

# 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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The Vicarage, St Arvans  
01291 622064;  
Mobile 07867803479  
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

**10<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**The Fourth Sunday of Lent B**  
*Mothering Sunday*

### The Collect

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those Sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, 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 Numbers [21. 4 - 9]

The Israelites set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.' Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, 'Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.' So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

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

### Psalm 107 1-3, 17-22

**R/ Give thanks to the Lord,  
for he is good, and his mercy  
endures for ever.**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endures for ever.

**R/ Give thanks to the Lord,  
for he is good, and his mercy  
endures for ever.**

Let all those whom the Lord has redeemed proclaim that he redeemed them from the hand of the foe. He gathered them out of the lands; from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

**R/ Give thanks to the Lord,  
for he is good, and his mercy  
endures for ever.**

Some were fools and took to rebellious ways; they were afflicted because of their sins. They abhorred all manner of food and drew near to death's door. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

**R/ Give thanks to the Lord,  
for he is good, and his mercy  
endures for ever.**

He sent forth his word and healed them and saved them from the grave. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his mercy and the wonders he does for his children. Let them offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and tell of his acts with shouts of joy.

**R/ Give thanks to the Lord,  
for he is good, and his mercy  
endures for ever.**

### A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Ephesians [2. 1-10]

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been

saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

*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  
Everyone who believes in him  
has 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 John](#)

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

**J**esus said to Nicodemus:  
‘Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is

true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’

*[St John 3. 14 - 21]*

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

### **For Your Prayers**

Our mothers, whether living or departed  
Our holy mother, the Church  
For an increase in devotion to Blessed Mary, the mother who leads us to Jesus  
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 Firth; Sr Ruth Furneaux;

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed: Alan Beattie; Leslie Moulden our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall this week: Robert Dare, John Cann; James Langley; Ian Drake

### **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'*

### **Merari**

**Jereboam:** I'm glad I've bumped into you again, Merari. I wanted to ask you something else, following on from our conversation the other day.

**Merari:** What was that?

**Jereboam:** Well, I remember Jesus once saying that people should allow light to fall on everything they do. Something like that, anyway...

**Merari:** Yes, you're right: "The man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God."

**Jereboam:** So how does that tie in with your comments the other day about communal and private worship? To what extent can your lives be private? Are they private at all?

**Merari:** Many aspects of our lives happen in private. That's only natural; it's right and proper too. Jesus himself often avoided the crowds: he'd choose to spend time alone or with a few close friends. So there's nothing wrong with privacy – far from it. What Jesus meant is that we shouldn't use a cloak of secrecy to hide our sins. What we do in

private is just as important as what we do in public.

**Jereboam:** But if you do something in private, and it doesn't affect anyone else, where's the problem?

**Merari:** I think I'd give two answers to that. First of all, you've got to be consistent: if you believe that something's wrong, you have to remain opposed to it, whether or not anyone's there to witness it.

**Jereboam:** Yes -- and your second answer...?

**Merari:** ...is that sins do affect other people, even if we commit them in secret. When we sin, we change ourselves. We drive a wedge between ourselves and God. If I were to beat my wife and children – not that I have any intention of doing so, mind you – but if I did beat them, I'd be rejecting their dignity as part of God's creation. So indirectly I should be rejecting God. My relationship with his creation as a whole would be compromised.

**Jereboam:** I see that, but isn't it a bit tough, wanting people to behave perfectly all the time?

**Merari:** What do you expect me to say?! Bear in mind that many things really don't matter when you're by yourself. No-one's telling anybody to worry about their appearance when they're on their own. All we're saying is that you can't let your moral standards slip.

**Jereboam:** I suppose so.

## THIS WEEK

On this Fourth Sunday of Lent we hear Jesus' words to Nicodemus in St John's Gospel. Jesus will be lifted up on the cross to heal us from the power of sin and death. This gospel, which is written like a trial, tells us the verdict. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." The gospels this week are all from St John's Gospel. After two days of healing stories, the opposition against Jesus builds. In Cana, in Galilee, Jesus heals the son of a royal official. Back down in Jerusalem, he heals a man who was sick for 38 years, incurring the wrath of his enemies because he did it on the Sabbath. Because of this, and because he called God his Father, they now plot a way to kill him. Jesus says his opponents do

not want to come to him for life. He calls God his father and says, "I have testimony greater than John's." Unafraid of his opponents, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for a feast and openly tells people that he has come from God. They did not arrest him then, "for his hour had not yet come." Thinking they know where Jesus is from (in both senses: where he lived now and his origin in heaven), his enemies insist that Jesus can't be a prophet: "Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." **Next Sunday**, the Fifth Sunday of Lent, traditionally known as Passion Sunday, we hear in St John's Gospel. Jesus says that the "hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." However, he describes this glory in a surprising way, which explains who he is for us and who we are called to be: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be."

