

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 usually on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. They can be accessed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook: <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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19th November 2023
The Third Sunday
of the Kingdom
2nd Sunday before Advent

The Collect

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life: grant that we, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as he is pure; that when he shall appear in power and great glory we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he 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 Zephaniah [1. 7, 12-18]

Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is at hand; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests. And on the day of the Lord's sacrifice I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who dress themselves in foreign attire. At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs, those who say in their hearts, "The LORD will not do good, nor will he do harm." Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them. The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind; because they have sinned against the LORD, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

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

Psalm 90 1 - 8, 12

R/ Satisfy us by your loving-kindness; so shall we rejoice and be glad.

Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born, from age to age you are God. You turn us back to the dust and say, 'Go back, O child of earth.'

R/ Satisfy us by your loving-kindness; so shall we rejoice and be glad.

For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past and like a watch in the night. You sweep us away like a dream; we fade away suddenly like the grass. In the morning it is green and flourishes; in the evening it is dried up and withered.

R/ Satisfy us by your loving-kindness; so shall we rejoice and be glad.

For we consume away in your displeasure; we are afraid because of your wrathful indignation. Our iniquities you have set before you, and our secret sins in the light of your countenance. So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

R/ Satisfy us by your loving-kindness; so shall we rejoice and be glad.

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians [5; 1-11]

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Make your home in me,
as I make mine in you, says the Lord.
Whoever remains in me
bears fruit in plenty
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.

Jesus said to his disciples,

For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to

another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents.

In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [25. 14-30]

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

For Your Prayers

Those living in poverty here
and throughout the world
All musicians, especially those who work
in the service of the Church
The peoples of Gaza and Israel

& for lasting peace in the Middle East
The people of Ukraine and a just and
peaceful end to the war there
The departed in this month of November
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, Margi.

For the Departed:

The recently departed; Rose Higgs;
Eric Brewer; our own departed relatives &
friends, & those whose anniversaries of
death fall at this time: Douglas Higgs;
Jeremy Winston, priest; James Griffin.;
Edward Roderick Hill

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)

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'

Septhan

Jereboam: Well, Septhan, we had plenty of response to your comments the other week.

Septhan: People seem to think I'm a bit of a reactionary. Honestly, I don't look for conflict. I just believe that certain things are either right or wrong, regardless of how much money they bring in, and regardless of who does them.

Jereboam: I think it's sometimes good to provoke a response anyway. Tell me: I was wondering what you'd make of Jesus' famous story about the man burying money in the ground. You know – the man is rebuked and punished, because he fails to increase the value of what has been entrusted to him. It hardly seems your sort of story.

Septhan: Strange, isn't it? This is the same Jesus who told people to sell their possessions and give the money to the poor. I can only think that he meant the story as a metaphor, and that he's asking us to develop our natural gifts fully, rather than hiding them from view. Or, to put it another way, he wants us to give back more than we receive.

Jereboam: That seems to be the general consensus of opinion.

Septhan: I hope so: you could imagine that story being open to quite unpleasant interpretations. You know: poor people deserve to be poor, because they don't use their money properly – that sort of thing.

Jereboam: I can't believe that Jesus wanted to encourage that idea.

Septhan: I think he'd have found it horrible, to be honest. And do we know how the other men in the story increased the value of their money?

Jereboam: By trade, I think. It doesn't say any more than that.

Septhan: Precisely. They could have done unspeakable things with that money. They could have impoverished someone else, for all we know. Obviously you'd need to know about what they did, if you wanted to assess their actions seriously...which brings us neatly to the distinguishing feature of God's riches.

Jereboam: What's that?

Septhan: Acquiring God's riches never makes anyone else poorer.

Jereboam: There's a thought. Thank you, Septhan

THIS WEEK

Sunday's Gospel brings us the familiar and powerful parable from St Matthew about the servants who are each given sums of money to invest. We are all called upon to use the gifts we have received as gifts, and to return them, fully developed, having made the best use of them.

This week we celebrate the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Tuesday, Saint Cecilia, the patron of musicians on Wednesday, St Clement on Thursday and St Catherine of Alexandria on Saturday. In this last but one week of the liturgical year, we hear readings from the First Book of Maccabees. These books are about the revolt against Jewish persecution a little over a century before Christ. The Maccabees are presented as a family that is faithful to the law in the midst of this persecution. Their witness is inspiring today.

Stories from St Luke's Gospel continue this week as Jesus moves toward and enters Jerusalem for the end of his ministry. Jesus heals the blind beggar near Jericho. The man immediately "followed him, giving glory to God." Then Jesus meets Zacchaeus who is up in a tree - because he was short, but probably also because he's a tax collector and was nervous about being caught in a zealous crowd. Jesus transforms him by inviting himself to Zacchaeus' house for dinner. Near Jerusalem, Jesus tells a parable of a rejected king and servants who use the gifts given them faithfully. In Jerusalem, Jesus weeps over the city, foreseeing the destruction that is coming, "because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." Entering the temple, Jesus drives out the old way of doing business and begins his ministry. He silences the

Sadducees, over their doubt about resurrection from the dead.

Next Sunday is the last Sunday of the year and the **Feast of Christ the King**. Jesus tells the parable about how we will all be judged - as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, based upon our care for the poor and those in need

A homily for the Third Sunday of the Kingdom

+ In all kinds of ways November seems very much to be a time of endings. The harvests are long over, the long warm days of barbecues and sitting outside in our free time seem unimaginably long ago now, the remaining leaves are coming off the trees, and winter is well and truly on its way. In terms of the liturgical year of the Church we have only today and next Sunday to go before the beginning of Advent and the inevitably run-up to our celebrations of Christmas. So, we are almost at the end of the year, traditionally a time for Christians to reflect on the meaning of the communion of saints, a time for remembering the departed and for thinking about the "last things," the end of life and the end of the world.

