

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

17th March 2024

The Fifth Sunday of Lent B

The Collect

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the prophet

Jeremiah [31. 31 - 34]

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new

covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

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

Psalm 51 1- 12 *Miserere mei, Deus*

**R/ A clean heart
create in me, O God.**

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving-kindness;
in your great compassion
blot out my offences.
Wash me through and through
from my wickedness
and cleanse me from my sin.

**R/ A clean heart
create in me, O God.**

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you only have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.
And so you are justified
when you speak
and upright in your judgement.

**R/ A clean heart
create in me, O God.**

Indeed, I have been wicked

from my birth,
a sinner from my mother's womb.
For behold, you look for truth
deep within me,
and will make me understand
wisdom secretly.

**R/ A clean heart
create in me, O God.**

Purge me from my sin
and I shall be pure;
wash me and I shall be clean indeed.
Make me hear of joy and gladness,
that the body you have broken
may rejoice.

**R/ A clean heart
create in me, O God.**

Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

**R/ A clean heart
create in me, O God.**

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews [5; 5 - 10]

Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'; as he says also in another place, 'You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek.' In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest

according to the order of Melchizedek.

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.
If a man serves me, says the Lord,
he must follow me;
Wherever I am,
my servant will be there also.
**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.

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.
They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And

I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

(St John 12. 20 - 33)

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

For Your Prayers

That this Passiontide we may walk along the way of the cross with the Lord
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; 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: Brian Drake; Alec Davies; Margaret Argile

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'

Eliphaz

Jereboam: I often think that there's something rather beautiful about this whole question of resurrection.

Eliphaz: I see what you mean, but we don't believe in something just because it happens to be beautiful. We believe in resurrection because...well, because we do. Beauty doesn't come into it.

Jereboam: But you have to admit that there's something lovely about the whole idea of death and resurrection -- of regeneration, if you like. It can be relevant to everyday life in all sorts of ways. Someone might fail to achieve something, but might feel reassured that new life can be breathed into their efforts. Conflict can be followed by peace. In many circumstances the idea of resurrection offers valuable encouragement.

Eliphaz: Well, yes: again I see what you mean -- and I don't actually disagree with you. There's one thing, though. We believe that Jesus' death and resurrection transformed the world. Our relationship to God, fundamental questions about good and evil and how we deal with them...all those were

changed for ever. I shouldn't want to reduce such a momentous upheaval to the level of "everything will be all right in the end; don't worry." We're talking about the crucifixion of the Son of God, not just about disappointment.

Jereboam: I didn't mean to suggest....

Eliphaz: Oh, don't worry. Let's talk about something that Jesus said: "Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest." Those words remind me that nothing on this earth becomes godly without some element of loss, of death. Sometimes that process is difficult and even painful. Ultimately everything we are and everything we do must be refashioned, to preserve their best features in a purer form. The challenge, I suppose, is to identify those godly aspects which will survive, and strive to develop them.

Jereboam: Now we're thinking along similar lines; that's the sort of thing that I meant.

Eliphaz: But you appreciate that the idea of resurrection – and of Jesus' resurrection in particular – is a tougher, more demanding aspect of our faith.

Jereboam: I'm sorry if I trivialised it.

Eliphaz: I ought to thank you really: it probably did me good to articulate my thoughts.

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THIS WEEK

In the Gospel for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, 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."

Tuesday is the Feast of St Joseph. The first readings at the Eucharist this week prepare for the gospels. We begin with the long, but well worth reading, story of Susanna, which ends in "blessing God who saves those who hope in him." The bronze serpent on a pole reminds us of Jesus' saving cross. Three young men refuse to commit idolatry and show us how God protects "the servants who trusted in him." God entered a covenant

with Abraham. In the midst of his persecution, Jeremiah praises God, "For he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!" God promises to unite the people in an everlasting covenant.

The gospels are again from the Fourth Gospel. Presented with a woman caught in adultery, Jesus replies, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Reminding us of the bronze serpent and his death, Jesus says, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM." To the children of Abraham and to us Jesus declares, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." "Whoever keeps my word will never see death. ... Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM." They heard what they thought was blasphemy and tried to stone him. Jesus simply told the truth, because, "the Father is in me and I am in the Father." After the raising of Lazarus, the plans were set to destroy Jesus. The high priest says the prophetic words, "it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish." Next Sunday is Palm Sunday as we make our way into Holy Week. We hear the gospel about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, St Paul's invitation to us to imitate Jesus who emptied himself, and the whole Passion, this year from St Mark.