## A homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

+ Probably what you really don't want today is to come to be in Church and listen to a man going on about motherhood – *mansplaining* about motherhood, I think the current phrase would be. So you'll be glad to know that isn't what I'm going to do. Yes, today is Mothering Sunday, or Mother's Day in the secular world here in the United Kingdom but not elsewhere. And this Sunday has come to be known as Mothering Sunday almost by accident – a combination of inferences drawn from the traditional readings for today, and past customs in wider society. It's the reason we will bless and hand out flowers at the end to remember our own mothers and give thanks for them. We also give thanks for Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, and for the motherhood of the Church which gives birth to us in the waters of baptism. Today is also called Laetare Sunday or Refreshment Sunday. What all three names have in common is this idea of a mid-Lent relaxation, a kind of spiritual mini-break to be refreshed in order to

continue the Lenten journey with renewed energy and commitment. . So whatever it's called, and whatever it's atmosphere compared to the other Sundays of Lent, this Sunday *is* bit different. But despite its somewhat less sombre feel, today is also a kind of turning point in the six weeks of Lent; after today our thoughts and prayers concentrate more and more on the passion and death of Our Lord. Holy Week and Easter are now on the horizon.

So today's Gospel tends to foreshadow and anticipate the liturgies of Holy Week. It begins in darkness and suspicion and a growing sense of threat and opposition. Nicodemus, a senior Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme religious court or assembly, and part of the establishment of the day, has come to meet Jesus under cover of night. Presumably he wants to find out more about him and his teaching, but dares not do so openly because Jesus and the Pharisees are already at loggerheads over the interpretation of the law. To be seen openly with Jesus would be to court distrust or worse among his colleagues and his friends. We have to assume that this is a genuine enquiry; he has heard Jesus speak and has been impressed, and perhaps more, by what he has seen and heard. Who is this man who speaks and acts with such authority, grace and compassion? He is drawn to Jesus, so he takes the risk of a clandestine meeting. Nicodemus is a seeker after truth and longs to understand more of what lies behind Our Lord's words and actions, the parables and the signs and miracles, and the word on the street. So he comes *by night*, John tells us before the passage we've just heard, under cover of darkness - and the word John uses in his Gospel is ambiguous - it can mean 'darkness' as in the night-time, but also 'darkness' as in doubt and uncertainty. The 'darkness' hides their conversation from those who wouldn't understand, but also prevents Nicodemus from understanding what Jesus at first says to him - Our Lord's words about the imminence of God's Kingdom - the beginning of a new covenant between

God and his people - leave Nicodemus, deeply rooted in the traditions of Jewish law, struggling to understand.

And so Jesus goes on to allude to the episode in the Book of Exodus - well-known to Nicodemus and to all scholars of the law and the scriptures - the story of the children of Israel, wandering in the wilderness on the way to the promised land, being attacked by fiery serpents, the bite of which could prove fatal. Moses, the Exodus account says, made a bronze model of the serpent and wove it around a pole and held it aloft and, the Exodus narrative goes on to say, all who looked upon the image of the serpent were healed. It became a symbol in the tradition and memory of the Jewish people of the healing power of God.

So Jesus relates this story of the bronze serpent to the impending mystery of his passion and death. Like the bronze serpent, Jesus himself will be lifted up and those who gaze upon him in faith will be given new life - the life of the Resurrection. What is being spoken of here is the cross as both the act and the symbol of the healing of the wounds of humanity. We come before the cross with all our brokenness, and the brokenness of the world around us, and with all the hurts, petty and substantial, we receive from others, not forgetting those we inflict on others and on ourselves. And here, in the light of the resurrection, we find both forgiveness and healing. In the presence of the passion and death of the Lord, the Lord lifted up in a triumph that transcends all tragedy, we are somehow given the key to a more profound understanding of the meaning and purpose of our lives, of our struggles, our pain and suffering and of our mortality. To encounter Jesus is to begin to be united with him in the mystery of his sacrifice and in his dying to himself in order to live for us. At the heart of his message is the need to let go our selfishness and egoism so we might experience the life of God and the gift of Resurrection.

