

# 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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The Vicarage, St Arvans  
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E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

**5<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**The First Sunday  
of the Kingdom**

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday before Advent*

## The Collect

Almighty and eternal God,  
you have kindled the flame of love  
in the hearts of the saints: grant to us  
the same faith and power of love, that,  
as we rejoice in their triumphs, we  
may be sustained by their example  
and fellowship; 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 Micah

Thus says the Lord concerning  
the prophets who lead my people  
astray, who cry 'Peace' when they  
have something to eat, but declare  
war against those who put nothing  
into their mouths. Therefore it shall  
be night to you, without vision and  
darkness to you, without revelation.  
The sun shall go down upon the  
prophets, and the day shall be black  
over them; the seers shall be  
disgraced, and the diviners put to  
shame; they shall all cover their  
lips, for there is no answer from God.  
But as for me, I am filled with power,  
with the spirit of the Lord, and with  
justice and might, to declare to Jacob  
his transgression and to Israel his sin.  
Hear this, you rulers of the house  
of Jacob and chiefs of the house  
of Israel, who abhor justice and  
pervert all equity, who build Zion  
with blood and Jerusalem with wrong!  
Its rulers give judgement for a bribe,  
its priests teach for a price, its  
prophets give oracles for money;  
yet they lean upon the Lord and say,  
'Surely the Lord is with us! No harm  
shall come upon us.' Therefore  
because of you Zion shall be ploughed  
as a field; Jerusalem shall become  
a heap of ruins, and the mountain  
of the house a wooded height.

[3. 5-12]

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

## Psalm 43

**R/ Give judgement for me, O God,  
and defend my cause**

Give judgement for me, O God,  
and defend my cause against an  
ungodly people;  
deliver me from the deceitful  
and the wicked.  
For you are the God of my refuge;  
why have you cast me from you,

and why go I so heavily, while the  
enemy oppresses me?

**R/ Give judgement for me, O God,  
and defend my cause**

O send out your light and your truth,  
that they may lead me,  
and bring me to your holy hill  
and to your dwelling,  
That I may go to the altar of God,  
to the God of my joy and gladness;  
and on the lyre I will give thanks to  
you, O God my God.

**R/ Give judgement for me, O God,  
and defend my cause**

Why are you so full of heaviness,  
O my soul,  
and why are you so disquieted  
within me?  
O put your trust in God;  
for I will yet give him thanks,  
who is the help of my countenance,  
and my God.

**R/ Give judgement for me, O God,  
and defend my cause**

## A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

You remember our labour and toil,  
brothers and sisters; we worked night  
and day, so that we might not burden  
any of you while we proclaimed  
to you the gospel of God. You are  
witnesses, and God also, how pure,  
upright, and blameless our conduct  
was towards you believers.

As you know, we dealt with each one  
of you like a father with his children,  
urging and encouraging you and  
pleading that you should lead a life  
worthy of God, who calls you into his  
own kingdom and glory.

We also constantly give thanks to God  
for this, that when you received  
the word of God that you heard from  
us, you accepted it not as a human  
word but as what it really is, God's  
word, which is also at work in you  
believers. [2. 9-13]

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

### Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Speak, Lord, your servant is listening:  
you have the message of eternal life.  
**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.

**A**s Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' Jesus answered them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, "I am the Messiah!" and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs. 'Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But anyone who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end

will come.

[St Matthew 24. 1-14]

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 always live in faith, hope and love. hope of the  
For Sophia and Louis to be baptised today  
The faithful departed  
The peoples of Israel and Gaza  
& for peace in the Middle East  
The people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to the war there  
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.  
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; Margot Davies.

### For the Departed:

The recently departed; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Sylvia Gravelle; Richard Clay; Donald Voss; George Sherwood; Donald Sunderland; Vera Witts

### 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'*

### Harpist

**Jereboam:** I'm not expert on harp-playing, but that sounded lovely to me.

**Harpist:** It's kind of you to say so, but really I could have done so much better if I'd practised properly. The stupid thing is that I didn't think I ought to practise.

**Jereboam:** Why ever not? Isn't that what you musicians are supposed to do?

**Harpist:** You're right, of course. It's just that I was thinking about something Jesus said not so long ago. He was warning us that we can expect to be treated pretty harshly by other people, if we follow him – even to the point of being arrested and punished like criminals. "You are not to prepare your defence," he said; "I myself shall give you eloquence and wisdom." So I thought, "Well, if Jesus will inspire us with the right words in a really difficult situation like that, surely I have only to lay my fingers on my harp, and he'll allow me to create beautiful music. So I should have faith, and I shouldn't practise: that would be like preparing my defence." But, if you'll forgive me for contradicting you, I tried that just now and made a bit of a fool of myself.

