

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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21st January 2024
The S
Third Sunday
of Epiphany

The Collect

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; 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 book of Genesis

After Abram's return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!' And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.

[14. 17-20]

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

Psalm 28

R/ Whoever fears the Lord shall indeed be blessed.

Happy are they all who fear the Lord, and who follow in his ways!
You shall eat the fruit of your labour; happiness and prosperity shall be yours.

R/ Whoever fears the Lord shall indeed be blessed.

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house,
your children like olive shoots round about your table.
Whoever fears the Lord shall thus indeed be blessed.

R/ Whoever fears the Lord shall indeed be blessed.

The Lord bless you from Zion, and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of our life. May you live to see your children's children; may peace be upon Israel.

R/ Whoever fears the Lord shall indeed be blessed.

A reading from the book of Revelation [19.6-10]

I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure' – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are true words of God.'

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom,
and cured all kinds of sickness among the people.

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.

On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the

mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.'

So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

[St John 2. 1 - 11]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may allow Christ to change the water of our old nature into the new wine of the Kingdom
The unity of the Church & all who follow Christ
All who are caught up in war or conflict
All those without adequate food or shelter
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; Anne-Louise; Helen; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron; Ken Reece; Margaret; Margot Davies, Margi.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Lisa; James Esherwood; Elsie Procter; Margery Edwards; James Grantham; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Grace Hodgkinson; Pat Beattie

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'

Jethur and Nabaioth

Jereboam: So, Jethur, what did you make of Jesus this afternoon?

Jethur: Interesting...he was talking about how we need to change our priorities, to think differently.

Nabaioth: Excuse me, Jethur.

Jethur: Ah, Nabaioth, hello!

Jereboam: I'm sorry to interrupt your conversation, but you wouldn't have any bread I could borrow, would you?

Jethur: I think so. The others should be at home at the moment. Why not go and ask them?

Nabaioth: Thanks. I don't know whether we might need some more wine too. You couldn't lend us some of that as well, just in case we run out?

Jethur: Of course: just tell the others what you need.

Nabaioth: I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Jethur: Don't worry: it's fine. Nabaioth, you're looking rather anxious this afternoon.

Nabaioth: Well yes – I've just agreed to feed some of Jesus' friends this evening and then put them up for the night. Obviously we weren't planning for that. I have to make sure that there's enough to eat and drink. I mean, they all seem very likeable and accepting, but I want to do things properly.

Jereboam: That's only natural. In your position I'm sure we'd all want to do our best.

Nabaioth: I'm not used to this sort of thing. Normally at this time of day I'd clean up a bit, have a rest and then go off somewhere for a walk. That's all been abandoned today, of course.

Jereboam: But we all get these emergencies from time to time. You just have to drop everything else and do what's necessary. I always tell myself that it's good to be adaptable.

Nabaioth: You're right, obviously. Anyhow, I'd better be on my way. I'll drop round at your house, Jethur. Thanks a lot.

Jethur: Tell them I suggested you called in.

Nabaioth: Thanks very much. 'Bye.

Jereboam: Goodbye, Nabaioth. So where were we? Talking about Jesus and his priorities...

Jethur: Actually, I think you just said pretty much the same as Jesus did.

We sometimes have to drop everything and react to special circumstances. In Jesus' eyes, the special circumstances are the urgent need to change our lives. Look, maybe I'd better go and check that we can find everything Nabaioth needs.

Jereboam: Certainly, yes. Maybe we'll speak again some other time.

THIS WEEK

Sunday is the Third Sunday of Epiphany. The readings include the first of Jesus' signs in St John's Gospel – the Marriage at Cana. Water is changed to wine by the presence of Christ

Wednesday is the feast day of Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. Thursday is the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, the Apostle. Friday we remember Saint Timothy and Saint Titus, bishops.

This is the third week of readings from Samuel, this week from the Second Book of Samuel. A young David is anointed King of Israel and with his army, captures the city of Zion. In the festivities that followed, Samuel offers the delightful image of a joyful David at the Ark of the Covenant, "dancing before the LORD with abandon ... with shouts of joy and to the sound of the horn." The Lord tells David, "I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his Kingdom firm." David sees Bathsheba, the beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite and after having relations with her, he orders Uriah to the front of a battle where he is killed. Nathan the prophet confronts David, who repents.

In St Mark's Gospel this week, we have many familiar stories. The scribes, hearing of his many healings, accuse Jesus of being possessed by Satan. He replies that a house is divided against itself cannot stand. Mary and other relatives arrive at a home where Jesus is teaching, but Jesus does not go to them, saying, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." He tells the parable of the sower and the seeds which fall on fertile ground and rocky soil. "Those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." He encourages his disciples not to hide their light "under a bushel basket" and tells the story of the mustard seed, the tiniest seed which grows into one of the largest bushes. In

Saturday's gospel the apostles are frightened on a boat in a storm until Jesus awakens to calm the wind and seas.

Next Sunday: St Mark's Gospel brings us the story of Jesus driving out unclean spirits from a man in the synagogue. The people are impressed because he taught with authority in ways the scribes did not and they marvelled that even the unclean spirits obey him.

A homily for Epiphany 3

+ Today's Gospel is full of celebration and hope. It speaks to us of the transforming joy of Christ's presence. But it happens right in the midst of the stresses and strains and social interactions of life as we live it. We don't need to be told that weddings – as well as occasions of shared love and happiness, can be pretty stressful occasions. It doesn't take too much reading between the lines in today's Gospel to work out that the wedding feast at Cana was a typically stressful occasion. We don't know much about the background, only that Jesus and his disciples and Mary, his mother, had been invited; it's probably a fair assumption to make that it was a family occasion, a marriage of cousins or extended family of some kind. And, of course, we know the vital point that at some point when the feast had been in full swing for some time, the wine started to run out. One can only guess at the consternation that much have caused, and the social embarrassment, even disgrace, to the family which would have followed.