And what of the human element of today's Gospel - what about

Nicodemus? We are not told whether he went away from this first secret meeting with Jesus satisfied or still full of questions. What we do know is that, later in St John's account, Nicodemus openly defends Jesus' right to a fair hearing at an assembly of his fellow Pharisees, and that after the Crucifixion, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, at their own expense, prepare the body of Jesus for burial. Tradition says that he became a believer and is venerated - in the Eastern Church - particularly as a saint.

And in this Eucharist, the saving events of the Gospel come alive for us; what we do here is always a celebration, an offering, a lifting up of the mystery of the dying and rising of Christ. We see him lifted up before us for the healing of the whole creation - and by his wounds we ourselves are healed.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ... +

### Thought for the Week

"Prayer, mercy and fasting:  
These three are one,  
and they give life to each other.  
Fasting is the soul of prayer;  
mercy is the lifeblood of fasting.  
Let no one try to separate them;  
they cannot be separated.  
If you have only one of them or not all  
together, you have nothing.  
So if you pray, fast;  
if fast, show mercy;  
if you want your petition to be heard,  
hear the petition of others.  
When you fast,  
see the fasting of others.  
If you hope for mercy, show mercy.  
If you look for kindness,  
show kindness.  
If you want to receive, give."

*St Peter Chrysologus (c380 - 450)*

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

**10<sup>th</sup> March 2024:**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Lent**  
**Mothers' Sunday**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
Hymns: (*New English Hymnal*)  
161 (*t. St Botolph*); 186; 285; 357

11.30 a.m. Liturgy of the Word  
with hymns at St Deiniol's Itton  
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

**NEXT SUNDAY**  
**17<sup>th</sup> March 2024:**  
**The Fifth Sunday of Lent**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

11.30 a.m. Liturgy of the Word  
with hymns at Holy Cross, Kilgwrwg

### Readings at the Eucharist :

*Jeremiah 31. 31-34;*  
*Psalms 51. 1-12 or 119. 9-16;*  
*Hebrews 5. 5-10;*  
*St John 12. 20-33*

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

## What's On

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

**April 6<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

## *A Musical Meditation for Holy Week*

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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](http://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*

## The Fourth Week of Lent

The gospels this week make it very clear, toward the end of the week, that Jesus faced opposition that couldn't accept who he is. We see that Jesus comes to lay down his life that we might live. So, this week of Lent is an important time for us to ask ourselves if there are any parts of our hearts, any of our daily routines, that run counter to Jesus and his desire to give us life.

This kind of honesty can transform our lives. It can allow the grace of God to bring a reconciliation and healing that we might not have imagined.

Even if it hasn't been easy to get really engaged with Lent so far, we can still make a beginning, even now. The keys are openness and desire. If we can feel any attraction, any sign that the Lord is possibly drawing us, then the Lord can work with us - no matter what resistance or fear we might also be experiencing. All we have to do is act out of these desires and simply ask the Lord for the grace to help us be more honest and more open to what he is offering us. For example, we can ask for the grace to examine our consciences more thoroughly. We could try a different approach to facing any resistance we might have to the Lord's working in us. We might not commit the big sins, but we may not have examined what we fail to do. Who am I failing to love, to forgive, to be generous to? From whom am I withholding affection, care, reconciliation? Where can I live more honestly, with more integrity? How might I proactively change my own personal patterns of escape with patterns of care for others?

It is a time of grace when we can experience moments of “recognition,” or self-understanding. But it is not a grace to beat ourselves up or to become self-absorbed in our own guilt.

It is grace to feel grateful to the Lord for showing us a way to recognise and overcome obstacles to the life he is offering us. It is grace to feel our spirits lighten as we feel drawn to greater freedom and peace. It is incredible grace when we are drawn to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This week, let us give thanks to the Lord who deeply desires our greater freedom and joy.

As we go to bed each night, let us thank the Lord for what we saw that day and renew our desires for the next day of grace.

*Adapted from the "Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer" on the Creighton University's **Online Ministries** web site:  
<http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html> Used with permission.*