**Jereboam:** I suppose that your instrument wasn't made by someone simply relying on inspiration, unless you regard their knowledge and craft as

coming from God.

**Harpist:** So why will it just happen when we defend ourselves, but not when we play or make harps? It's tempting to think that music isn't important enough. That can't be true though: so many times in the past it's felt as if God has been somehow present in what I've played.

**Jereboam:** I'm wondering about this question of finding the right words to defend yourself. What would really happen? Perhaps God would inspire you to gain maximum effect from skills that you already have.

**Harpist:** What sorts of skills?

**Jereboam:** Well, you tell me what would be involved. Let's assume that you're facing some unbelieving judge or governor.

**Harpist:** There's our ability to speak our own language fluently, I suppose.

**Jereboam:** Constantly developed and practised in your daily lives...

**Harpist:** And in some way or another we'd probably have to express the nature of our beliefs. The words we use would be very much bound up with our regular experience of prayer and study.

**Jereboam:** Again developed and practised on a more or less daily basis...It strikes me that you would make full use of your abilities and knowledge, with God transforming those raw materials into something greater.

**Harpist:** So, talking about music again, I shouldn't try to reject my own contribution: the hours of practice and so on.

**Jereboam:** That's exactly what I mean, but don't rely on me: I'm no musician.

**Harpist:** I think you're probably right though. Thanks, Jereboam.

## THIS WEEK

On Sunday in St Matthew's Gospel, Jesus encourages his disciples to hold on to their faith and hope even in the midst of crisis and disaster

This week we celebrate the Feast of All Saints of Wales on Wednesday, that of St Leo the Great on Friday, and St Martin of Tours on Saturday

During the regular readings this week, we conclude a four-week series of first readings from St **Paul's Letter to the**

**Romans**. He reminds us, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?"

In the **Gospel according to St Luke** we see Jesus living out his daily life with challenging honesty. He calls us to extend an invitation out of our hearts, not with an eye on an invitation in return: "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind." Then Jesus tells the parable of the invited guests who made excuses to decline the invitation. He sends his servants to invite everyone. Jesus tells a crowd that they have to renounce their possessions to be his disciple and that to do something really important, we have to prepare and be ready. When the religious leaders complain, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them," Jesus tells parables of the man who finds his lost sheep and the woman with the lost coin, both of whom rejoice in finding what was lost. A steward protects himself by pardoning those who owe his master. We end the week with Jesus asking which is more important, God or money? "No servant can serve two masters."

**Next Sunday** we keep as Remembrance Sunday – we offer the Eucharist for those who have died in war

## A homily for the First Sunday of the Kingdom

+ Following the celebration of All Saints and All Souls, we're now coming to the end of the Church's year, and we notice that the tone of the readings in the liturgy becomes increasingly more urgent - the end of the year is being used as a metaphor for the end of all things and the end of time, and the end of our own lives.

'The day is coming,' says the prophet Malachi in the Old Testament reading this morning,

This idea of an ending of the world - what is often referred to as the great 'Day of the Lord' at the end of all time is runs through the writings of the Old Testament prophets. But what are *we* to make of it? Perhaps we are reminded too much of those people with sandwich boards announcing the end of the world! Repent! The end of the world is nigh! Repentance – turning in the direction of the God of love is good advice for all of us, I suppose, but as with most things the ability to persuade and convince,

rather than just shout your head off and alienate, is all important!

Today's Gospel is about crisis. St Matthew speaks of Jesus along with his disciples coming out of the Temple in Jerusalem, that great symbol of the faith of Israel - think of one of our great cathedrals with its importance multiplied a hundredfold. - the absolute centre of religious practice. As they look around them, admiring its magnificence. Jesus, quite bluntly, that this whole glorious edifice will be destroyed, and not a stone will left standing upon another. Is this meant to be seen as a prediction of the fall of Jerusalem, or just the observable fact that human societies come and go and are swallowed by waves of invasion or overwhelmed by the sands of the desert? Archaeology if nothing else shows us that; if we look around us, the landscape of the world is littered with the ruins of successive civilisations.

And then, later, sitting with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, Our Lord spells out what will happen: *'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. ...'*

In one way, of course, this is simply a description of the history of the world. What Jesus isn't doing in the Gospel is delivering a kind of divine Hell-fire sermon. He doesn't speak of the end of all things either to frighten his disciples out of their wits or to make an imminent prediction of the end of the world. Jesus isn't the man with the sandwich board walking around the city centre. What he says to them and to us is meant to reassure not to induce panic, he doesn't say it to scare them, only to make them think about the nature of their discipleship and the realities of life. 'Do not be terrified,' he tells them, 'for this is something that has to happen, but the end is not so soon'.

