

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., 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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E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

8th December 2024 The Second Sunday of Advent

The Collect

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever.

AMEN

A reading from the prophet Baruch

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God. Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting; for God will

show your splendour everywhere under heaven. For God will give you evermore the name, 'Righteous Peace, Godly Glory.' Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height; look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them.

For they went out from you on foot, led away by their enemies; but God will bring them back to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne. For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up, to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God. The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God's command. For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory, with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

[5. 1 - 9]

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

Canticle: St Luke 1. 68 - 79
Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

Blessèd be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, born of the house of his servant, David.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

Through his holy prophets he promised of old, that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us. He promised to show mercy to our forebears and to remember his holy covenant.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight, all the days of our life.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, To give his people knowledge of salvation, by the forgiveness of their sins.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us, To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

**A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Philippians [1; 3 - 11]**

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full

insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Prepare a way for the Lord.
Make his paths straight,
and all mankind
shall see the salvation of God.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Hear the Holy Gospel
according to St Luke

Glory to you, O Lord.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."'

[St Luke 3.1–6]

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

For Your Prayers

That our advent journey may be blessed with joy and hope.
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
The people of Georgia
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; Althea; Eira Firth; Margi and Bob Osborne.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Elizabeth Arnold-Davies, deacon; Jean Davies; David Aitken; Robert Thompson; Gerdien Versteeg; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: David May; Derek Jones, priest; Ronald Harry; Audrey Reece.

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.

Joanna

Jereboam: So, Joanna, if I've understood correctly, you're a cousin of John – the one they call "the Baptist".

Joanna: Yes, that's right: our fathers were brothers. The two families always lived in the same area, so John and I know each other pretty well.

Jereboam: Excuse me saying this – and I haven't seen or heard John myself – but I have the impression that he's quite a stern man, even perhaps a bit angry.

Joanna: No, no: he's a very sensitive person...very open, very kind.

Jereboam: Somehow I've been given a different impression.

Joanna: What's happened with John is that he's always sensed the full possibilities of people. He sees everyone's gifts and respects the absolute dignity of every person. At the same time he feels great sadness when these possibilities are distorted by people's weakness. That's why he

has an urge to wash away any negative influences – almost like a physical process. Even in his childhood he did his best to put right anything he saw as being damaged by human failings. Clearly there's a connection with his ministry of baptism.

Jereboam: And he's always known Jesus too?

Joanna: Yes: in that case it's the mothers who were cousins. Their families met only occasionally because they lived a considerable distance away from one another, but nevertheless there was always a strong understanding between the two boys.

Jereboam: What did they used to speak about?

Joanna: As I remember it, John often used to speak of the potential of people he knew – of how he wanted to help them to realise that potential. Jesus didn't say all that much, but he encouraged John. He'd say "yes, I think you're right" or "I agree" or something like that. So whilst John would react to everything and discuss it, I had the feeling that Jesus observed a great deal, but was waiting for his opinion to mature. John was always more immediate, but we could all see that nothing escaped Jesus' attention.

Jereboam: That's very interesting. Just one more thing: is this rumour true about John eating locusts? I can't help feeling intrigued!

Joanna: I'm sorry, I don't know. You'd need to ask him that yourself.

Jereboam: Well, thank you, Joanna. Goodbye.

THIS WEEK

This Sunday's readings begin with these words from the prophet Baruch: "*Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever.*"

St Luke's Gospel offers us a first look at the promise of John the Baptist as he cries out, "*Every valley shall be filled and*

every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Monday is celebrated as the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, transferred from 8th.December. Friday is the feast day of **Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr**. Saturday is that of **Saint John of the Cross, priest and mystic**.

We focus on the first readings from the Prophet **Isaiah** this week. With the Babylonian Captivity, the temple was destroyed, the leaders of the people were taken away to Babylon and a remnant was left behind. A life-threatening desert separated the people. In this context, Isaiah proclaims God's vindication of the people in exile. The desert will be reborn. A highway will bring their liberation. And the signs will be that there is healing and peace. "Comfort, give comfort to my people," says the Lord. The valleys will be filled in, the mountains leveled - every obstacle will be overcome - to build a highway for our God to come and save us. The people can hardly believe the good news. They are weak and weary of their captivity. Isaiah proclaims, "They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles' wings." He offers support: "I am the LORD, your God, who grasp your right hand; it is I who say to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'" The people have been at a distance from the Lord for some time and were not obeying the commandments. The Lord says, "I, the LORD, your God, teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go." The final first reading this week is a piece from the book of **Sirach** in which the prophet Elijah is praised. Elijah, who was destined to come again to restore order before the day of the Lord, is seen in the reading from **Matthew's Gospel** to be John the Baptist.

