

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, **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

21st April 2024 The Fourth Sunday of Easter

The Collect

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

The Jewish rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the

Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone." There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.' [4: 5 - 12]

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

Psalm 23

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.**

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.**

He revives my soul and guides me along
right pathways for his name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.**

You spread a table before me in the
presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.
Surely your goodness and mercy
shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house
of the Lord for ever.

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.**

A reading from the first letter of St John [3; 16 - 24]

We know love by this, that the Son of God laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases God. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my own and my own know me.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And with your spirit

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St. John [10, 11 - 18]

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the Pharisees:

'I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the

sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

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

For Your Prayers

For vocations to the sacred ministry of the Church.
That we may follow the voice of Christ the Good Shepherd in all we do.
For all pilgrims to the holy places of the faith and all who support them
That in Eastertide we may continue to rejoice in the glorious Resurrection of Christ & live in joy and hope
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; Althea; Eira Firth; Jenny Sherwood; James Burnam.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Matthew Hoskins; Keith Jones, priest; Jonathan; Isabelle Ingledew; Rose Jones; Harvey Banks, Patrick Semple, 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'

Shelah

Shelah: Did I ever tell you about the lovely lady who used to supervise us when we were young?

Jereboam: I don't think so.

Shelah: She was wonderful, she was. I was thinking about her the other day. I remember one time I'd decided to

climb the tree next to our house. My parents didn't mind us doing that, but this lady – Esther her name was – she asked me not to. I think she didn't want to be responsible if I had an accident, which was fair enough, of course. I didn't see it that way at the time, though. I told her that my parents would let me climb the tree, and I did it in spite of her. As you might guess, she was quite annoyed, and when my parents returned home, she told them what had happened. That evening my mother sent me round to her home to apologise. I was quite worried about what would happen, but she was so gracious about it, telling me that we could make a fresh start and put our disagreement behind us. It was a perfect lesson in how to forgive someone. Her forgiveness was such an easy, natural thing – she was clearly well practised at it. Maybe someone had forgiven her too, at some point in her life. I'd say that you learn to forgive by experiencing it yourself. Anyway, it's funny how these things come back to you: I don't normally think about that incident much, but the other day someone was really rude to me, and the memory of it came flooding into my mind. I tried to copy what Esther had done to me. The trouble was that the person who'd offended me then responded really aggressively. Then I felt that Jesus was there with me. It was as if he was consoling me, putting his arms around me. I knew that he understood, after everything that he went through. He'd already experienced my pain; he was bigger than it. He encompassed it, you might say. It was the same with Esther: you knew instinctively that she understood – and I mean "understood", not just felt sorry for you.

Jereboam: This all begs the question: if Jesus forgives and consoles you, why do you need anyone else? It almost sounds as if this lady Esther gave you more comfort than Jesus did.

Shelah: Here's how I see it. People who make us feel happy are actually helping us to open up to a part of God's love. His love is always there, but we don't always appreciate it. Our interaction with the people around us helps us to see him more clearly – or that's what should happen, anyway. Speaking for myself, I caught a glimpse of God that day, but I saw him through Esther. Look, I've been

talking far too much – I'm sorry to be so tedious.

Jereboam: Not at all – I might even be able to use what you've said in one of my articles.

THIS WEEK

On the Fourth Sunday of Easter we reflect more deeply on the Paschal Mystery. Peter quotes psalm 118 in preaching to the religious authorities and defending the healing of the crippled man, "in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead." In St John's Gospel, Jesus tells us, "A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Thursday is the feast day of Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church.

The first readings this week continue the story of the growth of the Church community in the Acts of the Apostles. The gospels this week are taken from St John's Gospel, chapters 10, 12, 13 and 14 – they emphasise who Jesus is - from the Father and one with the Father. He has come to bring us light and life. He promises us that he is the gate, the way to life. And, he assures us that if we make our home in him, he will be in us, and we will thereby be one with Jesus and the Father. He says, "I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved." "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me." "From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM." "Do not let your hearts be troubled." "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." "If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it."

Next Sunday we hear the gospel from St John about Jesus as the true vine. We are the branches that are pruned to bear more fruit. We are invited to remain connected with Jesus, that we might make our home in him, and bear much fruit.

A Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Easter

+ If we look at today's gospel we may think of gentle pastoral images drawn from our own experience of the British countryside. But the imagery that Jesus is using is a long way from that. To begin with, the landscape he is calling to mind isn't one with which we would be familiar except maybe from holidays in the Mediterranean. It's the rocky, semi-barren hill country of the warmest parts of the Mediterranean and the middle east. Not only that but at the time entering into that landscape would be to recognise the ever-present, lurking possibility of violence and insecurity, both from wild animals and human thieves and robbers, not to mention the often inhospitable nature of the climate.

So the safety and survival of a flock of sheep in that environment would depend entirely on the strength of their bond with the shepherd, the one who is there to watch over them. This is a troubled, uncertain scene, full of the possibility of disaster.

And the words of Jesus about the Good Shepherd in today's gospel reading come at a pivotal point in the Gospel according to St John. The Lord's words, 'I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me' are said when the opposition to Jesus and the threat to his life are gathering and growing stronger. St John tells us that he has just cured the man born blind, and that the authorities are looking for ways to destroy him. It's also clear that they are beginning to persecute those who follow him. Again we are told just before this gospel passage that the man born blind has been expelled from the synagogue for telling others about his healing at the hands of the one he has come to believe is the Christ. Opinion is divided and polarised, divided between those who listen to the teaching of Jesus and those who refuse. There is a very deep division developing between those who accept Christ and those who reject him.

