

# 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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Mobile 07867803479  
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

## 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025 The Presentation of the Lord Candlemas

### The Collect

Almighty and ever-living God, clothed in majesty, whose beloved Son was this day presented in the Temple, in substance of our flesh: grant that we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts, by your Son Jesus Christ 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 Malachi

Thus says the LORD God: See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

[3. 1 - 5]

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

### Psalm 24 7- 10

*R/ The Lord of hosts,  
he is the king of glory.*

Lift up your heads, O gates; lift them high,  
O everlasting doors;  
and the King of glory shall come in.  
'Who is this King of glory?'  
'The Lord, strong and mighty,  
the Lord, mighty in battle.'

*R/ The Lord of hosts,  
he is the king of glory.*

Lift up your heads, O gates; lift them high,  
O everlasting doors;  
and the King of glory shall come in.  
'Who is he, this King of glory?'  
'The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.'

*R/ The Lord of hosts,  
he is the king of glory.*

### A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

[2. 14 - 18]

Since the children share flesh and blood, Jesus himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might

destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

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

### Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, Alleluia!  
The light to enlighten the Gentiles  
And give glory to Israel, your people.  
**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*

**W**hen the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.' Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the

law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

[2. 22 - 40]

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

## For Your Prayers

That we may share the light of Christ in our lives and our encounters with others.  
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.  
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; Jen James

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed: Douglas Ashcraft; Joan Kenington; Pauline Lawson; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Trevor Beverley-Jones; Jo Boys; Philip Arthur Zoab; Donald Wood, priest.

## 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.*

## Doeg & friend

**Jereboam:** I've got some difficult questions for you, Doeg.

**Doeg:** All right... let's try.

**Jereboam:** I'm prompted by words like these: "It was essential that Jesus should become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able to atone for human sins." Over the years I've also heard a good deal about the Incarnation fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy: "The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light." Then, according to Simeon, Jesus was "a light for revelation to the Gentiles."

**Doeg:** I'm with you so far.

**Jereboam:** And Paul has mentioned the concept of Jesus living in his people.

**Doeg:** That's right.

**Jereboam:** But, if I've understood correctly, Jesus was also with the Father from the very beginning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God."

**Doeg:** Right again.

**Jereboam:** Here's my problem: what about all that time before the Incarnation? Jesus existed, but wasn't available to people, because they didn't know he was there. He seems to have been constantly present, except that no-one realised.

**Doeg:** It sounds strange when you put it that way.

**Jereboam:** And certainly he couldn't live in his followers, because there weren't any.

**Doeg:** Obviously not.

**Jereboam:** But maybe he entered the lives of our ancestors too, even though they didn't understand it in those terms. Maybe the impact of the Incarnation was that people finally accepted what had already been happening for thousands of years.

**Friend:** Excuse me: I couldn't help overhearing that. What about the salvation of the world on the Cross? That happened at a specific moment in time.

**Doeg:** Ah – maybe I can answer that. I was taught that Jesus, before his resurrection, descended into the realms of the dead, to awaken the righteous to eternal life. So ultimately good people from all ages were included in his death and resurrection.

**Jereboam:** I'm relieved to hear that. I suppose it's another example of God working outside the restrictions of time.

**Doeg:** You manage to come up with some tricky issues, Jereboam...

**Jereboam:** I did warn you.

## THIS WEEK

Sunday is the Feast of the Presentation, which commemorated the infant Jesus being brought to the Jerusalem Temple, where he is recognised as the Messiah by Simon and Anna.

Candlemas marks the end of the extended Christmas / Epiphany season.

Wednesday is the feast day of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr. Thursday is that of the Japanese martyrs Saint Paul Miki and his Companions.

The first readings this week continues with the Letter to the Hebrews. Jesus is priest and we should not be discouraged.

In St Mark's Gospel this week, Jesus continues to heal and teach. A man in the Gerasenes is healed of unclean spirits and wants to stay with Jesus but he tells the man, "Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you." The young daughter of a synagogue official is sick and on the way to cure her, as Jesus stood in a crowd, he felt the power go out of him as a woman with a hemorrhage touched his cloak. "Your faith has saved you," he reassures her. To the synagogue official he says, "Do not be afraid; just have faith" and heals his daughter. He teaches in the synagogue in his hometown "and they took offense at him." He was not able to perform miracles there, because of their lack of faith. Jesus sends his apostles, in twos, to share the good news. After publicly promising a dancer anything she wants, Herod reluctantly gives the girl her wish and orders John the Baptist to be beheaded. When Jesus' disciples return from their

journeys, he encourages them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." But as they tried to get away "and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things."

**Next Sunday**, the Fourth Sunday before Lent, we reflect on St Luke's Gospel's call of St Peter. Jesus preaches from Peter's boat, invites Peter out into "deeper water" and shows him his power to catch fish. When Peter recoils in fear, Jesus calls him to gather people with Jesus' same power. "Do not be afraid," Jesus tells him, and says that from now on he will be catching people instead of fish.

## A Homily for Candlemas

Today's liturgy really speaks for itself, and because of what we are doing in words, music and actions we don't need that much by way of explanation as to its layers of meaning. With the story we hear in today's Gospel of Jesus' presentation in the Temple, what is sometimes referred to as the 'extended' Christmas season – the Sundays of Epiphany, that time of the year when we reflect particularly on the Lord's Incarnation - comes to a definite end. It's not Lent yet for just over a month, but as today's liturgy makes clear, from today onwards we begin to make that shift in our spiritual gaze and look towards the cross and Easter.