The gospels this week, taken from various evangelists, show Jesus as the fulfillment of the liberation promised. Jesus heals the paralytic. He tends to the lost sheep of his flock. He comforts us who labor and are burdened. Jesus teaches a true wisdom.

Next Sunday: the readings begin with the Prophet **Zephaniah's** announcement of liberation and God's presence among the people

after decades of their own infidelity. In **Luke's Gospel** John the Baptist is the focus of the expectation in the people who come to him asking what to do. He exhorts them to integrity and charity and announces the one who is to come: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

A Homily for the Second Sunday of Advent

+ When we come to church in Advent we hear the longing of a people in exile; many of the readings speak of the desire of the people of Israel deported to a foreign land for their return to their homeland, others speak of the restoration of the holy city Jerusalem to its former glory, others again speak of the return of a king to reign over God's people and the establishment of peace and justice to the whole world. Like the Israelites in exile, Christians, too, have a sense of exile, a sense that this is not our real home, a sense that we too are strangers beside the waters of Babylon, singing the Lord's song in a strange land. Now this has always been the case, as part of God's Church - which in the Resurrection of Christ exists in two worlds - we are citizens of this earth and of the kingdom of heaven; we cannot help but feel a sense of alienation from the world we see around us, a sense in which we don't wholly belong in the sense that we don't quite see things in the same way as the culture around us. I don't want to exaggerate this: there's a danger here of falling into all kinds of strange rabbit holes. This is just part of our calling in baptism, it goes with the territory - the Gospel and the world has never and will never be the same thing or hold the same values dear. And this has been the case down the ages in the face of injustice and cruelty and violence, in the face of the demands of human power which involve us in a denial of Christ's lordship of love over human conduct and over everything that is. At this time of year we are right to feel a bit uncomfortable when we see shops decked out with expensive decorations and consumer products no one could possibly really *need*, when there are people outside on our own streets sleeping rough or getting by being referred to food banks, not to mention those in parts of the world where people are subjected constantly to demonic violence while the rest of us look on in callous

disregard or, more likely, feel so powerless to change things that we end up shrugging our shoulders and saying, well, that's the way things are. We as Christians ought to feel a certain amount of discomfort at our own involvement in all this when we have to join the crush of Christmas shoppers in a culture where that's all Christmas is about. Perhaps when we turn our backs on the true message of the Gospel, we look for salvation in the strangest of places. The world and all its creatures desperately need kindness, empathy and compassion, yet wherever we look the opposite is on the rise.

We're living in a period now which feels a bit like an object lesson to all of us about the nature of life's unpredictability. And this unfamiliar, radical uncertainty remains with us as we journey through the Season of Advent. Advent is a time of uncertainty – one of those times in-between. There's a sense of mingled longing, anticipation and excitement. It's all about waiting and finding in the waiting a new meaning. It's about journeying and, what every long distance pilgrim or traveller becomes aware of sooner or later, finding as much, if not more, meaning in the journey as in the destination.

There's part of a poem by the late critic, writer and poet Clive James, which sums up the essential aim of Advent - this idea of a consciousness of the preciousness of time and the shortness of life:

*Once I would not have noticed;
nor have known
The name for Japanese anemones,
So pale, so frail.
But now I catch the tone
Of leaves.
No birds can touch down in the trees
Without my seeing them. I count the bees.*

He wrote those lines after the diagnosis of the illness which would eventually kill him, but, of course, for most of us, and for most of the time, we're, quite naturally, understandably, not really aware of what's called the 'Sacrament of the Present Moment' in this kind of way. Living in the moment – that intense appreciation of now, the present time – doesn't come easily to us. Maybe this awareness of the immediacy of the present is something felt by those who are aware of the unpredictability of life and the swiftness of

time - this appreciation of the here and now, *the absolute present - this moment* and not what might or might not come next.

One of the traditional themes of the first part of Advent is the idea that we should live each day as if it were our last – again, this idea of being really present in the world and in what we do and with the people we interact with – a call to be the people we were always meant to be, freed from other concerns to be fully, authentically human.

The real Advent message is just that: being able to wait meaningfully in hope and to be able to see things clearly. And it's an uncomfortable hope because this spiritual journey of opening up ourselves to grace and change has first to begin in ourselves before we can meaningfully hold out our hands in joy to welcome the God who becomes one of us. So that's what we're meant to do: to allow eternity and time to meet, not only in Christ himself, but in our own hearts and minds - to allow the dawning grace of the God who is *always 'now'* into our anxious lives, which are so full of stress, and so often preoccupied with trying to predict and control the future. And, of course, we find we can't do that now.

