

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

29th December 2024 The First Sunday of Christmas *The Holy Family*

The Collect

Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; 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 first book of Samuel

Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, 'May the LORD repay you

with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD'; and then they would return to their home.

Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favour with the LORD and with the people.

[2; 18 - 20, 26]

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

Psalm 148 1 - 12

**R/ Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Alleluia! Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights.
Praise him, all you angels of his;
praise him, all his host.
Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

**R/ Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Praise him, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord;
for he commanded and they were created.
He made them stand fast
for ever and ever;
he gave them a law
which shall not pass away.

**R/ Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea-monsters and all deeps;
Fire and hail, snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, doing his will;
Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;

**R/ Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Wild beasts and all cattle,
creeping things and winged birds;
Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the world;
Young men and maidens,
old and young together.

**R/ Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name only is exalted,
his splendour is over earth and heaven.
He has raised up strength for his people
and praise for all his loyal servants,
the children of Israel,
a people who are near him. Alleluia!

**R/ Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians [3; 12 - 17]

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, humility, meekness, and
patience. Bear with one another and, if
anyone has a complaint against another,
forgive each other; just as the Lord has
forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
which binds everything together in perfect
harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule
in your hearts, to which indeed you were
called in the one body. And be thankful.
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;
teach and admonish one another in all
wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts
sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to
God. And whatever you do, in word or
deed, do everything in the name of the
Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the
Father through him

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

Gradual hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Open our heart, O Lord,
To accept the words of your Son.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St. Luke

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

Every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

[St Luke 2. 41 - 52]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may celebrate with joy and hope
In this Christmas Season
Those travelling over Christmastide
All who are caught up in war or conflict
All those without adequate food or shelter
The people of the Holy Land; 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, & 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; Naylor & Eira Firth;
Margi & Bob Osborne.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Elizabeth Arnold-
Davies, deacon; Jean Davies; David
Aitken; Gerdien Versteeg; our own
departed relatives & friends, and those
whose anniversaries of death fall at this
time: Nick Hoskins; Reg Cook; Ivor
Shepherd; Oliver John Gollop; Peter
Ayres; Ivor Richard; Kay Richard;

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.

Innkeeper

Innkeeper: Yes sir, I am.

Jereboam: I should imagine that you don't see this sort of thing very often. **Innkeeper:** It's never

happened before. Obviously we had the census, for a start. The whole town's been swarming with people – which is why I had to put this family in the stable in the first place. It sounds incredible, but apparently there wasn't a single guest-room left in the whole town. Imagine how I felt, putting a heavily pregnant woman in the stable... I keep telling myself that we should have gone into the stable ourselves and let them use our private room, but I didn't think of it at the start, and they won't hear of it now, even with such a tiny baby. Added to which, the stable's the only place that could possibly accommodate all these extra visitors and well-wishers.

Jereboam: Where have they all sprung from?

Innkeeper: All over the place, really. The whole town seems to have come at some point or other, and we've had shepherds from over in that direction – they were the first ones here actually. It wouldn't surprise me if we saw people arriving from even further afield too.

Jereboam: Such as myself...I'm hardly local. I made my way here when I heard something special was happening. Any idea what's caused all the fuss?

Innkeeper: Well, there is something unusual about this little family. I can't put my finger on what, though. There's been talk of angels

and all sorts – I don't know. They claim this is no ordinary baby, which I can well believe.

Jereboam: What makes you say that?

Innkeeper: Look, I realise that there's something enchanting about every couple with a new-born baby. Somehow the love of the family unit draws you in. The same is true with these people, but on a different scale. I know this sounds silly, but you see them and you want to be part of their family. You want to touch them, be part of their embrace. Not only that, though – you want everyone else to be part of it too.

Jereboam: And, unless I'm very much mistaken, there's a side of you that's wondering: "What have I done to deserve this honour?"

Innkeeper: Absolutely right. These events have transformed us all –transformed the whole place too, in ways I can't describe. I'm delighted, of course, but at the same time it's all a bit of a mystery. Come and see for yourself: they're over this way.

