

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
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17th November 2024

**The Third Sunday
of the Kingdom**

2nd Sunday before Advent

The Collect

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life: grant that we, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as he is pure; that when he shall appear in power and great glory we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he 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 Daniel

In the third year of King Cyrus a word was revealed to Daniel.
'At that time Michael, the great prince,

the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. [12. 1-3]

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

Psalm 16

**R/ You, Lord, are my portion
and my cup**

Preserve me, O God,
for in you have I taken refuge;
I have said to the Lord, 'You are my lord,
all my good depends on you.'
All my delight is upon the godly
that are in the land,
upon those who are noble in heart.

**R/ You, Lord, are my portion
and my cup**

Though the idols are legion
that many run after,
their drink offerings of blood
I will not offer,
neither make mention of their names
upon my lips.
The Lord himself is my portion
and my cup;
in your hands alone is my fortune.

**R/ You, Lord, are my portion
and my cup**

My share has fallen in a fair land;
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.
I will bless the Lord
who has given me counsel,
and in the night watches
he instructs my heart.
I have set the Lord always before me;
he is at my right hand; I shall not fall.

**R/ You, Lord, are my portion
and my cup**

Wherefore my heart is glad
and my spirit rejoices;
my flesh also shall rest secure.
For you will not abandon
my soul to death,
nor suffer your faithful one to see the Pit.
You will show me the path of life;
in your presence is the fullness of joy
and in your right hand are pleasures
for evermore.

**R/ You, Lord, are my portion
and my cup**

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews [10. 11-14, 19-25]

Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, 'he sat down at the right hand of God,' and since then has been waiting 'until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.' For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Stay awake and stand ready,
Because you do not know the hour
When the Son of Man is coming.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

**Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St. Mark** [13. 1 - 8]

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

As Jesus came out of the temple,
one of his disciples said to him,
'Look, Teacher, what large stones
and what large buildings!'
Then Jesus asked him,
'Do you see these great buildings?
Not one stone will be left here upon
another; all will be thrown down.'
When he was sitting on the Mount
of Olives opposite the temple,
Peter, James, John, and Andrew
asked him privately,
'Tell us, when will this be,
and what will be the sign
that all these things are about to be
accomplished?'
Then Jesus began to say to them,
'Beware that no one leads you astray.
Many will come in my name and say,
"I am he!" and they will lead
many astray. When you hear of wars
and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed;
this must take place, but the end is still
to come. For nation will rise against
nation, and kingdom against kingdom;
there will be earthquakes in various
places; there will be famines.
This is but the beginning of the birth
pangs.'

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

For Your Prayers

All who are caught up in war or conflict
All those without adequate food or shelter
The peoples of Gaza, Israel and Lebanon
& 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;
The Revd Stuart Jackson; Anne-Louise;
Helen; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron;
Margaret; Margi; Althea; Eira Firth;
Bob Osborne;

For the Departed:

The recently departed: our own departed
relatives & friends, and those whose
anniversaries of death fall at this time:
Douglas Higgs; Jeremy Winston, priest;
James Griffin; Edward Roderick Hill

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
people whose lives have been affected*

*in some way by Jesus Christ and his
teaching.*

Veronica

Veronica: You're Jereboam,
aren't you?
Jereboam: Yes, Madam, I am.
Veronica: Ah, I've read several
of your articles. The name's Veronica,
by the way.
Jereboam: Delighted to meet
you, Veronica.
Veronica: Yes. Tell me, this
Jesus fellow: is he rather unstable?
Jereboam: Unstable? I don't think
I've heard anyone describe him like
that before. What gives you that idea?
Veronica: Well, I was just
speaking to one of his men, and
apparently Jesus tells them that the
world could come to an end at any
moment and that we all have to be on
our guard. I mean, honestly, what's the
fellow playing at?
Jereboam: I suppose we can't
really argue with him. Clearly none of
us does know when the world will
come to an end.
Veronica: Yes, but that's not the
point. Look: I am a spiritual person. I
resonate with the eternal goodness of
the world. I inhale with every breath
the wondrous rapture of the divine
creation. Frankly, I find this Jesus
fellow rather disheartening.
Jereboam: I suspect that Jesus
also lays greater emphasis on the
question of good and evil.
Veronica: Ah, for me, Jereboam,
there is no good nor evil, only spiritual
and unspiritual.
Jereboam: I think you've hit on a
significant difference between yourself
and Jesus there. He consistently
speaks of the conflict between good
and evil, and how, at the end of the
world, God will judge us according to
our actions. At least that's how I
understand him.
Veronica: It all sounds rather
like a farmer sorting out the sheep
from the goats.