The monk and influential spiritual guide, Thomas Merton, another author who died far too soon, was very clear throughout his writing that we can never hope to change the world unless the process of change first begins in our own hearts and lives, otherwise what we say is no more than a kind of ego trip, without heart or substance - a kind of glib, chattery, churchy, type of politics. It is only *the presence* of Christ which enables us to overcome our human fallibility and confusion, our resistance to the things of eternal value, the things which don't pass away.

So And Advent is above all an experience of being in time, but not of it. That is its significance - that's why it is so valuable and why *we particularly* shouldn't abandon it to the frenzy of a foolishly anticipated Christmas. This vital season is an encounter with God's time which is deeper than our own time, eternal, not fleetingly transient, a place where hope becomes reality. And the coming feast of Christmas is about just that: God's coming among us to redeem the world to lead it, and us all, into the joy of his kingdom...+

Wednesday 11th December 10 a.m. Shirenewton School Nativity Play at St Deiniol's Itton

December 14th and usually every second Saturday of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift please ring Diane on 628084

On 14th December entry will be £6 per person which includes a free raffle ticket with a guaranteed prize for everyone. There will also be Christmas carols led by Dorothy

Saturday 14th December 7 p.m. St Woolos Sinfonia Concert at St Deiniol's, Itton

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

***The Second Sunday of Advent
8th December 2024:***

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

**NEXT SUNDAY
*The Third Sunday of Advent
15th December 2024:***

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. Advent Chruistingle
Service at Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg

Readings:
Zephaniah 3.14-20
Canticle: Isaiah 12.2-6 or Psalm 146.5-10
Philippians 4.4-7
St Luke 3.7-18

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

The Eucharist is celebrated daily (except Mondays) **at St Arvans** at 09.30 a.m. *Please note new time.*

The Ministry Area Prayer Group meets every Thursday 7.45pm – 9pm

During these colder months, prayer meetings will be held in David Carne's house, The Cedars, Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric. If there is anyone or anything which you would like to be prayed for, please email david@bedlambeds.com

Advent Courses

Four Tuesdays at 7:30pm at St.Christopher's Church, Bulwark with Fr Chris Blanchard: a new **Meditation course** that will be the second ever to be run in the UK! All are welcome. Starts on Tuesday **26th November**.

Also, on Tuesday afternoons, an **Advent course based on the life and teaching of St Francis** at 2.45pm, on Tuesdays, in Collingwood, Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric. Starting on 19th November.

The Devauden Calendar is now available to buy ! £10. Proceeds to St James Devauden. This will make a Great Christmas present !! Available from Devauden shop.

What is Advent?

Advent is a Time of Preparation: Advent is a period of preparation, extending over the four Sundays before Christmas.

The word Advent comes from the Latin '*advenio*,' which means "to come to," and therefore it refers us to the coming of Christ. This means, first of all, our celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas; but also, secondly, to the coming of Christ now in our lives through

grace and the Sacrament of Holy Communion; and finally, to the Second Coming at the end of time. Our reparations, therefore, should have all these three comings in mind. We need to prepare our souls to receive Christ worthily, during our celebrations of Christmas, every day of our lives and at the end of life itself..

We Fast, Then We Feast:

Advent has been known as a "little Lent." As in Lent, Advent should be marked by increased prayer, fasting, and good works. Traditionally, all feasts have been preceded by a time of fasting, which makes the feast itself more joyful. Sadly, these days it seems that Advent today has supplanted by "the Christmas shopping season," so that by Christmas Day, many people no longer enjoy the feast.

The Symbols of Advent:

In its symbolism, the Church continues to stress the preparatory nature of Advent. As during Lent, priests wear purple vestments, and the Gloria ("Glory to God") is omitted during the Eucharist. The only exception is on the Third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday, when the clergy sometimes wear rose-coloured vestments. As on the fourth Sunday of Lent, this exception is designed to encourage us to continue our prayer and self-denial, because we can see that Advent is more than halfway over, and Christmas is just around the corner.

Keeping Advent:

We can all enjoy Christmas better—all 12 days of it, from Christmas Day to Epiphany—if we can keep Advent as a period of preparation. Abstaining from meat on Fridays, or not eating between meals, are good ways to revive the idea of an Advent fast. (Not eating

Christmas food or listening to Christmas music, if we *can* avoid either of these things- before Christmas itself is another, but good luck with that!) We can incorporate such customs as the Advent wreath into our daily ritual, and we can set some time aside for special scripture readings for Advent, which remind us of the threefold coming of Christ. Not putting up the Christmas tree and other decorations too early is another way to remind ourselves that the feast is not here yet. Traditionally, such decorations were put up on Christmas Eve, but they would remain up until the Epiphany (*January 6th*), in order to celebrate the Christmas season to its fullest. It reminds us that our Advent preparations end on Christmas Eve but that our celebration of Christmas does not end on Boxing Day but continues into the New Year at least until the Epiphany or even until the Baptism of the Lord.

