

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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4th February 2024

kept as Candlemas

**The Feast of the Presentation
of the Lord**

The Collect

Almighty and ever-living God, clothed in majesty, whose beloved Son was this day presented in the Temple, in substance of our flesh: grant that we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts, by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

A reading from the prophet Malachi [3. 1 - 5]

Thus says the LORD God: See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

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

Psalm 24 7- 10

**R/ The Lord of hosts,
he is the king of glory.**

Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.
'Who is this King of glory?'
'The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle.'

**R/ The Lord of hosts,
he is the king of glory.**

Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.
'Who is he, this King of glory?'
'The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory.'

**R/ The Lord of hosts,
he is the king of glory.**

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews [2. 14 - 18]

Since the children share flesh and blood, Jesus himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, Alleluia!
The light to enlighten the Gentiles
And give glory to Israel, your people.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St. Luke

R/ Glory to you, O Lord

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought

Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.' Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

[2. 22 - 40]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may shine like candles in the world as we reflect the love of 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; Eira .

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Lisa;; William Alan Norris; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall this week: Philip Arthur Zorab; Donald Wood, priest

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'

Doeg and friend

Jereboam: I've got some difficult questions for you, Doeg.
Doeg: All right...let's try.
Jereboam: I'm prompted by words like these: "It was essential that Jesus should become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able to atone for human sins." Over the years I've also heard a good deal about the Incarnation fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy: "The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light." Then, according to Simeon, Jesus was "a light for revelation to the Gentiles."
Doeg: I'm with you so far.
Jereboam: And Paul has mentioned the concept of Jesus living in his people.
Doeg: That's right.
Jereboam: But, if I've understood correctly, Jesus was also with the Father from the very beginning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God."
Doeg: Right again.
Jereboam: Here's my problem: what about all that time before the Incarnation? Jesus existed, but wasn't available to people, because they didn't know he was there. He seems to have been constantly present, except that no-one realised.
Doeg: It sounds strange when you put it that way.

Jereboam: And certainly he couldn't live in his followers, because there weren't any.

Doeg: Obviously not.

Jereboam: But maybe he entered the lives of our ancestors too, even though they didn't understand it in those terms. Maybe the impact of the Incarnation was that people finally accepted what had already been happening for thousands of years.

Friend: Excuse me: I couldn't help overhearing that. What about the salvation of the world on the Cross? That happened at a specific moment in time.

Doeg: Ah – maybe I can answer that. I was taught that Jesus, before his resurrection, descended into the realms of the dead, to awaken the righteous to eternal life. So ultimately good people from all ages were included in his death and resurrection.

Jereboam: I'm relieved to hear that. I suppose it's another example of God working outside the restrictions of time.

Doeg: You manage to come up with some tricky issues, Jereboam...

Jereboam: I did warn you.

THIS WEEK

Sunday we observe as **The Feast of the Presentation or Candlemas** – transferred from 2nd 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 today our focus in the liturgy turns towards Lent and Easter.

Monday is the feast day of St. Agatha, Virgin and Martyr, Tuesday is that of the Martyrs of Japan, and Saturday, Saint Scholastica.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week are from the First Book of Kings and continue the story of David's family as his son the wise Solomon is now King of Israel. He is honoured and praised for his wisdom, but falls away from the Lord and worships false gods, and for that the Lord tells him he will lose the Kingdom of Israel. During the week, the fast-paced Gospel of St Mark continues with stories of Jesus healing, teaching and challenging the authorities. As Jesus and his disciples

step on shore, people scurry from all over to bring those in need of healing. The Pharisees, watching for Jesus to break rules, criticize his followers for not washing their hands. Jesus responds, "You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." Jesus teaches his followers, "Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile." Jesus goes to Tyre and tries to slip into a house unnoticed, but a foreign woman finds him and Jesus, impressed by her faith, heals her daughter. He heals a man of his deafness and speech impediment and like so many others he healed, he orders him not to tell anyone. "But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it." Moved with pity, Jesus feeds the huge crowds who had followed him for three days. "They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over – seven baskets. There were about four thousand people."

Next Sunday St mark's Gospel offers us a dramatic vision of glory before the start of Lent. Jesus is transfigured before his closest followers and revealed as the fulfilment of God's promises.

A homily for Candlemas

+ It doesn't seem that long ago that we were being reminded (rather annoyingly, I think particularly when people start doing it half way through September) of how many 'sleeps' there were until Christmas. But as far as I know, it's only the Church which keeps track of the days *after* Christmas, which is where this particular Feast we are celebrating today, that of the Presentation of the Lord, comes in.

The Presentation falls forty days after Christmas, that was Friday really, but we tend these days to transfer Candlemas to the nearest Sunday so more people can experience it, and as today's Gospel explains we commemorate both the purification of Mary and the presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

Cultures change, and so happily has the status of women, so it's hard for us to understand the customs surrounding childbirth. Forty days

after Jesus was born, Mary received the Jewish rites of purification. In the culture of the day, this didn't carry with it any implication of sin, but rather a physical and emotional re-integration into the community at large outside the immediate family. And at the same time her new-born child, if he was the first born son, was ritually "presented" in the Temple, the heart and centre of the worship of the God of Israel. Well-off parents would have offered a lamb, but those without so much money could offer in its place a pair of pigeons. So Joseph and Mary came to the Temple to carry out rites which had their origin in the Escape of the Israelites from Egypt, a thousand or so years before.

