 81-13]

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full

accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

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

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth
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.

When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?’ Jesus said to them, ‘I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?’ And they

argued with one another, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” he will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “Of human origin,” we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And he said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, “Son, go and work in the vineyard today.” He answered, “I will not”; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, “I go, sir”; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.’

[St Matthew 21.23–32]

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 we may live out in our lives what we profess on our lips
For a successful harvest and for all who work in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and in the fishing industry.
Those who suffer as a result of the climate emergency
For 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; Lisa; Anne-Louise; Helen; Abigail; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron; Ken Reece; Margaret

For the Departed:

The recently departed; Michael Morgans; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Doris Williams

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'

Sephtan

Jereboam: I've understood correctly, have I? Paul doesn't encourage competition.

Sephtan: That's right. As Jesus said, "If anyone has a mind to be the greatest, he must be the last of all, and the servant of all."

Jereboam: I can't help thinking that you'll have to change that attitude from

time to time. Members of the Church still need to earn money, don't they? That's bound to involve competition of some sort. Or is it that you're happy to compete, but just not with each other?

Septhan: I don't see a problem. Jesus' teaching asks us to follow the path of love, and to choose right over wrong. None of that depends on competition or money.

Jereboam: I sometimes wonder whether you people actually achieve anything practical, though. What you say could describe a dreamy sort of existence where nothing actually gets done.

Septhan: Oh no -- we're very active people...or most of us are. I'd have thought that obeying God's will should provide sufficient motivation for anyone. Don't get me wrong -- I realise that we need to earn money. Having said that, though, you obviously can't allow financial considerations to take over your sense of morality. All sorts of dubious actions and decisions can appear quite justifiable, as soon as they are rewarded with money.

Jereboam: Yes, I agree. On the other hand, work's pretty hard to come by these days. It's admirable to be last instead of first, but you can't just allow everyone else to take on all the work.

Septhan: Jesus was pretty clear about things. He assured us that the same God who cares for the birds in the air will ensure that we have nothing to worry about. Anyway, you'll appreciate that we have to follow the demands of our faith. By the way, how much do you pay us for these interviews?

Jereboam: What?

Septhan: Don't worry, Jereboam: it was a joke. Things were getting a bit heavy...

THIS WEEK

On Sunday we hear St Paul exhorting the church at Philippi, "Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus," offering us a powerful image of Jesus' humble, self-less service. In St Matthew's Gospel Jesus offers a story about two sons, one who agrees to work in the vineyard but doesn't; the other who tells his father he will not work but then quietly goes to work. It is a story that challenges the chief priests and elders of the people, "Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you."

This week we celebrate the feast days of the Guardian Angels on Monday, Saint Francis of Assisi on Wednesday, and on Saturday Our Lady of the Rosary.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week continue with the prophet Zechariah writing in the period of recovery after the exile. "They shall be my people, and I will be their God, with faithfulness and justice." The Book of Nehemiah, like Ezra, chronicles this history. The prophet Baruch gives us a prayer of the people in captivity and God's reply, "Fear not, my children; call out to God!"

We continue with readings from St Luke's Gospel, as the disciples argue about who is the greatest. Jesus points out a young child and asks them to strive to be the "least" not the greatest. Jesus stops his disciples from preventing people, not of their group, from healing, because they are with Jesus, too. He stops the disciples from "calling down fire from heaven" on the Samaritan people who didn't give them a good reception. People come up, offering to follow Jesus, but have excuses for why they can't do it now. Jesus calls them to not "look back" once they have said, "yes." He sends his disciples to other towns: "The harvest is rich but the workers are few." Jesus warns the people blessed by the graces of his visits there, but who have not changed their ways. He prays, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike."

Next Sunday we hear a parable about tenants who were entrusted with their master's fields. Jesus challenges the religious leaders with this story of the tenant farmers who refused to listen to the master's servants (the prophets) and abused and killed his son (Jesus) in an attempt to usurp his inheritance. Jesus tells them, "Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

A homily for Trinity 17

+ Most people are aware of that classic comment of St Augustine: "God make me good, but not yet." St Augustine went on to become one of

the greatest writers, theologians and Saints of the early Church, but his remark does highlight the ambivalence of much of the human response to spiritual realities.

It's a natural if fallible human reaction. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews had it right when he says, "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Once we allow God into our lives without trying to hold anything back, we lose control and life will never be the same again. The following of Christ makes demands, it's not always a comfortable ride. St Augustine, with the formidable insight that he had into the psychology of faith, recognised that fact way before his final conversion. Hesitation is a natural response perhaps to something unseen and therefore, we think, less immediate. We can put off making a decision.