Candlemas falls – and it's deliberately designed to fall – at the time of the old Celtic festival of Imbolc. There was a similar Roman fertility festival, Lupercalia, at the beginning of February, too. That's not a problem – in fact, it's quite the reverse. We practice continuity: Christ is the power of love behind all things, and Christianity is meant to baptise and incorporate everything that is good in natural spirituality - and we light our candles today just as we begin to see the light strengthening in the natural world, the lengthening of the hours of daylight, and we hear the increase in birdsong.

So, today our gaze moves forward, and this festival of the presentation of Jesus in the temple can be seen to foreshadow his later entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, after which he will be lifted up on the cross for the salvation of the world. And, of course, this is summed up in Simeon's prophecy which we've just heard

in the Gospel. St Luke tells us that Simeon, inspired by the Holy Spirit, entered the temple at the same time as Jesus was brought in by Mary and Joseph. And he immediately recognised in the child the fulfilment of the promise God has made to his people and says that now he can depart this life in peace. The promised one, the Messiah, has come. This moment is for Simeon and then for the devout widow, Anna, the prophet, the fulfilment of a lifetime spent living in hope, a hope that sums up and represents all of Israel's waiting for the Messiah. Today, if you like, we see the promises we heard about throughout Advent, the longing for deliverance of the people of God, recognised as having come to pass.

But today isn't only a feast day of unconstrained joy. Here at Candlemas, the joy of Simeon as he recognises in the infant Jesus the Messiah, God's light to the nations, quickly gives way to realism as he speaks of Jesus as an inevitable sign of contradiction and division – how could the Word of God incarnate born into a world of fallen human beings be otherwise? Then Simeon turns to Blessed Mary herself and predicts the sword-thrust of grief that she will experience at the death of her son, some thirty years or so years in the future. Redemption is brought about at a cost, and the price is paid by God himself. But our relationship with God isn't transactional – despite the best efforts of some throughout history to portray it that way. It's not a deal – it's a free gift. So Christ comes to share in our experience fully even to the point of sharing our life and death. Because ours is fundamentally a faith of the Incarnation, the Christian faith presents us with a picture of human life, and all created life, as it really is. There are no rose-tinted spectacles or romanticised visions here: the great Festivals and Feasts of the Church's year all tend to have a darker, realistic edge to them because they look life straight in the eye and tell it how it is. What use is a faith which does anything else?

Today is a pivotal point in the year, from now on we are very definitely focused on the coming seasons of Lent and Easter - from the crib we turn to the cross and we face the most profound mystery of all - that of the meaning of pain, suffering and death which is transformed by the

shattering event of the Lord's Resurrection.

Once again, today's liturgy points out to us that it is through the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ that we can begin to make sense of our own encounters with change and loss and grief, pain, suffering and death. Christ is the light which the darkness cannot extinguish. Light is a sign of contradiction to the darkness. But in so much as we share in the light, and reflect it to the world, in whatever ways we can, small or great, we come to share in the Salvation – the Resurrection life – of the one who comes to bring glad tidings of joy to the whole of creation. +

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

### THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

#### 'Candlemas'

**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvan's

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
at St Mary's, Penterry

4 p.m. All Age Eucharist  
at St James' Devauden

## NEXT SUNDAY

### The Fourth Sunday

#### before Lent

**9<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvan's

11.30 a.m. Liturgy of the Word  
at St Deiniol's, Itton

Readings:

Isaiah 6.1-8, [9-13]; Psalm 138

1 Corinthians 15.1-11; St Luke 5.1-11

For all services in the wider Ministry Area please see [www.severnwyema.co.uk](http://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. except Friday at 9.30 a.m.

**The Ministry Area Prayer Group meets every Thursday 7.45pm – 9pm** at David Carne's house, The Cedars, Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric. email [david@bedlambeds.com](mailto:david@bedlambeds.com)

## 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)

## Candlemas

The Feast of the Presentation, often called Candlemas, commemorates the purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the presentation of Christ in the temple, which occurred 40 days after his birth as prescribed by Jewish law

St Luke tells us, quoting Exodus 13:2,12, that Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem because every firstborn son was to be dedicated to the Lord. They also went to sacrifice a pair of doves or two young pigeons, showing us that Mary and Joseph were not wealthy people.

Once in the temple, Jesus was acclaimed as the light of the world by the prayer of Simeon and in the presence of Anna the prophetess. Simeon, upon seeing the Messiah, gave thanks to the Lord, singing a hymn now called the Nunc Dimittis, one of the Church's ancient evening canticles: *'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word.*

*For mine eyes have seen. thy salvation: which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples*

*To be a light to lighten. the Gentiles: and to be the glory. of thy people Israel'.*

Simeon told Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against, (and

a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." Simeon predicts the crucifixion and the sorrows of Mary at seeing the death of her Son.

The name Candlemas comes from the liturgy of the feast. It came to be known as the Candle Mass, where a procession takes place involving lighted candles, while the Nunc Dimittis, the words of Simeon, are sung.

Also, on this day candles to be used throughout the year are sometimes blessed.

Today, we also reflect that at baptism we were presented at church. We were made part of the Church as members of the Body of Christ. We received a lit candle from the Easter candle, as the priest said, "Walk in the light and keep the flame of faith alive in your heart. When the Lord comes, may you go out to meet Him. As 'lights', we are called to witness to Christ in the way we live and to be beacons that guiding others to the Lord.

In the Middle Ages, the feast of the Presentation was seen as ending the celebration of Christmas. It is still regarded as bringing to a close our extended celebration of the Lord's Incarnation. For this reason, we keep our Christmas cribs up until the end of Candlemas.

Candlemas was also important in rural life. An old English rhyme went as follows: *"If Candlemas be fair and bright, Come, Winter, have another flight. If Candlemas brings clouds and rain, Go, Winter, and come not again."*