Jereboam: Funnily enough, Jesus has used that very image himself.

Veronica: So he believes in some sort of hell, does he? It sounds like it.

Jereboam: He does speak about that, yes.

Veronica: Hardly encouraging, is it?

Jereboam: On the contrary, Veronica, many people seem to find the concept highly motivating... coupled, of course, with the alternative prospect of heaven.

Veronica: I do tend to forget that so few people have my spiritual gifts.

Jereboam: Maybe I should just add that Jesus reckons that it will be God who judges us. He doesn't offer his listeners the option of passing judgement on each other – in fact, he positively discourages it.

Veronica: Oh, really...how extraordinary. Goodbye.

Jereboam: Goodbye, Veronica. It was a pleasure to meet you.

THIS WEEK

As we near the end of the liturgical year, we have more "end time" readings. Today we hear about being ready for the end of time. "In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates." It is the good news that we can stay alert and will be ready when it is our time to recognize the Lord's coming in our own life's challenges today. On Thursday the Church celebrates the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On Friday we remember Saint Cecilia, virgin and martyr, the patron saint of music and musicians. During these last two weeks of the Church's year, the first reading is from the Book of Revelation, with its mystic imagery. Written for readers who were very familiar with apocalyptic writings, the writings send a hidden message of salvation to the earliest communities of Christians, and to us.

St Luke's Gospel continues with the story of the blind man who hails him, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!" An unpopular tax collector, Zacchaeus,

climbs a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus and is given personal recognition as Jesus says, "Zacchaeus, today I must stay at your house." Luke's version of the parable of the talents offers praise for the servant who has invested the ten coins and earned another ten. "Well done, good servant! You have been faithful in this very small matter; take charge of ten cities." In Jerusalem, Jesus weeps over the city, foreseeing the destruction that is coming, "because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." Jesus drives out the sellers from the temple while the chief priests plot against him. Religious leaders try to trap him with a trick question about a woman who marries seven brothers but Jesus refutes them.

Next Sunday we celebrate Christ the King. In the first reading from the Book of Daniel, we read of a vision he has of "one like a Son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven." In St John's Gospel Jesus tells Pilate, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

A Homily for Remembrance Sunday

+ November always seems to be a time of endings. The harvests are long over, the long warm days of barbecues and sitting outside in our free time - not that we were able to do much of that this year - seem unimaginably long ago now, the last of the leaves have come off the trees with the dry weather and the breeze of the last few days, and winter is well and truly on its way. It's starting to get dark at half past four *and* its getting colder. In terms of the liturgical year we have only today and next Sunday's Feast of Christ the King to go before the beginning of Advent and preparation for Christmas. We are almost at the end of the year, traditionally a time for Christians to reflect on the meaning of the communion of saints, a time for remembering the departed, and for thinking about the "last things" - the end of life and the end of the world – shorthand for the things that really matter, for talking about the things that fade and come to an end, and the things which endure.

But even in the context of all this, today's Gospel can sound pretty alarming. Chapter thirteen of St Mark's Gospel to

someone not carefully nurtured in the Christian tradition can read very much like an apocalyptic science fiction story - where do you think a lot of those ideas come from? Or maybe in this increasingly dysfunctional world of ours, it doesn't seem that divorced from our present reality.

But from a first glance there doesn't seem in the passage we've just heard to be very much hope and grace or "good news," which, after all, is one of the meanings of the word "Gospel." To complicate matters further, throughout the Church's history there have always been individuals or small groups of people who have taken it upon themselves to brandish this chapter of St Mark's Gospel in the face of those around them and provoke psychosis, fear, panic and a totally unbalanced version of the faith of the Church. We see them around even today! It's also been used by those with more 'respectable' pedigrees who are interested more in enforcing social control than the freedom given to all the children of God.