And then, of course, he develops another theme - and broadens it out to include the likely end result of following discipleship to its logical conclusion in a fallen world. He tells his disciples they are to have no fear,

even in the face of persecution, betrayal and the prospect of death. He will put into their mouths the right things to say, he will give them eloquence and wisdom: 'By your endurance you will gain your souls,' - that is your perseverance, your determined, even obstinate, faith and trust will save you.

And under all the pressures of life in an ever-changing world, and one in which we are surrounded by multiple crises, it is a good thing to remember that. When we look around us we see the threat of war, innumerable political crises, including a crisis of confidence in the way we are governed and those who govern us, and an existential crisis of climate catastrophe that threatens the life of the planet itself. And although every generation probably thinks its problems are uniquely bad, we can sense today that our times are seriously and perhaps even unprecedentedly out of joint, and that no one in power has much of a clue how to deal with it - or perhaps even the will to do so.

But even without all this, we know from our own experience how precarious and fragile human life can be and there is no point in pretending it isn't. Faith never means we are protected from all harm - Our Lord's words don't allow us to believe in a God of simplistic, childish expectations. The vision Jesus gives us of the universe is much more complex, much more mysterious than that. And, of course, the Christian Faith is meant to express reality not an evasion of unpalatable truths, otherwise it wouldn't be worth believing in it for one moment. What we believe is rooted in a putting together of accumulated evidence - material, philosophical and psychological. It might sometimes be a way of making sense of the hints and allusions we find around us, but it's not irrational and without foundation.

So the other side of all the apocalyptic imagery of these last few weeks of the liturgical year is that the message we are to be told to hang on to is one of hope and encouragement. Only be faithful, the

Lord says to us. We are not alone. God is with us.

Jesus himself did not attempt to avoid this future, but allowed himself to be betrayed and delivered to death. The immediate future offered him pain and suffering, yet he freely embraced the cross, so that we ourselves might no longer live in fear of what tomorrow might bring. Because of his death and resurrection, *for us* - whatever the present may throw at us - the *future* is Christ. He is with those who hope and trust in him, leading them through the anxieties of this life to the joy of God's eternal kingdom. He is with us as we reflect on where we are, where we have come from and where we wish to go - these are the real themes of the approaching season of Advent, not just preparation for Christmas. Yes there is death, there is judgement but when the time comes for us to experience our own last things we know we will do so in the profound security that on that day the love of God in Jesus Christ will take care of us. The Easter mystery, the mystery of God in Christ himself, is the one truth which lasts to eternity and we are part of it. +

### 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.

### Thought for the Week

"Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all...As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength.

G. K. Chesterton

## What's On

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

*November 11<sup>th</sup>*  
& every second Saturday  
of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift  
please ring Diane on 628084

### SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

**5<sup>th</sup> November 2023:**  
**The First Sunday of the Kingdom** (4<sup>th</sup> before Advent)

9 a.m. Family Service at  
St James', Devauden

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
Hymns (*New English Hymnal*)  
238; 385; 327 (*t.295 'Picardy'*); 461

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
at St Mary's, Penterry

The Eucharist is celebrated at 9 a.m.  
on weekdays

(There is no service on Mondays)

### NEXT SUNDAY

**12<sup>th</sup> November:**  
**Remembrance Sunday**

**The Second Sunday**  
**of the Kingdom** (3<sup>rd</sup> before Advent)

10.30 a.m. Requiem and Act  
of Remembrance at St Deiniol's, Itton  
*This is the only service today*

Readings at the Eucharist:

*Micah 3. 5-12; Psalm 43 or 107. 1-8;*  
*1 Thessalonians 2. 9-13;*  
*St Matthew 24. 1-14*

For services in the wider Ministry Area  
please see [www.severnwyema.co.uk](http://www.severnwyema.co.uk)

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

**9<sup>th</sup> November:** St. Tewdric's  
Church, Mathern

**16<sup>th</sup> November**  
Chepstow (07887 853479 for  
address) - Movie showing  
of 'The Shack'

**23<sup>rd</sup> November**  
St. Pierre Church

**30<sup>th</sup> November**  
St. Pierre Church - Rev  
Robert Sanday (retired) will  
be following a Celtic form  
of prayer

**7<sup>th</sup> December**  
St. Pierre Church

**14<sup>th</sup> December**  
St. Pierre Church

**21<sup>st</sup> December**  
St. Pierre Church – with  
mince pies!

*Future dates to follow ....*

## ***Ministry Area Prayer***

**D**ear 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.**