But unseen doesn't necessarily mean unreal. At this time of year, the Church celebrates two feasts of the mysterious, the unknown and the unseen, the feast of St Michael & All Angels which was last Friday and that of the Guardian Angels tomorrow. They remind us that the greatest reality there is, is one which we cannot now see and touch and feel, but is all around us nevertheless. John Henry Newman, another saint who was well aware of the personal, psychological aspects of faith, said this, "*Persons commonly speak as if the other world did not exist now, but would after death. No: it exists now, though we see it not. It is among us and around us.*"

That's something which, of course, makes our response to faith now all the more vital, even if we have a tendency to say 'yes' and 'no' at the same time.

And today's parable in the Gospel seems to have been addressed precisely to this situation. Jesus asks us to pay attention to those two words we've already spoken of which either influence our lives or can send them off in a new direction. 'Yes' and 'no'. Those two very simple words which can have a profound effect on the direction of our lives. If we mean them. And if we mean them, we will

act upon them. Otherwise we don't really mean them.

The parable, as all the parables, is very familiar in terms of our own experience. This kind of thing happens over and over again. The first son, at his father's request to go and work in the family vineyard, declared quite openly: "No, I will not go."

We are not told why he refused. He could have been lazy, he could have been reluctant to change his plans for the day, he may have felt put upon and always being unfairly asked to do things. However, he changed his mind. again we are not told why. All that comes across from Jesus' words is that he reconsidered his initial response and turned up for work after all.

The second son in contrast to his brother said an equally emphatic "yes" to his father's request. But he didn't act on it. Again we don't know why. He may have forgotten, he may have thought it wasn't urgent, he may never have intended to go in the first place. All we do know is that his 'yes' gives way to a very emphatic 'no'. Now, although we might like to think we would be completely unlike either of the sons and that we would have said 'yes' in the first place and meant it and go on to act on it, we have to recognise that at some level there is a part of each son in us. We know very well that sometimes our actions do not always match our promises or our good intentions. We sometimes give our word but don't always keep it in all kinds of ways and situations. We turn our 'yesses' into 'noes'. This is at the heart of Jesus' attack on the scribes and Pharisees, the religious establishment of his day, and it's directed at all kinds of formalism in religious faith. In effect, he's saying that the Pharisees and scribes say 'yes,' like the second brother in the parable, but don't go to work in the vineyard. They profess to do the God's will, but don't carry it out in the way they live. If what we say and what we pray isn't reflected in what we do - in the way we live our lives and the way we treat others - then what value is there in that? And that's the point Our Lord is making when he says to the chief priests and the elders

- the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you.

But, of course, the opposite can happen too. Some people may in the beginning throw up their hands in horror and revulsion and say, "no, that's not for me," but as time goes on they begin to see things differently and change their minds. Lots of people come into a relationship with God that way. Throughout the history of the Church we are presented with people who in various ways knowingly or unknowingly had said 'no' to God, and then later changed their minds and the direction of their lives and became heroic men and women of faith - Saints. St. Augustine, I suppose, is the classic example, but there have been many others, including St Francis and Ignatius of Loyola . No one will be judged by a single act or by just one stage of his or her life, but by the whole of their lives.

So, as those who have made a solemn commitment in baptism to following Christ, in order to fulfil our promises we have consciously to hold on to, deepen and reinforce our initial 'yes' to God. And that means giving our full attention to daily prayer, regular worship, service to others, a willingness to grow in faith by whatever means present themselves to us in the course of our lives. We have to learn to see God in all things as St Ignatius would say. And that means we have to keep on struggling however difficult, however dried up, things seem to get.

We can fail, we can fall down, we can miss the mark - or whatever metaphor we want to use - and still be redeemed by the grace of God. In fact this is the experience of each one of us.

Every 'no' of the past can be turned into a 'yes.' There is always time to reconsider our decision because whatever we do or say, or don't do and not say, we can still hear the call of grace as Christ waits to invite us into his Father's kingdom. We think we are searching for him, but in reality he is searching for us, and he is not that easily put off. +

Thought for the Week

"You cannot all abandon your possessions, but at least you can change your attitude about them. All getting separates you from others; all giving unites to others."

*St Francis of Assisi
Feast day 4th October*

Services in our Churches:

TODAY:

1st October 2023:

The 17th Sunday after Trinity

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

Please note: The Eucharist will be celebrated Tuesday - Saturday at 9 a.m. (this is no service on Mondays)

NEXT SUNDAY

8th October 2023:

The 18th Sunday after Trinity

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. Harvest Thanksgiving Liturgy at St Deiniol's, Itton

Readings at the Eucharist:

*Deuteronomy 8. 7-18;
2 Corinthians 9. 6-15; St Luke 12. 16 - 30*

What's On

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.

St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat
2.30–4 p.m. at the Meeting Rooms
Everyone Welcome

Saturday 14th October
*And every second Saturday
of the month*

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

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

5th October: St. Peter's
Church, Newchurch

12th October: St. Tewdric's
Church, Mathern

19th October: St. Thomas a
Becket's Church,
Shirenewton

26th October: St. Thomas a
Becket's Church,
Shirenewton

2nd November:
St. Arvan's Church

9th November: St. Tewdric's
Church, Mathern

Future dates to follow

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.**