And right there I suppose, we have to make it crystal clear, that the Church is in no position to lecture society about anything, and is as much, if not actually more, under the judgement of God for what it does or what is done – or isn't done – in its name than anyone or any institution on the planet. I'm not going to disguise my anger or sense of betrayal and utter frustration this morning. Today is supposed to be Safeguarding Sunday – we are a different completely independent province - there are so many things we now do right here, but given the news from over the border it's obvious that there is so much more that has to be done: there's still an instinctive defence of the institution, there's too much deference to those in authority bound up with it, too little communication, not enough accountability, and too little humanity. Religion can be dangerous. I'll leave it there for now.

Back to today's Gospel - a preoccupation with the end of the world, peddled by those with a very distorted religious or psychological viewpoint, can have and has had a devastating effect on many people. It either reinforces the idea of a God who is always angry, ready to vent his wrath on the world at the expense of the message at the heart of the Gospel of freedom from the worst aspects of our

human nature, and the new life of the Resurrection, or in others it reinforces the idea of all Christians as credulous anti-scientific religious fanatics who are obsessively concerned with sin, negativity and cruel punishment.

We always need to read scriptural passages in context. In the context of the whole Gospel and in the broad context of teaching down the centuries.

When Jesus speaks about judgement at the end of days, he's using the kind of language which would have been very familiar to his hearers, part of that tradition of Jewish religious imagery which we see in the reading from the book of Daniel this morning.

However, we also have to say that none of this reduces one bit the seriousness of what we are being told. It's important we don't fall into the trap of trying to strip away the mysterious, supernatural heart of the Christian faith and then end up wondering what we have left. On the other hand we don't want to be credulous, superstitious and downright unintelligent in the way we view the world.

We don't know the timing of the end of the world, or the end of human history, but it would be foolish in the extreme to console ourselves with talk of Jesus using first century biblical linguistic conventions and forget that, for each one of us, the end of the world - the end of life – the end of *our* human history - could be at any moment. And of course, we don't know. The world had a beginning; it's hardly a startling revelation, particularly in the age of man-made climate disaster, that it will have an end, too – especially in its ability to sustain human life.

And it has always been part of the Church's interpretation of Jesus' words about the end of the world to say that we are meant to try at least to live each day of our lives as if it could be the last. We don't know when the end of the world itself will take place and Our Lord's words in the Gospels tell us quite explicitly us not to be obsessed with it. When we are called to live our lives as if the end may be round the corner, we are being told to live our lives of faith, our lives of human relationships, wholeheartedly, to pursue the things that really matter, the Gospel values of love and mercy – in that sense to "seize the day" and live it to the full.

On a practical level, today's readings invite us to meditate on the concept of the

end of the world for us. And this isn't meant to make us feel depressed, but as a means of reminding us that everything in this world comes to an end, even our own lives. This is just an adult facing of the facts and not an attempt to evade the inevitable truth for each one of us. So these last Sundays of the Church's year and the first Sundays of Advent are a time for us to reflect, to feel the presence of God, to reflect on how we are living and to ask God to give us the strength to live faithfully no matter what happens. Jesus is telling us that we are not here in this world to play safe but to trust that his is the way which leads to life.

So often we try to wage war against time either trying somewhat futilely to bring it under our control, or attempt to avoid thinking about its consequences at all by the innumerable forms of escapism available to us in contemporary culture. Jesus himself did not attempt to avoid this future, but allowed himself to be delivered to death. The future offered him pain and suffering, yet he freely embraced this future on the cross, so that we ourselves might no longer live in fear of what tomorrow will bring. Because of his death and resurrection, for us the future is Christ. He is with those who hope and trust in him, leading them through the anxieties of this life to the joy of his eternal kingdom. We are not left to our own devices, or even to our own resources or capabilities. He is the Good Shepherd, who is our guide and our helper along the often difficult pilgrimage of faith. He is with us here at the end of the Christian year as we reflect on where we are, where we have come from and where we wish to go.

Saints Day:

*St Cecilia
22nd November*

St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat

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

***December 14th and usually
every second Saturday
of the month***

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

***17th November 2024:
3rd Sunday of the Kingdom***

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

***NEXT SUNDAY
24th November 2024***

***Christ the King
The Sunday before Advent***

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

Readings:
Daniel 7. 9-10, 13, 14
Psalm 93
Revelation 1. 4b-8
St John 18. 33-37

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

We hope to resume both the daily celebration of the Eucharist and the Wednesday evening reflection and night prayer at the beginning of Advent.

