

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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25th February 2024

The Second Sunday of Lent

The Collect

Almighty God, you show to those who are in error the light of your truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, 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

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.' God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.' [17. 1 - 7; 15 - 16]

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

Psalm 22, 22 - 30

R/ All the ends of the earth shall turn to you, O Lord.

Praise the Lord, you that fear him; stand in awe of him, O offspring of Israel; all you of Jacob's line, give glory. For he does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither does he hide his face from them; but when they cry to him he hears them.

R/ All the ends of the earth shall turn to you, O Lord.

My praise is of him in the great assembly; I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied, and those who seek the Lord shall praise him: 'May your heart live for ever!'

R/ All the ends of the earth shall turn to you, O Lord.

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall bow before him. For kingship belongs to the Lord; he rules over the nations.

R/ All the ends of the earth shall turn to you, O Lord.

To him alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship; all who go down to the dust fall before him. My soul shall live for him; my descendants shall serve him; they shall be known as the Lord's for ever. They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn the saving deeds that he has done.

R/ All the ends of the earth shall turn to you, O Lord.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans [4; 13 - 25]

The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his

descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations') – Abraham believed in the presence of the God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations,' according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith 'was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him,' were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

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

[Gradual Hymn]

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory
God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son;
All who believe in him
have eternal life
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory**

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Mark

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the

scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." [St Mark 8. 31-38]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may take up our cross and walk with Christ along the way that leads to Resurrection
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: our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall this week:
Joan Priddis

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'

Rabbi Joseph

Jereboam: Today I am speaking with Rabbi Joseph, who will be well known to many of our readers in Caesarea Philippi. Rabbi Joseph, you've recently taken an interest in the teachings of Jesus, haven't you?

Rabbi: Yes. Many people had spoken to me about him enthusiastically. Finally last week I was able to attend one of his...well, "meetings" seems too grand a word for it...one of his sessions.

Jereboam: And your reaction?

Rabbi: I was quite bowled over, to tell you the truth: such integrity, such humility – and such an engaging man. But really, you know, a lot of his teaching isn't that different from what the rest of us might say, if only we had the courage of our convictions. During the past week I've realised that lots of passages from the Scriptures relate very closely to Jesus' message, except that he doesn't water them down, as other people tend to do – myself included. Take, for example, a couple of texts that I've read in the last few days: "The Lord is my light and my help" and "You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you". Now what Jesus would say, if I've grasped him correctly, is: "The Lord AND NOBODY ELSE is my light and my help" and "You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you ALL THE TIME." He just gives it to you straight.

Jereboam: I must say I'm surprised at his popularity, given the uncompromising nature of his message.

Rabbi: I couldn't agree more, but look at them all, young and old, flocking to him. You know, I'm often told I need to make my teaching more relevant to modern life. Well, Jesus turns all that on its head: it's not a question of him making himself relevant to modern life – he challenges you to make modern life relevant to his message.

Jereboam: So you'll continue your interest in his teaching?

Rabbi: Definitely: we can all learn, even at my age.

Jereboam: I'm glad to hear that.

THIS WEEK

On this Second Sunday of Lent we hear both in the Genesis Old Testament reading and from St Paul of the faith of Abraham, and in the gospel Jesus foretells his death and resurrection. Peter resists this message, and after rebuking him, Jesus tells his disciples that in order to share his divine life they must first take up their cross and follow him. Each day this week the first reading at the Eucharist is chosen to prepare for the

gospel and the theme of both readings is complementary.

This second week of Lent begins with Jesus telling us: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful... For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." All week we will be taught by Jesus about the simple lessons of being his followers. "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted." Jesus predicts his passion again. Again, they misunderstand, and so he says, "whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant." Jesus tells the Pharisees a parable about a poor man and a rich man. The rich man asks Abraham to warn his brothers about the consequences of this behaviour. Abraham answers: "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead." Then Jesus tells the scribes and religious leaders the parable about the farmer whose servants were abused by his tenants. Finally, they killed his own son. Jesus concludes, "the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit." While tax collectors and sinners are being drawn to Jesus the Pharisees complain, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So Jesus tells them the wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son.

Next Sunday we hear in the book of Exodus the Ten Commandments given to Moses, St Paul speaks about the folly of the cross which is wiser than human wisdom, and in the gospel we witness Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple. He says, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." St John's Gospel tells us the point: "After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken."

A homily for the Second Sunday of Lent

+ We find ourselves just a week and a half into the Church's Lenten journey toward Easter.

As we said last Sunday, Lent is our annual reminder that God is calling us to holiness of life and that the path we have to follow involves repentance – a change of mind and heart - and certain

attitude of self-forgetfulness and spiritual renewal. Lent is a period of six weeks or so when we try to make extra space to allow the grace of God to permeate our lives. Like the Gospel message itself, Lent isn't about restriction or negativity, it's about the gift of radical freedom so as to allow the grace of God to work in our lives - to open ourselves up and let the voice of God soak into our lives through prayer, through a certain amount of sensible self-discipline and simplification, and by trying to redirect our attention towards those who are in need of our help in some way.