But even in the context of all this, today's both today's Old Testament reading and the beginning of the Epistle can sound very alarming. For anyone not carefully nurtured in the Christian tradition all this can read very much like apocalyptic science fiction. At a first reading there doesn't seem to be very much hope and grace or "good news," which after all is the meaning of the word 'Gospel.' These passages, of course, form part of the classic Judaeo-Christian account of the end of the world. But to complicate matters further, throughout the history of the Church there have always been individuals or small groups of people who have taken it upon themselves to brandish these and other similar passages (we think of the Book of Revelation in particular) in the face of those around them and provoke psychosis, fear, panic and a totally

unbalanced version of the faith of the Church. We see them around the world in various disguises, some of whom are vocal, not to say vociferous, supporters of a former American president. It's also an element in some of what's going on in the Middle East at the moment. A preoccupation with the idea of the end of the world, and the frankly inappropriate delight in which it's engaged in by those with a distorted religious viewpoint, has a quite troubling effect. It either reinforces the idea of a God who is always angry, ready to vent his wrath on the world at the expense of the message at the heart of the Gospel of the love of God and the new life of the Resurrection, or it reinforces the idea of all Christians as credulous anti-scientific religious fanatics. We need to read scriptural passages in context and in the context of the whole Gospel, the teaching of the Church down the ages. For instance if we read the whole of, say, chapter thirteen of St Mark's Gospel we see towards the end these words: *"But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* What Jesus is doing is talking of his return at the end of time to judge the world. The details of that return are couched in the kind of language which would have been very familiar to his hearers, part of the tradition of Jewish religious imagery - what we hear in fact from the prophet Zephaniah and others. However, we also have to say that none of this reduces one bit the seriousness of what we are being told. No, we don't know the time of the end of the world, the end of human history, but it would be foolish in the extreme to console ourselves with talk of first century biblical linguistic conventions and forget that, for each one of us, the end of the world - the end of life - could be at any moment. This year, above all, has emphasised the fragility of human life in a way most of us have never experienced before. And it's always been part of the Church's interpretation of Jesus' words about the end of the world to

say that we are meant to live each day of our lives as if it could be the last. On a practical level, today's readings invite us to meditate on the concept of the end of the world *for us*. And this isn't meant to make us feel depressed, but as a means of reminding us that everything in this world comes to an end, even our own lives. This is just an adult facing of the facts and not an attempt to evade the inevitable truth for each one of us. So these last Sundays of the Church's year and the first Sundays of Advent are a time for us to reflect, to feel the presence of God, to reflect on how we are living and to ask God to give us the strength to live faithfully no matter what happens. So often we try to wage war against time - either trying somewhat futilely to bring it under our control, or attempt to avoid thinking about its consequences at all by the innumerable forms of escapism available to us in today's culture. In the Gospel today, Jesus is telling us that we are not here in this world to play safe, but to trust that his is the way which leads to life. Of course, we are to avoid doing wrong - that much is essential if we are to be his disciples, but it isn't *enough*. It's too negative. We are being told by Jesus today to make, within the opportunities we are presented with, the best possible use of our time and our talents, we are meant to unite ourselves to Christ, and allow his grace to work in us to build up the kingdom of God where we are, in our own lives, and relationships. Everything we have, whether in the spiritual or the material sphere, even life itself, is a 'talent' entrusted to us by the Lord, and, as they say, we 'use it or lose it' - *For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.* Because of his death and resurrection, for 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 his eternal kingdom. We are not left to our own devices, or even to our own resources

or capabilities. He is the Good Shepherd, who is our guide and our helper along the often difficult pilgrimage of faith. He is with us as we reflect on where we are, where we have come from and where we wish to go. November is a time of endings but it keeps bringing us back to the beginning point of the resurrection - the new life which unites us all in Christ. We can't predict the future with any certainty, either our own or that of the world itself, but we do know that no matter what the future brings, the risen Christ is with those who hope in him, leading them amidst the anxieties of this life to the joy of his eternal kingdom. +

Thought for the Week

“If you observe anything evil within yourself, correct it; if something good, preserve it; if something beautiful, foster it; if something sound, maintain it; if sickly heal it. Read unwearingly the precepts of the Lord and, sufficiently instructed by them, you will know what to avoid and what to pursue.”

- St. Bernard of Clairvaux -

What's On

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



December 10th
& every second Saturday
of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

19th November 2023:
The 3rd Sunday of the Kingdom
(2nd before Advent)

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St James', Devauden

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
Hymns (*New English Hymnal*)
466; 418; 295; 401

11.30 a.m. Midday Prayer
at Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg

NEXT SUNDAY

19th November 2023:
CHRIST THE KING
(The Sunday before Advent)

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St Deiniol's, Itton

Readings at the Eucharist:
Ezekiel 34. 11-16, 20-24;
Psalms 95. 1-7 ;
Ephesians 1. 15-23;
St Matthew 25. 31-46

For services in the wider Ministry Area
please see www.severnwyema.co.uk

**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.

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

23rd November

St. Pierre Church

30th November

St. Pierre Church - Rev

Robert Sanday (retired) will
be following a Celtic form
of prayer

7th December

St. Pierre Church

14th December

St. Pierre Church

21st December

St. Pierre Church – with
mince pies!

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.**