

# 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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12<sup>th</sup> January 2025

## The Baptism of the Lord

### The Collect

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; 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 Isaiah

Thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through

fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, 'Give them up,' and to the south, 'Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.'

[43; 1 - 7]

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

### Psalm 29

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

Ascribe to the Lord, you gods,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the Lord  
the glory due to his name;  
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;  
the God of glory thunders;  
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.  
The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice;  
the voice of the Lord  
is a voice of splendour.

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord  
breaks the cedar trees;  
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;  
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,  
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord  
splits the flames of fire;  
the voice of the Lord  
shakes the wilderness;  
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.  
The voice of the Lord  
makes the oak trees writhe  
and strips the forests bare.  
And in the temple of the Lord  
all are crying, 'Glory!'

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

The Lord sits enthroned above the flood;  
the Lord sits enthroned  
as king for evermore.  
The Lord shall give strength to his people;  
the Lord shall give his people  
the blessing of peace.

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

### A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

[8; 14 - 17]

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

### Gradual hymn

Alleluia, Alleluia!  
John saw Jesus coming towards him,  
and said: This is the Lamb of God  
who takes away the sin of the world.  
**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:  
**And also with you**

## Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to Saint Luke

### **R/ Glory to you, O Lord.**

**I**n the wilderness John proclaimed a baptism of repentance. As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptise you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

[3, 15 - 17, 21 - 22]

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

### **For Your Prayers**

That we may be faithful to our baptismal promises as beloved sons and daughters of the Father.  
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, especially for the people of California  
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, James Burnam.

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed: Douglas Ashcraft; David Aitken; Gerdien Versteeg; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Charlotte Horsfield

### **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.*

### **Esther**

**Jereboam:** Is this right, Esther? You saw something extraordinary at the river Jordan the other day?

**Esther:** It wasn't so much a question of what I actually saw, but yes, I did experience something quite extraordinary.

**Jereboam:** What had taken you to the Jordan in the first place?

**Esther:** Well, I'd heard that this man John was conducting his cleansing ceremonies in the river. That reminded me of Naaman being healed, after Elisha had told him to wash seven times in the Jordan. So I told myself that there was nothing to lose, and I went along to see whether my pains might be cured. I've been suffering for years, you see.

**Jereboam:** And did it work?

**Esther:** I think it must have done: I wasn't aware of any immediate change, but by the end of the afternoon I felt better than I have done for years.

**Jereboam:** That's marvellous! Was that the extraordinary experience you mentioned?

**Esther:** Not exactly, although I'm sure the two things were connected. Just after my cleansing – or baptism, they call it -- a man called Jesus stepped forward. He and John seemed to know each other pretty well already. They had a curious discussion about which one of them was going to baptise the other. In the end it was John that baptised Jesus, and as he did so I felt something shift inside me. I think we all felt it – it was as if the whole place somehow changed. All at the same time, we realised that there was something remarkable about Jesus. I don't think that he himself had particularly changed...it's just that we all suddenly realised how special he was. I know this sounds a bit strange, but I had a strong sense that Jesus was connected to God.

**Jereboam:** Actually I was speaking to someone else who reckoned that Jesus himself is God.

**Esther:** Oh, I couldn't...well, I was about to say that I shouldn't describe anyone like that, but I'll admit that Jesus does rather give that

impression. There's something quite extraordinary about him.

**Jereboam:** Thank you for being so frank, Esther.

## THIS WEEK

Sunday is the Baptism of the Lord.

We hear in the first reading from Isaiah, "Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit." Those words are echoed in the reading from St Luke's Gospel, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." This feast marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Winter ordinary time with the weeks after the Epiphany. well pleased."

During this first week in Ordinary Time, we begin a four week cycle of weekday readings from the Letter to the Hebrews. This is the longest letter to any community in the New Testament.

For the next four weeks, until the beginning of Lent, the weekday gospels are from St Mark's Gospel. This week Mark offers us a look at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Monday he calls his first disciples: Simon and Andrew, John and James. He drives out evil spirits, heals the sick and forgives sins to the skepticism of the scribes. The week ends as Jesus extends an invitation to the despised tax collector, Levi/Matthew "Follow me."

**Next Sunday**, the Second Sunday of Epiphany, the first reading from the prophet Isaiah promises vindication which will "shine forth like the dawn." In St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, we are reassured that each of us has different gifts of the Spirit. "There are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone."

The Wedding Feast at Cana is the centrepiece of St John's Gospel. His mother told the servants to follow his instructions and Jesus performed his first public sign "and so revealed his glory."

## A Homily for the Baptism of the Lord

Very often on today's feast we're invited to remember when we ourselves were baptised. Interestingly, people very often use the word Christening and think baptism is somehow a different thing. In fact, Christening is just the old English word for baptism – it's when we are made one with Christ, part of the Body of Christ. Now there's nothing wrong with recalling our own baptism – it's never a bad idea for us all to be reminded of our vocation and the promises we made - or were made for us – at the font. But today it really rather misses the point. The baptism practised by John the Baptist was a very Jewish ritual. Like the other rites of purification practised in the Old Testament, it involved water, but there the close visual resemblance ends. John himself in today's Gospel makes that point very clearly where he says *'I baptise you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'*

John's baptism of repentance was meant to have a psychological effect, not what we would call a sacramental one – in other words it doesn't do anything in and of itself – it doesn't change someone through the action of the Holy Spirit. So, what's going on here in the story of Jesus' Baptism we've just heard? From all the Gospel accounts, John the Baptist wasn't exactly a cosy figure and he offered little in the way of comfort and reassurance. Despite his background – he comes from a family of the Jewish priesthood - he lived an unconventional kind of life, as a prophet and preacher of repentance. He would soon be executed for his refusal to tread the tightrope of a religious politician. He wasn't willing to accommodate or compromise his essential message.