Jereboam: Thank you. Look, while I think of it, I take it that you're still fully booked? I think I might want to stay around for a day or two.

Innkeeper: Absolutely crammed to overflowing, I'm afraid. Your best bet is probably to have a word with one of the shepherds. They're always popping round. I guess they'll know where to find shelter on the hills.

THIS WEEK

The Sunday that follows Christmas is always the celebration of the Holy Family. There are wonderful readings from the Book of Sirach, the First Book of Samuel, and Paul's letter to the Colossians or the First Letter of John. The gospel is the story of the teen aged Jesus teaching in the temple while his parents could not find him. Jesus goes back home with his family. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in

wisdom and age and favor before God and man."

Like Christmas Week, this week is filled with special Church celebrations. Wednesday is the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, The Mother of God. It marks, too, the Circumcision and Naming of Jesus. It's also the World Day of Peace. Thursday is the feast day of Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church.

The first reading at the Eucharist during the week continues from the First Letter of St John, encouraging us to make our home in the one who makes his home in us. In Jesus, we have eternal life and we are called to love one another. The Gospels this week show us the public life of Jesus as it begins in St John's Gospel. On Monday we hear John's iconic opening lines of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Next Sunday is the celebration of the Epiphany of the Lord, The light has come into the darkness of the world and our salvation was made known to the Gentiles. The Prophet Isaiah offers us a vibrant image of hope and fulfillment: "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you." Matthew's Gospel brings us the story of the Magi and their encounter with Herod on the way to "do homage" to the newborn King of the Jews. "And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was."

A Homily for the First Sunday of Christmas

As we know liturgies, time jumps about quite a bit. So here, just a few days after Christmas Day itself, we are given a picture of a young teenage Jesus on a pilgrimage from Nazareth to Jerusalem with his family, whereas next week at the Epiphany we'll go back in time to the visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. In today's Gospel we are given a rather strange story of the boy Jesus in effect playing truant. His mother gently reproached him, and, in turn she received a gentle rebuke herself. 'if you knew me you wouldn't have

needed to look for me.' We are now into one of the major problems of family life down the ages - the incomprehension between parent and adolescent child. But before we start to make facile comparisons, let's look at this story carefully: and it hinges around the question as to who Jesus is. The name his parents were told by the archangel Gabriel to give him, Jesus, is known to almost everyone in the world. We keep it in its original, precious, Latinised Jewish form, but in English it means 'the God who saves' Joshua - *Yeshua* in Hebrew.

This is the scandal of the Incarnation : God is living in a family home.

No one seems to notice.

But everyone is astonished when Jesus suddenly begins to teach. We are told scarcely anything about his life then.

There were 'family stories' handed down to us: the announcement of his conception, his birth in Bethlehem as a new born baby, having to be placed in the animals' manger, strange and exotic visitors, the flight into Egypt, away from the threat of the State's violence and settling in safe obscurity in the small town of Nazareth. These hidden years of Our Lord can be very significant and helpful to us because they tell us that ordinariness, even obscurity, can be holy. It's not fame or human approbation that's important but the way we live. We can and must learn holiness where we are, here and now - nothing else matters. Jesus, who St John reminded us in the Gospel for Christmas day, was the Word made flesh 'lived under the authority' of Blessed Mary and St Joseph as his parents and, in fact, benefited from it and helps us to benefit too. He 'increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.'