But we're not trying to *save ourselves* by what we do in Lent; we know that God has already saved us by Christ's death and resurrection. We will only be making an extra effort in the next six weeks or so to give him our attention more fully and to give his grace a chance to work in us. And that's the key to everything: the free gift of the Easter life of God's Son which is offered to us all. Lent is about unblocking our hearts and our minds and putting on one side those things which so often get in the way. Hence the Lenten observances of prayer, self-denial and acts of generosity and service (which is really what almsgiving means for us). As someone has said, Lent is a three course meal.

Today's Gospel passage from St Mark comes immediately after he is recognised by Peter, and then the other apostles, as the Messiah, the Christ. Despite his ordering his disciples not to speak about it, Jesus accepts being identified with the awaited Messiah, but not with the idea of the Messiah which had taken hold of the popular imagination at the time – a political leader who would liberate Israel from Roman domination and establish the kingdom of God on earth by military force - hence the stern warnings he give his closest followers not to talk about it – he doesn't want to be identified with a half-truth or a misguided interpretation of who he might be.

Jesus needs to correct that assumption which seems to have been shared even by his own closest disciples, the

apostles. The harsh words addressed to Peter, designed to shake him out a belief in a violent liberation struggle, "Get behind me, Satan!" is, of course, couched in similar language to that he used to the tempter in the desert.

Jesus is striving to make it very clear that the Messiah - the Christ - has to be identified

with the suffering servant of God, and – more than that - that God himself - in an act of almost reckless compassion - has to identify totally with the sufferings of his people and to die – as we all die - in order to restore and heal the brokenness of humanity.

Peter's intervention, then - put down here so emphatically by Jesus - is an example of a purely human, perspective, a worldly point of view you might say – a passionately held but wholly inadequate short-cut - which doesn't measure up to the profound mystery of the task ahead of the one who comes to restore and renew, not the earthly kingdom of Israel, but the relationship between God and humanity, who comes to set us free from everything that separates us from our true selves made in the image of God.

"If anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me... Whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it" (Mk 8.34).

This Lent and every Lent, through the practice of prayer, self-denial and service, we are given the means, and supplied with the grace necessary, to make our way to Easter with our hearts and minds freed, purified and renewed. It's up to us to make use of the opportunity – the gift we are presented with. .

Here at the altar we are fed by the eternal sacrifice which results from those words of Jesus in today's Gospel - by his life being 'poured out' and 'given up' for us. And, for our part, when we come to the altar, we also offer ourselves - our lives - as part of Christ's mission to transform the world. Here at the altar, we come to share the resurrection life Christ has gained by his victory, and we are sent out to proclaim that by the way we live. +

Thought for the Week

""The Paschal Mystery is above all the mystery of life in which the Church, by celebrating the death and resurrection of Christ, enters into the Kingdom of Life which He has established once for all by His definitive victory over sin and death. We must remember the original meaning of Lent, as the 'ver sacrum,' the Church's "holy spring" in which the catechumens were prepared for their baptism, and public penitents were made ready by penance for their restoration to the sacramental life in a communion with the rest of the Church. Lent is then not a season of punishment so much as one of healing.

Thomas Merton. Seasons of Celebration.

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

25th February 2024:

The Second Sunday of Lent

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
Hymns: (New English Hymnal)
76; 453; 350; 449 (t 352)

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

NEXT SUNDAY

3rd March 2024:

The Third Sunday of Lent

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 :

Exodus 20. 1-17;

Psalms 19. 7-14;

1 Corinthians 1. 18-25;

St John 2. 13-22

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

March 9th 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

Keeping a good Lent

A Beginning New Patterns During Lent. Something all of us can do is commit ourselves to being more reflective during Lent. It just means that I'm going to make a point of being more observant, more aware of what I'm experiencing - paying more attention to what is "automatic" behaviour. And, I then start paying attention to my desires. We have all kinds of desires. During Lent, I can reflect upon the desires I currently have and which of them need to be purified, which may need to be abandoned, and which are wonderful desires that are there, but I haven't acted upon them. Naming our deepest desires will guide the choices we make to establish new patterns for Lent. Praying

Lent is the time to start new patterns of prayer. Perhaps I haven't been praying at all. This is a great time to choose to begin. It is important to begin realistically. I can start by simply pausing when I get up and taking a slow, deep breath, and recalling what I have to do this day, and

asking for grace to do it as a child of God. I may want to go to bed a half an hour earlier, and get up a half an hour earlier and give myself some time alone to read the readings for the day, the spiritual readings we have chosen to follow. I may choose to go to Mass each day during Lent. I may choose to get to church on Sunday, just 10 minutes earlier, so I can reflect a bit.

