

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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14th January 2024
The Second Sunday
of Epiphany

The Collect

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; 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 first book of Samuel [3. 3-10]

The boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the

LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

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

Psalm 139 1-5; 12-17

R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.

Lord, you have searched me out and known me; you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

You trace my journeys and my resting-places and are acquainted with all my ways.

R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.

Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O Lord, know it altogether. You press upon me behind and before and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain to it.

R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.

For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will thank you because I am marvellously made; your works are wonderful and I know it well.

R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.

My body was not hidden from you, while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; they were fashioned day by day, when as yet there was none of them.

R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.

How deep I find your thoughts, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand; to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.

R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.

A reading from the book of Revelation [5. 1-10]

I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and

break its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.’ Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.’

*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 words of eternal life.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

[Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St John](#)

Glory to you, O Lord.

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of

Joseph from Nazareth.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, ‘Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael asked him, ‘Where did you come to know me?’ Jesus answered, ‘I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.’ Nathanael replied, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.’ And he said to him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’

[St John 1.43–51]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may always listen for the voice of God in the events of our lives
All who are caught up in war or conflict
All those without adequate food or shelter
For all musicians, particularly for choirs and organists at this season
Those who travel at Christmastide
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
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; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron; Ken Reece; Margaret; Margot Davies, Margi.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: James Esherwood; Elsie Procter; Margery Edwards; James Grantham; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time:
Charlotte Horsfield; Bill Blakey

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'

Esther

Jereboam: Well, Esther, it must be a good twenty years since you and I first discussed Jesus' baptism. So much has happened since then.

Esther: Yes: I still see that event as a sort of turning-point. In a way

everything was set in motion that afternoon.

Jereboam: But do you really feel that the motion has been maintained? It seems as if the Church has settled into a sort of routine now.

Esther: Things are certainly much less dramatic than they were when Jesus was with us – but that doesn't mean that the Church has ground to a halt: far from it.

Jereboam: The reason I mention it is that people talk nowadays about the Second Coming of Jesus.

Esther: Yes...

Jereboam: Well, I couldn't help wondering whether there was really all that much difference between you awaiting the Second Coming of Jesus, and us ordinary Jews looking forward to the ...well, the First Coming. Of course we were all caught up in the drama of Jesus' life and death, and I realise that His attitudes and teaching were quite distinctive, but, at the end of it all, did He really make all that much difference?

Esther: I'd say He did.

Remember the impact His baptism had: that was the moment, for many of us at least, when Jesus was revealed as the Son of God. A son of God doesn't exactly appear every day, but just as striking was the fact that this Son of God emerged from amongst us. He was an ordinary person too. God was approaching us both from our level and from beyond it, all at the same time. So our contact with Him became all the more direct and tangible. And that's even before His death and resurrection... So, if you ask me, Jesus certainly did make a difference.

Jereboam: I suppose you're right.

Esther: And there's another thing: He also reached out to everyone, in a way that certainly I had never encountered before. Jesus addressed...and still addresses...the whole of humanity, not just the Jewish race. I'll admit that we can easily lose sight of that. It's often tempting to limit your concept of God to your own little world. I try hard to avoid that.

Jereboam: Can you explain how?

Esther: I'll try: let's imagine the process of prayer. When someone prays, they'll probably have in their mind some image or idea of God. At the same time they'll perhaps consider some text of scripture or aspect of faith – in our case

perhaps an incident in the life of our Lord. Maybe, together with all that, they might have particular concerns which they want to include. Already it's a complex picture. Personally I add something extra too. I try to visualise some image or other that can represent the whole world – perhaps I might think of a place I've seen far away. That reminds me of the universal nature of God and His Church.

Jereboam: It sounds very difficult, following all those thoughts at the same time.

Esther: Oh, it's not that awkward: more like a drawing that depicts various things. Your attention shifts to different parts of the picture from time to time.

Jereboam: I'll give that a try. Thank you, Esther. Please don't take this the wrong way, Jereboam, but I hadn't expected to see you around here again so soon.

THIS WEEK

Sunday is kept as the Feast of the Epiphany. We celebrate, with the coming of the Magi to the infant Christ, the light that has come into the darkness of the world and that our salvation was made known to the Gentiles – the non-Jewish world..

On Monday we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. At Jesus' baptism by John in the river Jordan the divine voice from heaven manifests, reveals, points Jesus out as God's "beloved Son."

This marks the end of the Christmas Season.

Tuesday begins Epiphanytide, the winter ordinary time in the Church calendar which will last until Candlemas and then resume with the weeks before Lent which continue until Ash Wednesday in mid-February.

The weekday readings at the Eucharist, begin with a three-week cycle of readings from the First Book of Samuel. We read of Samuel's mother, Hannah, who promises the Lord, "if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the LORD for as long as he lives." Samuel hears a call from the Lord and responds, "Speak, for your servant is listening." An epic battle against the Philistines ends in devastating losses for Israel and the capture of the Ark of the Covenant. In his old age, Samuel rules Israel and the elders ask Samuel to

appoint a King to rule them. Samuel meets Saul. "When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD assured him, "This is the man of whom I told you; he is to govern my people."

From now until the beginning of Lent, the weekday gospels are from **St Mark's Gospel**. Mark offers us a look at the beginning of Jesus public ministry. Jesus calls his first disciples, fisherman at work: Simon and Andrew, then James and John. "Then they left their nets and followed him." He drives out evil spirits and heals the sick. He hears the cry of the leper: "If you wish, you can make me clean," and Jesus, "moved with pity" heals him. Friends lower a paralytic from a roof down into the crowd in front of Jesus, who heals him and says, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Jesus extends an invitation to the despised tax collector, Levi: "Follow me."