And for anyone to come to John for baptism was to ask to be cut down to size and jolted into repentance. And in today's Gospel - we see Jesus, who the Christmas message declares to be God among us, receiving the baptism of repentance at the hands of John. This isn't, on the face of it an appropriate thing for Jesus to do. He is the promised Saviour, the anointed Messiah, he doesn't need this at all, and yet he submits to

something which symbolises repentance and humility.

What Jesus does seems to have struck John the Baptist himself as a strange act of role-reversal. Jesus, God come among us, is behaving like someone needing to repent.

And that's the point. Although Christmas Day itself now probably seems a while ago, today we are really not so very far from the Bethlehem stable at all, in that here by the banks of the river Jordan we see God coming among us to share our human condition and declaring his solidarity and one-ness with his people.

Jesus

doesn't do this because he has to: he does this as a continuation of the event begun when the angel appeared to Mary - this is God acting out of love and compassion and declaring he will not be separated from us and submerging himself in the messiness of human reality. It's very easy to isolate the Feasts and Seasons of the Christian year from each other. But, of course, they are only proclaiming just different aspects of the same message of salvation. The Lord's birth, life and death and rising again are not isolated incidents but part of the same process of God's sharing our life, and what that inevitably entails, in order to share his eternal, divine life with us. Here at the baptism of the Lord, as we do at the stable in Bethlehem, and on the cross of Good Friday, and in the garden on Easter morning, we see Jesus sharing our material, physical nature, taking on the sin of the world in order to free us from it. It's all part of the great act of solidarity humanity which lies at the heart of the Christian message, and we see this solidarity dramatically acted out before us in his baptism.

We are again here at another anxious, worrying, start to the year. We don't know what the coming weeks and months will bring, particularly when a lot of people – including some very stupid, malicious and greedy people – are pushing a narrative that there are simple, often cruel and easy answers to difficult and complex questions. But, of course, at the beginning of a new year we never know what lies around the corner. We never do. Whatever is thrown at us, individually or collectively, or globally, today's liturgy reminds us very clearly that we are not alone, it reminds us that God in Christ

understands and knows our experience – because he has shared it: he is in this with us, and for us.

Here at the beginning of a New Year, the message of the Lord's Baptism is that of the prophet Isaiah in today's first reading: *Thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.*

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## St Arvans Tea and Chat

**February 15<sup>th</sup>** and usually every second Saturday of the month

Childrens activity table  
For assistance or a lift  
please ring Diane on 628084

**Fr Michael's day off is Monday**

**Blessed chalk** is still available at St Arvan's together with instructions to bless our houses for the New Year

**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](mailto:david@bedlambeds.com)

**Daily celebrations of the Eucharist resume on Tuesday at 10 a.m. Thursday's celebration will be at 9.30 a.m.**

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

***The Baptism of the Lord***  
**12<sup>th</sup> January 2025:**

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

**NEXT SUNDAY**  
***The Second Sunday of Epiphany***  
**19<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

9 a.m. Family Service at St James, Devauden  
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvan's

Readings:  
Isaiah 62.1-5  
Psalm 36.5-10  
1 Corinthians 12.1-11  
St John 2.1-11

For all services in the wider Ministry Area please see [www.severnwyema.co.uk](http://www.severnwyema.co.uk)

## Puddings and Alpha! Starting Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> !

The Alpha course is a free 10 week course involving eating puddings, meeting others and learning about the Christian faith in an informal way. Each session we will share a delicious pudding, watch a video and have time for discussion where different thoughts, ideas and opinions can be raised  
Sundays 7pm - 8.45pm 12th January to 23rd March at St Christopher's Bulwark.  
Alpha is for those new to faith, and it's also for those who want to explore their faith further.

For more information, contact Zoe or Barney at [SaintsChepstow@cinw.org.uk](mailto:SaintsChepstow@cinw.org.uk)

## **The Baptism of Christ Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water**

*On Sunday we celebrate the Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist in the waters of the River Jordan. Our eyes are, once again, turned to the beloved Son of the Father, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The rite of sprinkling reminds us of our baptismal calling to turn away from sin and, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to live the risen life of Christ.*

*This rite of Sprinkling may be used to replace the usual penitential rite at the Eucharist.*

My brothers and sisters: the kindness and goodness of God is revealed in Christ who has saved us through the cleansing waters of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has poured over us.

We will use this water to remind us of our baptismal calling, by turning from sin and being washed in the overflowing compassion of Christ, the Beloved Son of the Father.

Dear friends,  
we will use this water to remind us of our baptism. Let us ask God to bless it and to keep us faithful to the Spirit he has given us, so that we may continue to walk in the light and keep the flame of faith alive in our hearts.

### *Silent Prayer*

God our Father, your Son our Lord Jesus Christ was baptised in the waters of the River Jordan by John, and anointed with the Holy Spirit. We ask you to bless this water which we use in faith. Pour out your forgiveness upon us and strengthen us in holiness. Give us living water always springing up as a fountain of salvation, that Christ your Beloved Son may lead us to your presence in purity of heart.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*The Kyries (Lord have mercy etc) may be sung while the priest and people are sprinkled.*

*The following prayer is said after sprinkling:*

May almighty God, forgive us our sins  
strengthen us in goodness  
and keep us in eternal life  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*The Eucharist continues  
with the Gloria*