We find help in words written by his servant St Paul, and also words said by Our Lord himself, in what we call the 'beatitudes', in the 'sermon on the mount.' St Paul writes, in today's second reading of those virtues and qualities which come from the Lord himself: "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." But - and this is extremely helpful, I think - he tells to "clothe

ourselves" in these things with the implication both that these things are available to us when we put on the baptismal clothing of Christ but that also that it is something we *consciously* have to do - *clothe yourselves* - he says - make a conscious attempt to put on love. These things don't come automatically or if we fee, in the right mood - put on love as if you were getting dressed, is what he is saying. That is, with the grace we are given, we have to work at these things. Human nature, however, has a darker side. As human beings we are all mysterious, complex, difficult to understand and live with. There is a key to it all, in the idea that the Holy Family suggests to us, and that is the idea of a God-given vocation - that there are things we are meant, intended to do and to become. Jesus is literally the embodiment of vocation - sent and called to do his Father's will: that he realises this call even in his childhood is clear from this morning's Gospel - "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" he says to Mary and Joseph who are anxiously searching for him. But there is a reason why Jesus was born to a human family - he doesn't appear magically from the heavens as do the deities of the ancient pagan religions. He is nurtured carefully and with faith by Our Blessed Lady and St Joseph - Mary who is the disciple above all disciples, the mother above all mothers - the young girl who responds to Gabriel's message with those words "I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy will. This 'fiat mihi', this phrase 'let it be to me,' sums up her life as the Mother of the Incarnate Word. And Joseph, the obscure descendant through many generations of the royal house of David, is the practical carpenter and craftsman who is sustained by a life of prayer, and who does the right and honourable thing. He is Jesus' God-given foster-father, not just someone who happened to around and convenient.. Both Our Lady and St Joseph both knew their vocations and what they were meant to do. They were our Lord's formative human influences and examples - they bring him up in faith - and as we said, in the Gospel this morning we see them on a religious pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem with their family, friends and neighbours.

The reality of the Holy Family wasn't sentimental or glamorous, their early lives together saw politically-caused disruption and tragedy, fleeing from state sanctioned violence and massacre into a neighbouring country as political exiles. Yet that's not the whole story because it overlooks so much of importance that really was going on in this family story. The events, the relationships, the free responses to God and to one another were upheld by a divine grace that, while it did not spare Jesus, Mary and Joseph the messiness and the pain and suffering of life, wasn't limited or destroyed by it. Here was love and here was holiness, and it occurs in lives which had paid a huge human cost, and that's something very familiar to families throughout the world today. But this is God at work. Here is the gift of grace, the flooding in of God's light and love into the often difficult realities of human life, here into the relationships of a human family in the most difficult of circumstances. Is this exceptional and only an ideal? Yes, of course, it is; yet ideals are presented to us precisely as things to aim towards, however imperfectly and uncertainly we are able to walk towards them. But the true point of our Christmas celebrations - the real meaning of Christmas, if you want to put it like that - is that in Jesus - the Word of God, the divine Logos as St John says, takes on our human nature and by so doing makes us all part of the divine plan and sharers in the nature and life of God - and makes our possibilities - particularly our capacity to grow in love - infinite. For us, too, it humanises God - he is one of us and one with us. This *is* the message of Christmas. +

St Arvans Tea and Chat

January 11th 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

***The First Sunday of Christmas
29th December 2024:***

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

NEXT SUNDAY

***The Epiphany of the Lord
5th January 2025***

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist

at St Mary's, Penterry

4 p.m. Family Eucharist

at St James, Devauden

Readings:

Isaiah 60.1-6

Psalms 72.[1-9,] 10-15

Ephesians 3.1-12

St Matthew 2.1-12

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

The Eucharist is celebrated daily this week in the Lady Chapel at St Arvans this week at 10 a.m Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and at 09.30, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

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

The Prayer Group will resume after the Christmas holidays on 2nd January

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

The Holy Innocents
(Refugee)

The following poem is by Malcolm Guite, the poet, Anglican priest and academic

We think of him as safe
beneath the steeple,
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,
But he is with a million
displaced people
On the long road
of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on that road,
Fleeing the wrath
of someone else's quarrel,
Glancing behind
and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still
from his dark tower
Christ clings to Mary,
fingers tightly curled,
The lambs are slaughtered
by the men of power,
And death squads spread
their curse across the world.
But every Herod dies,
and comes alone
To stand before the Lamb
upon the throne.

MERRY
CHRISTMAS
&
A HAPPY
NEW YEAR!