

# 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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**28<sup>th</sup> January 2024**  
**The Fourth Sunday**  
**of Epiphany**

## The Collect

Creator God, who in the beginning commanded the light to shine out of darkness: we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, shine into the hearts of all your people, and reveal the knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN

## A reading from the book of Deuteronomy [18. 15-20]

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: 'If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.' Then the Lord replied to me: 'They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.

Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak - that prophet shall die.'

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

## Psalm 111

**R/ Great are the deeds of the Lord.**

Alleluia.  
I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the faithful and in the congregation.  
The works of the Lord are great, sought out by all who delight in them.  
His work is full of majesty and honour and his righteousness endures for ever.

**R/ Great are the deeds of the Lord.**

He appointed a memorial for his marvellous deeds; the Lord is gracious

and full of compassion. He gave food to those who feared him; he is ever mindful of his covenant. He showed his people the power of his works in giving them the heritage of the nations.

**R/ Great are the deeds of the Lord.**

The works of his hands are truth and justice; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever; they are done in truth and equity.

**R/ Great are the deeds of the Lord.**

He sent redemption to his people; he commanded his covenant for ever; holy and awesome is his name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have those who live by it;

**R/ Great are the deeds of the Lord.**

## A reading from the book of Revelation [12. 1-5a]

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

*Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord*

*Response / Thanks be to God*

### Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!  
The people that lived in darkness  
has seen a great light;  
on those who dwell in the land and  
shadow of death  
a light has dawned.

**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:  
**And also with you**

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

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

**T**hey went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching - with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.' At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

*[St Mark 1. 21-28]*

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

### For Your Prayers

That we may recognise the hope and promise Christ gives to us  
For equality of treatment and an end to discrimination on grounds of race  
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;; Margery Edwards; James Grantham; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall this week: Marian Price; Trevor Beverley-Jones; Jo Boys

#### **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'*

### Machir

**Jereboam:** Paul tells us that we need to devote our lives to God, and he certainly means what he says. I even heard him claim that it would be best for people to remain single, so that they're not distracted by the needs of a wife or a husband -- let alone children.

**Machir:** I see his point, but...well, I don't know how you spent your youth, but when I was single, I spent most of the time being thoroughly distracted. In fact I'd even say that I went out of my way to distract myself as much as possible. I was probably just frightened to be alone, so I mixed with friends all the time. We'd talk forever and absorb the cares and dramas of each other's lives.

**Jereboam:** Things were just the same for me too, of course.

**Machir:** It was a slightly hysterical existence, clinging onto each other's emotional upheavals. Hardly what Paul has in mind, I'm sure.

**Jereboam:** And I can't believe that we'd achieve much, simply by encouraging single people to talk about Jesus and the Church, instead of whatever it was that we used to gossip about. No: Paul must envisage a more mature sort of single life.

**Machir:** I'll tell you about a phase I went through. Eventually -- like many people, I suppose -- I started to question my life-style. I had become too dependent on others, and unwittingly I'd made them dependent on me too. We'd adopt each other's mannerisms, we'd speak in a similar way; we even wore the same sorts of garments. So I set myself a challenge. Whenever I spoke to anyone, I'd tell myself that I wanted them to be as different as possible from me. In my mind I'd encourage them to be everything that I

wasn't. The challenge probably helped: it allowed me to see other people more as individuals. I became more respectful of them.

**Jereboam:** There might be something in that, but surely you can't force anyone to be different from you.

**Machir:** No, of course not. I just found it a useful exercise...and I certainly didn't tell anybody what I was thinking!

**Jereboam:** I might give it a try it myself.

## THIS WEEK

On 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.

Wednesday is the feast day of Saint John Bosco, Priest.

At the Eucharist this week the story of David we have been following for the past two weeks will end with his death as we conclude the readings from the Book of Samuel. As the narrative moves to the Book of Kings, David's son Solomon, has succeeded him on the throne and for the next week, the tale of notable leaders of Israel's history continues to unfold.

