

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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19th January 2025 The Second Sunday of Epiphany

The Collect

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; 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

The LORD says this:

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name

that the mouth of the LORD will give.

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

[62. 1-5]

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

Psalm 36. 5-10

**R/ With you is the well of life,
and in your light we see light.**

Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, and your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, your justice like the great deep; you save both human and beast, O Lord.

**R/ With you is the well of life,
and in your light we see light.**

How priceless is your love, O God! your people take refuge under the shadow of your wings. They feast upon the abundance of your house; you give them drink from the river of your delights.

**R/ With you is the well of life,
and in your light we see light.**

For with you is the well of life, and in your light we see light. Continue your loving-kindness to those who know you, and your favour to those who are true of heart.

**R/ With you is the well of life,
and in your light we see light.**

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

Concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

[12.1-11]

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!

We have found the Messiah

- which means the Christ -

grace and truth have come through him.

Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:

And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St John

Glory to you, O Lord.

There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee,

and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.'
 And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.'
 His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'
 Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

[2.1-11]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may be joyful as we share the life
 All who are caught up in war or conflict
 All those without adequate food or shelter
 The people of the Holy Land; of Palestine & Gaza, Israel, Lebanon & Syria, & for lasting peace in the Middle East
 The people of the U.S.A.
 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: Grace Hodgkinson

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.

Cleopas

Jereboam: Well, Cleopas, it doesn't seem as much as ten years since we attended your wedding over in Cana.

Cleopas: No: it feels almost like yesterday, doesn't it?

Jereboam: We still talk about that wonderful wine you served.

Cleopas: You know, everyone says the same. The funny thing is that we spent the absolute minimum on that feast. No-one could explain how we got hold of such lovely wine – even the supplier was honest enough to say that he couldn't understand it either.

Jereboam: And of course Jesus was there.

Cleopas: Yes: it was only in retrospect that we realised what an honour it was to have him at our wedding. The main reason we invited him and his friends, and his mother of course, was because they were so far away from home: we were trying to be hospitable. Actually we weren't sure whether he'd accept. We didn't know whether someone as holy as that would attend a wedding-feast.

Jereboam: But he really made an impact, didn't he?

Cleopas: Certainly: we saw quite a lot of Jesus after that, and it was always the same. You'd hardly realise he was there, unless he was addressing the crowds, obviously, but somehow he always made everyone feel comfortable. You could never prove that he was the one who made the difference, but whenever he was there, everything flowed – and I don't mean the wine. Everyone could be themselves.

Jereboam: Anyway, you seem to have done well for yourselves in the last ten years.

Cleopas: Well, even in our everyday lives we feel we owe a lot to Jesus. It's as if his presence at our wedding set us on the right path.

Jereboam: But you're not going to claim that it's always been easy...

Cleopas: No, of course not, but the memory of Jesus has always been a stabilising influence for us...except that it's not just the memory of him. He remains constantly present in our lives.

Jereboam: How's that possible?

Cleopas: In various ways: for a start he's always present in the Church. Don't forget that we believe the Church is the Body of Christ.

Jereboam: I'm sure many of our readers will envy your certainty.

Cleopas: Certainty? I don't know...I don't really think of it in those terms...Certainly without Jesus' presence we'd sense a gaping hole in our lives.

Jereboam: Many of us will find gaping holes easier to appreciate.

Cleopas: That's an excellent start: I can't imagine you can allow a hole to be filled unless you realise it's there.

Jereboam: That's a thought. Thank you, Cleopas.

THIS WEEK

Sunday is 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."

Tuesday is the feast day of Saint Agnes, virgin and martyr. Wednesday that of St Vincent, deacon and martyr, and Friday we celebrate St Francis de Sales, bishop and doctor of the Church. Saturday is the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, the Apostle.

The first reading this week continues with the letter to the Hebrews. Written to inspire and encourage the community in its faith, he exhorts them "not become sluggish, but imitators of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises."

As we continue St Mark's Gospel this week, Jesus is asked why his disciples don't fast. He challenges the religious leaders to have a completely open mind and heart to his teaching because "new wine is poured into fresh wineskins." Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, bringing a new freedom. It is only chapter 3 in the gospel, but we already see the tension with religious leaders building. Because Jesus heals a man's withered hand on the Sabbath, the Pharisees seek to kill him.

Jesus withdraws and people from the surrounding regions come to him, and even the demons know who he is. Jesus names twelve Apostles to be with him, to preach and to drive out demons. Jesus' relatives think he's "out of his mind" because so many people are coming to him that he can't even eat.