A homily for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

+ We are now entering the most solemn part of Lent – the time when our focus shifts from turning around our own relationship with God to the contemplation of the cross. It's all part of the same pilgrimage towards Resurrection, but now we concentrate more on the specifics of Our Lord's own journey, and this week prepares us to walk the way of the cross with Jesus and to meet and in some way embrace the cross in our own lives. And this is what this morning's Gospel is saying to us. When in response to the enquiry of the little group of Greeks, Jesus alludes to the mystery of His death, he is saying to us all that his passion and death are somehow the key to a more profound

understanding of the purpose of our lives. To see Jesus is to begin to be united with him in 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.

In today's Gospel, as he does so often, Jesus uses an example from the natural world to explain his meaning. "Unless a grain of wheat falls onto the earth and dies, it remains alone." The grain of wheat left by itself produces nothing; it's only when it seems to have died and has been buried in the ground that it is able to bring forth fruit - in far greater abundance than a single grain. This is true of Jesus himself; we see this most clearly in the events of Holy Week and Easter, but it is true for us, too, in so far as we deepen our relationship, our true encounter with Christ in the light of the cross, the focus of our lives, the paradoxical source of all our freedom and the reason for our hope and joy. Here, now, as we celebrate the unfolding story of our redemption of the Church's year, as we spend time in prayer, the events of the Gospel come alive for us. We too say 'we wish to see Jesus', and we do see him lifted up before us, here - at every celebration of the Eucharist. Here we see Christ, and he draws us to himself, when we come together to offer his saving death and resurrection to the Father and to receive his life in Holy Communion.

We will see and encounter Jesus in a particularly intense way through the celebration of the liturgies of next week - Holy Week. We miss the point *completely, absolutely and altogether* if we allow ourselves to be put off by the angst, the suffering and the pain of Holy Week and simply try to experience Easter Day in isolation from the events leading up to it. After the events of the last year, the liturgies of Holy Week speak to us directly and clearly; by engaging with the events of the saving death of Christ they alter our way of looking at the world and how we treat one another.

Many people's scepticism about the Christian faith, if you take that at face value, is partly about a desire to

reject fantasy and a need to face up to harsh realities – yet our society’s public discourse has never been more filled with fantasy, wild conspiracy theories and abject wishful thinking. In stark contrast, we believe that we find salvation and freedom and hope – as the Greeks did in the Gospel today – in the reality of the divine / human encounter in Christ, in the Gospel message of love and compassion, and in our participation in the mystery of Jesus’ ultimate and victorious confrontation with death and the interior and external darkness of a world fallen away from the true human values taught and lived out by Jesus in the Gospels. This is what we now begin to focus upon at this most sacred period of the Christian year. +

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

17th March 2024: The Fifth Sunday of Lent

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

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with hymns
at Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg

NEXT SUNDAY

24th March 2024:

PALM SUNDAY

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

Readings at the Eucharist :

Liturgy of the Palms: *St Mark 11. 1-11*

Liturgy of the Passion:

Isaiah 50. 4-9a;

Psalms 31. 9-16;

Philippians 2. 5-11;

St Mark 14.1 – 15.47

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

April 13th 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,
Pwllmeryc, 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

*Western Churches Walk
Next Saturday 23rd March
see below for details*

*At St Arvan's Church
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

The Fifth Week of Lent

This week is filled with drama. We continue to prepare ourselves to be open to God's grace. We continue consciously to try to choose Lent, to live out our observance of Lent, in very concrete ways. We are examining our patterns and realigning our priorities. Our hearts are being renewed, as we experience God's reconciling love and beg for the gift of healing. All this is wonderfully supported by the drama of the daily liturgies.

We begin with the raising of Lazarus. During the week, we hear very powerful stories about the accusation against Susanna, a healing image lifted up in the desert, the three faithful witnesses who survive the fiery furnace, the account of God's covenant with Abram, Jeremiah's fearful trust in the midst of the plot against him, and Ezekiel's incredible vision of restoration of the nation - that God will make a new and everlasting covenant.

Each of these readings is matched with a gospel from St John. We hear about witnesses and testimony and judgment, about his being lifted up (on the cross and in glory), about the freedom / liberation he has come to bring, about himself as the fulfilment of God's covenant, the new and everlasting covenant. And, we can feel the opposition rising against him. And we realize that it is all "for us." The gospels this week make it very clear, toward the end of the week, that Jesus faced opposition which 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.

*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.*