Even after his mother asks him to intervene, Jesus seems to have been reluctant to get involved. No, he seems to be saying this is not the right time yet for any kind of demonstration of powers beyond the ordinary, his Divine Sonship should remain hidden for a while longer.

Yet at the end of the story St John says that this was the first of Our Lord's "signs" which were an indication of the nature of his divine mission - this is the Incarnation again made visible, the physical intervention of God into the material world in order to heal the wounds of

humanity. But it's important to say that what Jesus does here at the wedding at Cana isn't an opportunistic bit of conjuring to get everyone out of a tight spot. Yes, it's an act of compassion and kindness, but it's a clear demonstration of something much more going on here. The word "sign" that St John uses to describe what has happened doesn't just mean "something miraculous," something which seems to go against the nature of way things are, however divinely inspired. This word 'sign' is important because it points us to something profound about the nature of God – that his is a joyful and liberating presence.

St John's Gospel is a book which, for all its human qualities and insights, is a complex and many layered reflection on the meaning of Jesus for us. Everything John says, he says for a purpose, and symbolism of one kind or another is everywhere.

The first of Our Lord's signs is this miracle at Cana; the last and definitive sign, we could say, is the manifestation of his glory upon the cross of Calvary. The Greek original of the passage we have just heard as our Gospel, the opening of chapter two of John's Gospel, begins with the words "three days later there was a wedding feast at Cana." Now, "three days later" can be taken as referring to the calling of Philip at the end of chapter one and as such is usually left out at the beginning of the reading. But coming here at this account of the first of the signs which culminate in the Cross, I don't think it's too fanciful to see a reference to the resurrection, the outcome of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for the life of the world - "on the third day." Remember every word, every phrase is here for a purpose. It's true of all the Gospels, but John's, the Fourth Gospel, particularly isn't meant to be a contemporary account, or a simple narrative, but a theological reflection made years later by someone who has spent a lifetime reflecting on the meaning of what has happened.

And, then, we have the jars of water, placed there at the wedding for the rites of purification. This was a family

that was concerned with the ritual of the Jewish law – possibly a priestly family or certainly a pharisaical one. And it's not a coincidence that the jars become the source for the changing of water into wine. John is saying here that Jesus by his presence is showing us that his presence enables us to make the move from outward, ritual purity – *the water* - to an inner and joyful transformation of our hearts and minds symbolised by the wine. But not only that: this sign is pointing to the gift of Christ's own self, his blood, given once for all on the cross and now received by us in this Sacrament of the Eucharist – a word which itself means a joyful thanksgiving – and the Sacrament which is seen as a foretaste of the wedding banquet of the kingdom of heaven.

So – as we said – there's layer upon layer of meaning here.

It's difficult sometimes, the sheer intrusiveness of social media and the way we are constantly bombarded with news and information, to reflect and step back from the problems of the world outside these four walls, its implacable divisions, bigotries and hatreds, the terrible scenes of devastation and human need in the aftermath of war and disaster. We could be tempted to ask, just where is this new wine of God's presence? I don't see it. But we find God – no, he finds us – *that's the message* - in acts of love and service - however small, in attempts at kindness and reconciliation and in the breaking down of barriers of mistrust and fear he inspires in us. He asks of us purity of heart. Here is resurrection and new life even in the face of what seems to us to be intractable divisions and meaningless tragedy. And, for us, the transformation Christ brings about is made possible here at this feast, this foretaste of the wedding banquet of the Lamb, at this offering of the sacrifice of the Cross, as we eat and drink the transformed elements of bread and wine, become his Body and Blood. Christ gives his own life to us so that we can not only share the new life of resurrection but bring it to others so that the life of the world

might be renewed and changed into something infinitely more glorious. As Jesus constantly reminds his disciples throughout the gospels, the new wine of God's kingdom is only reached through the shedding of his blood. And he tells them – *and most importantly he's speaking to us, too* – that they can only get there through the uniting of themselves with his sacrificial death. But *on the third day* – to go back to that phrase which begins today's Gospel – is the life of Resurrection, and we see that resurrection in the presence of Christ with us – in the way he delights in and is concerned for our own lives and his delight in and concern for our own personal lives and the people and all the things that are dear to us. At the altar he comes to us in our need, and sends us out filled with his joy and delight in the world he has made. +

What's On

St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat

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

*February 17th and usually
every second Saturday
of the month*

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

Our thanks to all who helped at
yesterday's very successful event!

**The Severn Wye Ministry
Area Prayer Group meets
each Thursday at 7.30 p.m.**

All are welcome!

For details see

www.severnwyema.co.uk

Thought for the Week

“Contempt of material things as such is, in fact, no more orthodox than pantheism -- it is the great dualist heresy which always lies in wait for an over-spiritualized Christianity.”

Dorothy L. Sayers

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

**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
Hymns: (*New English Hymnal*)
56; 387; 302; 351

NEXT SUNDAY

**28th January 2024:
The Fourth Sunday
of Epiphany**

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

Readings at the Eucharist :

*Deuteronomy 18. 15-20;
Psalm 111; Revelation 12. 1-5a;
St Mark 1. 21 - 28*

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

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.**