Next Sunday, the Third Sunday of Epiphany, we resume hearing Gospels from St Luke until the beginning of Lent in early March, and which will be picked up again after the Easter season ends in early June. Jesus is seen as returning to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" where he goes to the synagogue and teaches from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor." He ends with the stunning words "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

A Homily for the Second Sunday of Epiphany

You don't have to read between the lines that much to work out that the wedding feast at Cana, like most weddings in one way or another, wasn't exactly stress free. We're not given many of the background details about the wedding – even whose wedding it was - only that Jesus and his disciples, and Mary, his mother, had been invited; it's probably a fair guess it was a family occasion, perhaps a marriage of cousins or close family of some kind. And, of course, we know the crucial point in the story that when the feast had been in full swing for some time, the wine started to run out. We can only guess at the consternation and panic that must have caused, and the social embarrassment to the family which would have followed. Even after his mother's pleading with him to do something to fix the situation, Jesus was reluctant to get involved. No, he seems to be saying, it's not the right time yet for any kind of demonstration of powers beyond the ordinary, his identity – his divine Sonship - should remain hidden for a while longer. Yet at the end of the story St John says that this was the first of Our Lord's "signs" which was an indication of the nature of his divine mission - this is the Incarnation again made visible, the intervention of God into the material world to heal the wounds of humanity. What Our Lord does here at the wedding at Cana

isn't an opportunistic bit of conjuring to get everyone out of a tight spot, it's a clear demonstration of something much more. The word "sign" St John uses to describe what has happened doesn't just mean "something miraculous," however divinely inspired. He goes on to say that this sign of the changing of the water into wine is the first of the signs Jesus shows forth which in some way "manifests his glory," For all its many human qualities St John's is a Gospel of theological complexity. Everything he says, he says for a purpose: symbolism is everywhere. It's significant, too, that it is Mary, his mother, who is instrumental in making it happen. Once again we are back in the territory of the Annunciation and her willing cooperation in God's plan for the salvation of the world.

The first of Our Lord's signs is this miracle at Cana, the last and definitive sign is the manifestation of his glory upon the cross of calvary. The Greek original of the passage we have just heard as our Gospel, the opening of chapter two of John's Gospel, begins with the words "three days later there was a wedding feast at Cana." Now, "three days later" can be taken as referring to the calling of Philip at the end of chapter one and as such is left out at the beginning of our reading. Yet coming here at this account of the first sign which culminates in the Cross, it's not at all fanciful to see a clear reference to the resurrection, the triumphant outcome of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for the life of the world - "on the third day."

But many biblical scholars also think that there's a reference here to one of the creation stories in the Book of Genesis: at the wedding feast there are six water jars as there were six days of creation in Genesis. The water of chaos or the unformed world, is changed by the Word of God into visible light and the water in the stone jugs is transformed into the new wine of resurrection hope through the action of Jesus, the divine light who has come into the world.

So, what we have here is in his story of the first of Jesus' 'signs' is St John's account of day one of the new creation. The wedding feast began with the serving of the first wine, the original creation. For John, Jesus is the later wine which completes the wedding feast begun with the first serving of wine - that is, he

completes and makes more glorious the original creation of the universe.

This is the point at which the disciples begin their journey of faith in accepting Jesus as the Son of God. The outcome of this revelation of Jesus is their acceptance that they themselves are water changed into wine. This sign also takes place in our own lives. God continues breathing over our own chaos, our own darkness and brings us into the light who is Christ. In these signs of new life and resurrection God comes out of hiding in order to show us his glory and promise us the hope of a new creation. Jesus changes our old water, our old selves, into the new wine of his own life which we are called to share. The question we all have to ask ourselves and one another is where is the new wine of God's presence? Not where we can bring it about, but where it actually is? That's difficult in a world where so many things are in question, where so much seems precarious and up for grabs, where even, in parts of the Christian world, the view of God seems to be going backwards to that mistaken image of a vengeful, judgemental God which we don't find in the pages of the Gospels.

But we do find resurrection and new life everywhere, particularly when we encounter genuine human kindness and concern, and a desire to heal and renew. The kingdom of God – of which the Church is meant to be a kind of foretaste, even if it's a very flawed one much of the time - is where we are brought together, where no one is unwelcome or excluded from the love and mercy of Christ.

The transformation Christ brings about for us can be seen here at this feast, this foretaste of the wedding banquet of the Lamb, at this offering at the altar of the sacrifice of the Cross, as we eat and drink the transformed elements of bread and wine, become his Body and Blood. Christ gives his own life to us so that the life of the world might be renewed and changed into something infinitely more glorious. As Jesus constantly reminds his disciples, the new wine of God's kingdom is only reached through the shedding of his blood. We can only get there through uniting ourselves to his sacrifice. But we hope – we believe - there is a great deal of rejoicing, and even perhaps the raising of a glass or two, at the wedding feast of God's kingdom - *on what is for us the third day +*

St Arvans Tea and Chat

February 15th and usually every second Saturday of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift please ring Diane on 628084

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

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

The Second Sunday of Epiphany
19th January 2025

9 a.m. Family Service
at St James', Devuden
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

NEXT SUNDAY
The Third Sunday of Epiphany
26th January 2025

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

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

Fr Michael's day off is Monday

Daily celebrations of the Eucharist (Tuesday to Saturday) at St Arvan's are at 10 a.m.

No celebration this week on Friday.

Puddings and Alpha!
Starting Sunday 12th !

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