Next Sunday is the **Second Sunday of Epiphany**. **St John's Gospel** offers us the story of the calling of the first two disciples. He asks them what they are looking for and when they ask where he lives, he invites them, "Come, and you will see."

A homily for Epiphany 2

+ For most people in our culture in our society, the question of whether God exists doesn't feature anywhere on their radar, much less the idea that if there is a God, his existence should affect the way we live. It's one of the biggest problems the Church faces – and we should face up to it and take it much more seriously than we do. The crisis through which we are living isn't because of a failure of presentation, but it's because people no longer believe the things they used to believe – the stories we tell and the way they've always been explained just don't resonate in the way they did.

The Gospels, of course, are very clear in the way they present Jesus to us. He's the Saviour, the Redeemer of the world. In Jewish terms he is the Messiah, and I think it's probably true to say that who Jesus is for the Gospel writers can't be fully understood apart from the history of Israel - which is the pre-history of the Church, the pre-history of all of us, and that, of

course, is one of our communication problems in a culture which scripture has little relevance and the past in general isn't something from which we tend to draw inspiration. But what can be presented to any culture is Jesus as the one who reconciles, who takes away the sins of the world – who shows us the way to rid ourselves from the demons of our human nature and the way we've made the world. – those facets of human nature and human living which alienate us from the source of all goodness, which stop us from being what we want to be.

In the Gospel today Jesus says to Philip, "Follow me." So let's go back to the Gospel story as John tells it. For whatever reason, perhaps it was a deep intuition, perhaps it was because he had listened carefully to what Jesus was saying and doing, perhaps he had heard John the Baptist preach and even witnessed our Lord's baptism in the river Jordan, we don't know. But when Jesus approaches him and invites him to join him, Philip doesn't need any further explanation. Not so Nathanael his friend; when Philip tells him in effect that he has discovered the Messiah ("him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote") Nathanael is openly sceptical. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth," he says, referring dismissively to this out of the way, provincial small town and possibly the fact that the tradition clearly said that the Messiah, the Christ, was to come from Bethlehem in Judea, not Nazareth in Galilee. Nathanael takes a lot of persuading - ultimately Philip just says to him to come and see and judge for himself. When Jesus sees him and proves that he understands him and knows something about him that no one else knows, Nathanael is convinced – 'you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel he says.' And Jesus replies that if Nathanael follows him he will see far greater things: essentially the Lord is saying to him that he will come to see the vision of God and share the life of God himself.

So what is St John, and through John, Christ himself, saying to us in this passage? There's a great deal here and

anything we say can only scratch the surface. But, firstly, that it is Jesus himself who finds us, not the other way around. The message of Christmas just past is that of God coming in search of the human race and identifying himself completely with us. Here, in today's Gospel, Philip must have studied the law and the prophets and even heard and seen a lot about the Lord, but it is Jesus who comes to him and says 'follow me.' however much we search for truth and meaning, however much we strive to discover something which is worth giving our lives to, ultimately it's the case that God comes to us and calls us when he is ready, in his time and not in ours.

Secondly, Philip's vocation - his calling - as an apostle and witness to Christ, begins immediately - he persuades Nathanael to overcome his scepticism and to see for himself the truth about Jesus. So often we are brought to faith, or to a deeper experience of the Faith, by those around us who are able to reflect some of the love of God and the urgency and importance to all of us of the person and message of Christ, and to convince us that it's worthwhile taking a closer look. Like Nathanael, *when we do* we are not disappointed, we are drawn by Jesus himself into the mystery of his life - the life of God himself, the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And thirdly, as with Philip and Nathanael, Jesus also calls *each one of us*, even though we may be naturally sceptical and hard to convince, even if we are far from perfect, even though we are, unfashionable and vaguely archaic though it now sounds, sinners and that's misunderstood, too in all kinds of ways, but there really isn't a better shorthand term to describe our flawed human nature. But each one of us, through our baptism, through our confirmation, has become a follower of Jesus. What does this calling mean to us? What does it require of us? The call of Christ isn't, a one-off experience. The Lord continues to call us not once but constantly throughout our lives, however hard we sometimes try to hide. Sometimes He calls us in

ways that result in major changes and upheavals in our lives. But most of the time Jesus calls in a quietly insistent way that we may try to explain away with all kinds of clever psychological evasions. When we are able to listen, *really listen*, we are changed. In one sense we are already living in the kingdom of God here and now. Christ is as present to us as he was to the people in the today's Gospel - not physically, but through the power of the Holy Spirit. Why else are we here, but to meet him in the words of the Gospels and in the Reality of the Blessed Sacrament of his Body and Blood? We hear him speak to us through the words of Scripture and when he gives his life to us in Holy Communion to draw us ever more deeply into the mystery of his life? Here we are truly given a foretaste of the life of heaven and, if we look with the eyes of faith, here at the altar we "see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." +

Saints Day

St Anthony of Egypt
(*feast day January 17th*)

Thought for the Week

"Prayer is not designed to change God but to change us. The faster we let that happen, the better our prayer is going to be".

- Thomas Keating OCSO 'Prayer' -

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

**14th January 2024:
The Second Sunday
of Epiphany**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

Hymns: (*New English Hymnal*)
48; 57; 56; 55

11.30 a.m. Liturgy of the Word
at St Deiniol's, Itton

NEXT SUNDAY
21st January 2024:
The Third Sunday
of Epiphany

9 a.m. Morning Liturgy
at St James' Devauden
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

Readings at the Eucharist :

Genesis 14. 17-20;
Psalms 128;
Revelation 19. 6-10;
St John 2. 1-11

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

What's On

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

January 20th
February 17th and usually
every second Saturday
of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

The Severn Wye Ministry
Area Prayer Group meets
each Thursday at 7.30 p.m.
All are welcome!

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.**