Eating

Lent is a great time to change our eating patterns. This is not about "losing weight" or "getting in shape," though for most of us, paying attention to what we eat, will make a difference in our overall health. This is about being more alert. Anyone who has tried to diet knows that something changes in us when we try to eat less. The monks in the desert, centuries ago, discovered that fasting - simply not eating - caused a tremendous boost to their consciousness. Not only did their bodies go on "alert," but their whole person seemed to be in a more heightened state of attention. The whole purpose of fasting was to aid prayer - to make it easier to listen to God more openly, especially in times of need. Only Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are named as days of fasting we all do together. (And that fast is simply to eat only one full meal in the day, with the other two meals combined, not equal to the one.) On the Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent, we may want to try to fast more intentionally. Of course, always conscious of our health and individual nutrition needs, we may want to try to eat very little, except some juices, or perhaps a small amount of beans and rice. We will experience how open and alert we feel and how much easier it is to pray and to name deeper desires. Not only will I feel less sluggish and tired, I will feel simply freer and more energised.

The other powerful advantage of fasting is that it can be a very simple gesture that places me in greater solidarity with the poor of the earth, who often have very little more than a little rice and beans each day. Powerful things happen in me, when I think about those people in the world who have so much less than I do. And, it's a great cure for self-pity.

Practicing Generosity

Almsgiving has always been an important part of Lent. Lent begins with the powerful *Isaiah 58*, on the Friday and Saturday after Ash Wednesday. It is important to give ourselves the experience of fasting from being un-generous. Generosity is not simply giving my excess clothes to a place where poor people might purchase them. It's not even writing a "generous" check at the time a collection is taken up for a cause that benefits the poor. These are wonderful practices. Generosity is an attitude. It is a sense that no matter how much I have, all that I have is gift, and given to me to be shared. It means that sharing with others in need is one of my personal priorities. That is quite different from assessing all of my needs first, and then giving away what is left over. A spirit of self-less giving means that one of my needs is to share what I have with others. Lent is a wonderful time to practice self-less giving, because it takes practice. This kind of self-sacrificing generosity is a religious experience. It places us in solidarity with the poor who share with each other, without having any excess. It also joins us with Jesus, who gave himself completely, for us. Establishing new patterns of giving will give real life and joy to Lent.

Practising Penance

When I sprain my ankle, part of the healing process will involve physical therapy. It's tender, and perhaps it is swollen. It may be important to put ice on it first, to reduce the inflammation. I may want to wrap it and elevate it and stay off of it. Then I will need to start moving it and then walking on it, and eventually, as the injury is healed, I'll want to start exercising it, so that it will be stronger than it was before, so that I won't as easily injure it again.

Penance is a remedy, a medicine, a spiritual therapy for the healing I desire. The Lord always forgives us. We are forgiven without condition. But complete healing takes time. With serious sin or with bad habits we've invested years in forming, we need to develop a therapeutic care plan to let the healing happen. To say "I'm sorry" or to simply make a "resolution" to change a long established pattern, will have the same bad result as wishing a sprained ankle

would heal, while still walking on it. Lent is a wonderful time to name what sinful, unhealthy, self-centred patterns need changing and to act against them by coming up with a strategy. For example, if the Lord is shining a light into the darkness of a bad pattern in my life, I can choose to "stop doing it." But, I have to work on a "change of heart" and to look concretely at what circumstances, attitudes, and other behaviours contribute to the pattern.

Putting It All Together - Alone and With Others

In the end, the prayer of St. Augustine places us in the right spirit for Lent: *O Lord, our Lord, you have created us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*

Lent is indeed how God draws us home, as individuals. But, it is also a very communal journey. We never journey alone, no matter how "lonely" we may feel. We are always journeying together. If we can experience our journey in communion with others, it makes it so much clearer that we are on a journey together. When I can share my experience with even one other close friend, or with my regular worshipping community, I can enjoy and share the support and environment that allows grace to flourish.

Let us pray for each other on this journey, especially those who need and desire a change of heart on this pilgrimage to Easter joy.

Adapted from Lenten material on the Creighton University's *Online Ministries* web site:
<http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html>
Used with permission.

A Musical Meditation for Holy Week

**Wednesday 27th March
2024**

**5pm
With**

**Kate Price 'cello
Charles Matthews, piano**

Tickets £10

Available from the Vicarage
01291 622 064

(Profits to St. Arvans Church)

Saturday 23rd March 2024

Severn Wye Ministry Area invite you to join a walk around the
Western churches:

St Peter's Newchurch to Shirenewton setting off 9am

Shirenewton to Mounton setting off c 11.30am

Mounton lunch break c 12.30pm setting off c 1.30pm to Mathern

Mathern to St Pierre setting off c 2.30pm

There will be a short pause for prayers at each church.

Total distance is around 9 miles but you are welcome to join us for all or any
part of the route (and to bring well behaved dogs on leads).

Bring your own refreshments. Please wear suitable clothing and footwear for
the weather and terrain. Toilets available at Shirenewton and St Pierre

All timings approximate

www.severnwyema.co.uk

☎ For more information about the day: Hilary 01291 624924 or 07812 110628

*This is not an official 'organised event' - we all walk independently, and at our own risk.
We can arrange lifts back from St Pierre to cars left at other points on the route*

In case of poor weather, please check the website in case we have to cancel