It's in this context that Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd who protects and calls out to his flock in the midst of the troubles and uncertainties of human life. We shouldn't forget either that the image of the protecting shepherd used by the prophets of the Old Testament is

one which is used about God himself. This is another of those 'I am' sayings of Jesus in John's Gospel where Jesus is being identified clearly with God himself. Here in St John's Gospel as Jesus is entering into ever greater danger he calls on his disciples to follow him in such a way that when the violence and conflict reach their conclusion in his passion and death they are united to him and to one another. And when he says, "*As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep,*" he makes it very clear that this unity is not just an earthly belonging together, but is founded upon the unity of the Holy Trinity. When Jesus tells his disciples that he and the Father are one, he is telling them that the community he is calling them into, the community of the Church, is not just an earthly institution, but a sign of the divine purpose at work in this world and the next. Today on this Good Shepherd Sunday, we are very familiar with the image of the Lord as the Shepherd lovingly caring for his sheep. Today's Gospel reminds us that it is Christ, who calls each one of us, who truly *knows* each one of us, and that his knowing us gives us new life - the Easter life of Resurrection.

On this Sunday when we each reflect upon our own callings to follow the Good Shepherd, what Jesus is saying to us is that through him we hear the voice of God himself, calling us to a share in the overflowing, unlimited love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through him we find the way to life, the life of God's Kingdom itself. And this is where we become aware of the great charge placed upon each and every professing Christian called to witness to the Gospel. The truth of our faith will only be glimpsed by those with whom we wish to share it if the way we live is consistent with what we say we believe, even if falteringly and partially - which is probably the most we can hope for much of the time – we're never going to be perfect examples and we're in deep trouble once we start to believe we are. That might be in strange and unexpected ways - we are all different personalities, with different gifts and attributes; there is no 'one size fits all' rigid pattern and model of Christian discipleship, apart from our sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ. But the essential point of discipleship, if I can put it like that, is that the gifts we are given should be used for the benefit of the whole

Christian community and for those beyond it, supporting and confirming one another in our own pilgrim journeys to encounter the reality – the mystery - of the Risen Christ.

I suppose what I am saying is that in the end it's down to us, at least in the sense that we need in the first place to be receptive to what the Lord is asking of us. But in order for God to communicate his grace to us, we have to be prepared to hang around with our eyes and ears open, if I can put it that way, to be prayerfully receptive and alert, in order for him to give anything to us at all.

And its only through God's grace, freely given and gratefully received, will an understandably sceptical world be able to see that the message of Easter is one of freedom, joy and goodness - that the Holy Spirit, first breathed upon the apostles by Christ after his Resurrection, and later poured out more publicly at Pentecost, is truly at work in the world re-fashioning a new creation out of the old. Only then will the world recognise that by placing our trust in the living reality of Jesus Christ and his message of love and mercy, we can become a new humanity, reconciled and forgiven, and united to what St Paul calls the first-fruits of the new creation, the Risen Christ, himself. And as for ourselves, the Good Shepherd reaches out to us to draw us into the life of his resurrection. He offers us life in abundance, without limit or end: do we have the courage to accept his invitation?

Many thanks to Jean Papps and to everyone who helped organise and run the highly successful Fashion Show last Friday evening at St Arvans Memorial Hall .

Please put 7th May in your diaries. The installation of our new clergy, the Rev'ds Zoe and Barney Pimentel, as Ministry Area leader and Team Vicar respectively, will be held at St Mary's, Chepstow at 7.30 p.m. All are welcome!

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

21st April 2024:

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

9 a.m. Family Service
at St James, Devauden
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg

NEXT SUNDAY

28th April 2024:

The Fifth Sunday of Easter

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St Deiniol's, Itton

Readings at the Eucharist :

Acts 8. 26-40;
Psalms 22. 25-31;
1 John 4. 7-21;
St John 15. 1-8

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

St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat

2.30–4 p.m. at the Meeting Rooms
Everyone Welcome

May 11th and usually
every second Saturday
of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

**The Severn Wye Ministry
Area Prayer Group meets
each Thursday at 7.30 p.m.
All are welcome!**

SATURDAY MAY 18th 2024

Severn Wye Ministry Area

'Rogation' Walk

**The Churches of Itton,
St Arvans, Penterry,
Devauden
and Kilgwrrwg**

**You are welcome to join us for
as much of the day as you
wish! including well-behaved
dogs on leads)**

Stage 1: St Deiniol's Itton to St Arvans Church

we will be setting out after prayer and
a blessing at about * 9 a.m.,
arriving at **St Arvan's Church**
at about 10.15 a.m.

Stage 2: 11 a.m. St Arvan's to St Mary's, Penterry

**Stage 3: St Mary's, Penterry to St
James** – setting out from Penterry at
1.p.m. after a break for lunch
(please bring your own refreshments)

Stage 4 St James', Devauden to Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg

- setting out at 2. p.m.
**The walk will end at Kilgwrrwg
at 3 – 3.30 p.m..**

For more information about the day,
including transport arrangements at
the end of the walk, contact The
Vicarage, St Arvans 01291 622064 or
email frmichaelgoilop1@gmail.com

** All times are approximate, please dress
appropriately for the weather conditions
and terrain.*

*This is not an official 'organised event' -
we all walk independently, and at our own
risk.*