In Mark's Gospel this week, Jesus continues to heal and teach. A man in the Gerasenes is healed of unclean spirits and wants to stay with Jesus, but Jesus tells the man, "Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you." The young daughter of a synagogue official is sick and on the way to heal her, as Jesus stood in a crowd, he felt the power go out of him as a woman with a haemorrhage touched his cloak. "Your faith has saved you," he reassures her. To the father he says, "Do not be afraid; just have faith" and heals the daughter. He teaches in the synagogue in his hometown "and they took offense at him." He was not able to perform miracles there, because of their lack of faith. Jesus sends his disciples out to preach and heal, telling them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick. Though the demons know who Jesus is, Herod thinks he is John the Baptist, whom Herod had beheaded. Jesus encourages his busy disciples, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a

while." But as they tried to get away "and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things."

**Next Sunday** we observe as **The Feast of the Presentation or Candlemas** – transferred from 2<sup>nd</sup> February in order that we may more widely celebrate the end of Epiphany and the extended Christmas Season.

Jesus is presented in the Temple and recognised by Simeon and Anna as the long-awaited Saviour.

From next Sunday our focus in the liturgy turns towards Lent and Easter.

## A homily for Epiphany 4

+ + Most of us will know the acronym WYSIWYG? Of course, in what is now fairly old-fashioned computer jargon it stands for "*What you see is what you get*" meaning that what you see on the computer screen is what you will get if you were to print it off. You can rely on the fact that what you see in front of you can be regarded as reliable, consistent and authoritative. Press the print button and that is what will be produced for you.

Reliable, consistent and authoritative is exactly how the scriptures present Jesus. What you see is what you get. What he says, what he does and who he is are radically consistent.

Although he shares our human nature, unlike the rest of us there are no gaps between expectation and reality, no disparity gaps between what the politicians (and they should know!) call promise and delivery. In Christ we see our own human nature, but transformed into everything it is capable of being: we could say he *is* humanity as God intended.

So no wonder he astonishes his contemporaries both with his teaching and the way that teaching is put into action in his encounters with those who need healing in one form or another.

Today's Gospel opens with Jesus teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum and it's clear from St Mark's account that his way of teaching is very different from the

kind of thing the congregation was used to. The scribes seem above all to be concerned with explaining the letter of the Law (*to us* the Old Testament scriptures) in accordance with what they had received from their own teachers; their teaching was concerned with the authority of precedent and rabbinical tradition. Jesus seems to have expressed himself with a different kind of authority: one which came from a profound and intimate knowledge of what he is talking about. He isn't satisfied just to repeat what he has been taught, but His authority comes from within and this is absolutely clear when he interprets the scriptures.

And the Gospel today goes on to reinforce this overwhelming sense of authority, of *believability*, with his healing of the possessed man whose cries and protests only reinforce and confirm the power Jesus demonstrates.

These two events in combination can only provoke this question by those who witnessed them: *Who is this man?*

Today's Gospel shows us that Jesus has already at the beginning of his ministry begun to form a community of disciples around him - this tiny group of apostles and disciples after the Resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit will form the nucleus of the Church. This community is made up of the people who are redeemed by Jesus Christ and who have come to believe in him as their Lord and Saviour. Over the last couple of weeks the Sunday readings have spoken about the call addressed to all of us to conversion of life, holiness, closeness to God and the mission that involves us in to help spread the good news of the Gospel. But it's very clear that although we are all called by name (we have a *personal* faith in that sense) we are not called as isolated individuals but to be part of this community of God's people. Christ came to gather to gather into one the scattered children of God, to draw everyone to himself. It's often said that as human beings we live with uncertainty and we shouldn't try to avoid the inevitability of that, but it's also true that at the

same time tend to long for something authoritative and sure on which to base our lives with some degree of confidence.

We ourselves are here today, as part of the community gathered around the person of the Lord, in the security and certainty that it is Jesus we meet and who feeds us with himself in the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist, his Body and his Blood. Outside, we are often almost overwhelmed by doubts and fears, anxieties and uncertainties, by rapid change and the increasingly worrying and unpredictable nature of the world in which we live. But here, we meet in the knowledge that it is Jesus we encounter, the same Jesus who gathered his first followers around him.