And we see in these religious rites a pattern, because when Jesus - as Incarnate Son of God - is seen as taking part in the rituals of Judaism, he gives them a new significance above and beyond what they had previously symbolised.

We know that the first Christians, who were steeped in knowledge of the Old Testament far more than we are, saw the huge irony that in these presentation rituals Jesus' parents who cannot afford a lamb for sacrifice are offering to the Temple priests the true Lamb of God, destined to take away the sins of the world.

And, as the Gospel tells us, while they are in the Temple the infant Jesus is taken up in the arms of Simeon (we are not told he is a priest but he is often depicted as one - as in the south-west window here at St Arvans) and the old man recognises him as the Messiah, the light to enlighten the gentiles (the non-Jewish races of the world) and to be the glory of God's people Israel.

So here is the reason we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation with lighted candles, the reason the old English name for it is Candlemass, the mass of the candles. There's a similar name for it in most other European languages.

St. Sophronius, writing in Jerusalem in the sixth century, tells us how the early Church celebrated this event with a candle-light procession:

"Our lighted candles are a sign of the divine splendour of the one who

comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole world radiant with the brilliance of his eternal light. Our candles also show how bright our souls should be when we go out to meet Christ."

Today's feast, then, in many ways seems to evoke once again the great mystery of Christmas. It's a feast of Incarnation. This child of Blessed Mary, is Emmanuel, God-with-us, and is now recognised, according to the words of the prophet Malachi in our Old Testament reading today, to be the Lord entering his Temple. Simeon and Anna are representatives of the faithful remnant of the Jewish faith who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

But this celebration today faces in two directions, back to Christmas and on towards Easter. The mystery of the cross falls across this episode in Our Lord's life as Simeon describes Jesus as a "sign destined to be rejected", or "a sign of contradiction" and that for Mary, a sword will pierce her heart. This is a feast of glory and of light, full of hope because the Incarnate Lord, who died and rose again, is present with us until the end of time. And again, it's not too fanciful, I think, to suggest that the candles we will hold today themselves anticipate the candles we will carry on Easter Eve, when as our celebration of the Resurrection begins, we hear the words: "*Christ our Light. Thanks be to God.*"

Simeon is filled with joy to see this child of Mary and he gladly recognises him as the light of the world. At the same time, as we said, he speaks of Jesus that he will be a sign that is rejected, a sign of contradiction. For us who follow The Incarnate Lord, we know well that his true glory is revealed not here, but upon the cross where God's makes a complete identification with suffering humanity and leads us through death to Resurrection life.

Today, then, we leave behind the extended Christmas season and start to look towards those life-giving mysteries of the cross and resurrection. Lent begins in a week and a half. +

Thought for the Week

"We embrace where we love, we take into our arms whom we love; so that we love Jesus and embrace Jesus - love Jesus and take Jesus - love Jesus and take him into our hands, and into our arms, and into our mouths, and into our hearts."

Mark Frank (1612 – 65)
1st Candlemas Sermon

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

4th February 2024:

Kept as ***The Feast of the Presentation or Candlemas***

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
Hymns: (*New English Hymnal*)
187 (t:387) , 44; 185; 157
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with hymns
at St Mary's Penterry
4 p.m. Family Eucharist
at St James' Devauden

NEXT SUNDAY

11th February 2024:
The Sunday before Lent

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

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

Readings at the Eucharist :

2 Kings 2. 1-12;
Psalms 50. 1-6;
2 Corinthians 4. 3-6;
St Mark 9. 2-9

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

A REMINDER THAT LENT BEGINS THIS YEAR ON FEBRUARY 14th

Please return your Palm Crosses from last year, as they are burnt to provide the ashes for the ceremonies on Ash Wednesday.

The celebration of the Eucharist on Ash Wednesday (14th) will be at 10 a.m. at St Arvan's

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

*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
Tel 07711961237

World Community for Christian
Meditation

What can we do before Lent Begins?

Anything worth doing is worth preparing
for. The purpose of Lent is to prepare
ourselves so that God's grace will help
transform our lives, giving us greater
freedom, a greater joy, and a deeper
desire for love and service.

Lent can truly be a season of grace for us
if we give ourselves to it with our whole
hearts. In few weeks days before Lent, we
should begin to prepare our hearts and
minds by realising how much we wish to
grow in freedom, how much we need to
lighten our spirits and experience true joy,
and how much some parts of our lives
really are in need of change.

However, If we imagine Lent as an
"ordeal" or a time we dread in some way,
then we've probably already prepared
ourselves not to get very much out of it.

Lent begins early this year. Ash
Wednesday is on 14th February - and we
need to be ready to hit the ground running
on that day, rather than just beginning to
think about how we can use the season
ahead of us. Before we get to Ash
Wednesday, we should start asking
ourselves some basic questions - "What
does God want us to receive from him this
Lent? This question may require that we
slow down a little bit and so be able to
listen to him and to others.

Too often, Ash Wednesday can be like
any other day, except that we manage to
get to church and get ashes on our
foreheads. Is there anything we can do so
that the symbolism of Ash Wednesday
becomes a reality? How will we make
prayer, self-denial and acts of service a
part of our lives as we prepare for Easter?
.Ash Wednesday is a very good place to
put into action what we have planned.
It doesn't take a lot of time to prepare for
the beginning of Lent. It's just a matter of
wanting to do it, and focus - God can do
a great deal with that. We can give God
more of a space within which to touch our
hearts if we begin to establish some
simple patterns of prayer and self-
discipline.
May the Lord bless us all on this coming
Lenten journey towards the joy of Easter.

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.**