Here, we meet the sacramental presence of the One who is Lord of the past, the present and the future, and having sat down and been fed at his table, we are ourselves sent back to do what he wants of us in our daily lives of work, with our families and friends and whatever we do. And what we do here is to come to encounter the authentic, the real presence of Christ. We come to meet the Lord in Word and Sacrament and to grow in prayer and trust and faith so that we can go that much further in our trust and following of Jesus. And what we hear in the Scriptures and from the Christ we receive in our hands and from the chalice in the Blessed Sacrament gives us the grace to grow both in knowledge of the things of God and in holiness. We have this much on divine authority. Today, if we are not careful we can get so bogged down with trying to answer all the questions and to dotting all the 'i' s and crossing all the 't' s of the many issues faith raises that it makes following Jesus that much more difficult. I'm definitely not advocating a kind of anti-intellectual approach to our faith (after all God gives us minds to use) but merely to concentrate on the things which really matter. Jesus didn't have a detailed map to give to those he called his friends. At the start of this story of the Incarnation - God becoming one of us - it wasn't offered to Blessed Mary as she began

her journey of faith and trust. It wasn't offered to St Joseph or to those Jesus called as his apostles and first disciples. It wasn't offered to Paul whose conversion we celebrated last week. He only offered them (and he still offers *us* today) the promise and hope of an enduring relationship. That's all. But it's a relationship with the source of all life.

The Lord calls us and leads us towards the radical freedom which authentic faith provides. We all have our doubts and difficulties, our problems of faith and belief. Most of the time they don't come to the surface because we are called to follow him in tried and tested ways within the boundaries of the familiar - that's where we find God most of the time: in the ordinary but extraordinarily valuable things of life. But that's increasingly not the case today in terms of what we could call the superstructure of faith as the established patterns of faith and belief, and history and tradition are called into question, or are just not there anymore to be relied upon. We are never guaranteed a place of security or to be protected from an ever-changing reality. We are called just to trust, and where Christ leads, to follow.

The experience of those who have gone before us on the pilgrimage of faith and belief is that the Lord always speaks to us with the true authority of love; he feeds us and gives us strength so that we are enabled by his grace to travel deeper into the mystery of his unfolding will for us and for the world he created. +

### Thought for the Week

“My grace works much like My sun does on earth. You know how sometimes the sun shines brightly and on those days everyone enjoys its warm rays. On other days, however, the sun is hidden behind the clouds, and it isn't seen all day long; but, remember, its brightness and warmth are still there.”

-- Margery Kempe, 15<sup>th</sup> mystic from "The Book of Margery Kempe"

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2024:**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
Hymns: (*New English Hymnal*)  
52; 206, 485, 339

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

## NEXT SUNDAY

**4<sup>th</sup> February 2024:**  
Kept as **The Feast of the Presentation or Candlemas**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with hymns  
at St Mary's Penterry  
4 p.m. Family Eucharist  
at St James' Devauden

### Readings at the Eucharist :

Malachi 3. 1-5;  
Psalm 24. [1-6,] 7-10;  
Hebrews 2. 14-18;  
St Luke 2. 22-40

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

## A REMINDER THAT LENT BEGINS THIS YEAR ON FEBRUARY 14<sup>th</sup> What's On

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

*February 17<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.severnwyema.co.uk)**

## **\*THIS YEAR'S LENT COURSE \***

### **INTRODUCTION TO**

## **Christian Meditation**

*"Be still and know that I am  
God" Ps.46:10*

### **A SIX-WEEK LENT COURSE**

There is a choice between an  
Evening Session or a Daytime  
Session

Monday Evenings 19 February  
to 25 March at 7.30 – 8.45 pm  
at The Cedars, Chapel Lane,  
Pwllmeyric, NP16 6LE

or

Tuesday afternoons 20 February  
to 26 March at 2.45 - 4.00 pm  
at St.Thomas Becket Church  
Room, Shirenewton

This course provides an  
opportunity for those interested  
in finding out about Christian  
Meditation to experience the  
practice in a small group, to  
learn about its origins, and to  
discover its relevance as a form

of prayer for the contemporary  
world.

For more information contact  
Canon Chris Blanchard  
- email: [frchris2@icloud.com](mailto:frchris2@icloud.com)  
Tel 07711961237

World Community for Christian  
Meditation

## ***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.**