

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
Fr Michael Gollop,
The Vicarage, St Arvans
01291 622064;
Mobile 07867803479
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

9th February 2025 The Fourth Sunday before Lent

The Collect

O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; 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

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one

called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!' Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said:

'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!' [6 1-8]

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

Psalm 138

R/ Great is the glory of the Lord!

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise. I will bow down towards your holy temple and praise your name, because of your love and faithfulness; For you have glorified your name and your word above all things.

R/ Great is the glory of the Lord!

When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me. All the kings of the earth will praise you, O Lord, when they have heard the words of your mouth. They will sing of the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord. Though the Lord be high, he cares for the lowly; he perceives the haughty from afar.

R/ Great is the glory of the Lord!

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me. The Lord will make good his purpose for me; O Lord, your love endures for ever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

R/ Great is the glory of the Lord!

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

I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you – unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them – though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

[15.1-11]

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Follow me, says the Lord
and I will make you fishers of men
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Luke

Glory to you, O Lord.

While Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.

[St Luke 5. 1 - 11]

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise be to thee, O Christ

For Your Prayers

That we may listen to the voice of Christ as he call us to be his disciples..
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; Yvette

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.

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.

Abigail

Jereboam: Excuse me; is everything all right?

Abigail: Yes, I'm fine, thank you. It's just been rather an overwhelming afternoon -- very inspiring actually, but overwhelming all the same.

Jereboam: Is it true that Jesus has been here?

Abigail: Yes: I was listening to him earlier.

Jereboam: I'm Jereboam from the Gazette. Do you think that you'd feel up to telling me about it?

Abigail: I'll do my best. I'm Abigail, by the way.

Jereboam: Thank you, Abigail. So you were here from the start?

Abigail: Yes: I'd heard that Jesus would be speaking by the lake, so I joined the crowd, and we all made our way here. Normally I suppose we'd have sat down, but it's wet enough underfoot that people preferred to stand, and one of the men from that boat over there suggested that Jesus could climb up onto it. So he sat there where we could all see him.

Jereboam: What did he talk about?

Abigail: Oh, everything: it's extraordinary. Whatever he says seems to have a direct bearing on your whole life. He seems to penetrate into the innermost part of your being. It's a bit like that psalm: "If I spread out my wings towards the morning or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me." But actually the strangest part of the afternoon concerned what happened afterwards. Jesus finished teaching,

and most people drifted away. I stayed behind, though, because I'd hoped to speak to him, but he and the other men in the boat set out towards the middle of the lake. Even from here I could see that they were trying to fish, but were struggling with the nets. They were gesturing and calling to that other boat, and so the other lot went out to help. Well, they all managed it in the end – they'd caught a huge haul of fish.

Jereboam: They must have been delighted.

Abigail: That's the curious thing. My grandfather was a fisherman, and I used to go out in the boat with him sometimes. If we caught even twenty fish, we'd be celebrating and singing on our way back. Now when these fellows came back to the shore, there were fish everywhere on both boats. Actually they could hardly stay afloat with the weight. I've never seen so many fish in my life. But these men were absolutely silent...very solemn. Jesus and the head fisherman walked away without saying a word. They did smile at me, but in total silence. It was as if something momentous had happened. The men from the other boat were left to sort everything out; they've only just finished now. All that must have happened a couple of hours ago now. Since then I've just been wandering around, trying to make sense of it all – until you came along.

Jereboam: Look, are you going to be all right getting home?

Abigail: Yes, really, I'll be fine: I'll just make my way back gradually.

Jereboam: As long as you're sure...

THIS WEEK

On 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.

For the next two weeks, the first readings on weekdays at the Eucharist are taken from the book of Genesis. This week begins with the story of creation, the one that will be repeated at the Easter Vigil. St Mark's Gospel continues with stories of Jesus' healing and of his challenging and being challenged by the religious authorities. "People immediately recognised him. They scurried about the surrounding country and began to bring in the sick on mats." The Pharisees and scribes question Jesus asking, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" A frustrated Jesus responds, "You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." Jesus challenges the people to disregard rules about being defiled by food but to avoid the evil desires and deeds that defile their hearts. Travelling north into pagan territory, Jesus visits a woman whose daughter has an unclean spirit. Jesus heals her because the mother believes in him. On his way back, Jesus heals a man, allowing him to hear and speak again. Jesus feeds four thousand people for whom he is moved with pity.

Next Sunday we hear St Luke's account of the Beatitudes, as Jesus proclaims the blessings he offers us and the warnings he gives us. It all is about accepting discipleship now – the way that leads to life - versus choosing our own way.

A Homily for the 4th Sunday before Lent

If you'll forgive the Star Trek reference, many of us from time to time have our 'beam me up Scotty' moments - the wish to be anyway at all other than the situation in which we find ourselves. And there are also times, perhaps only in times of real crisis, when we might dream - even if only fleetingly - of leaving everything behind with all the responsibilities which tie us down, the daily grind of existence, our own half-heartedness, the weight of our past and our failures, all the things which go to make us what we are. It's always a delusion, of course, because even if we

were either brave enough or maybe reckless enough to try it, we couldn't escape from our selves - from the people we are and everything that has made us what we are.

Sometimes our prayerful reflection and meditation might lead us to the conclusion that a radical change is not what we in our worst moments want to use as a means of escape, but actually what God wants of us. But there's a huge difference there and it can never be what we might call our default position. As disciples of Christ, for the most part, we are called to conversion *where we are now*, in the circumstances we find ourselves.

In the Gospel today, four fishermen *do leave everything behind*, all the ties and bonds of work and family, in order to follow Jesus. But *here* they leave everything in response to his call: He says: "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.*"

But what Jesus *doesn't do* is offer them an escape from reality, from everything which defines them and makes them who they are. He doesn't offer them an *easy* way out of past failures or misunderstandings. He gives them a specific task to do as the people they are, and as they follow him, and as they live their lives in his company, they discover their identity afresh from a new perspective and with a deeper self-understanding. But they don't follow Jesus to run away, as a means of escape, they do it to embrace reality, to engage with it. As we know, for some people, following Jesus involves almost precisely what it did for the apostles and first disciples, giving things up and leaving behind the prospect of family, a stable job, a successful career and what we might call all the trappings of "normal life." I suppose we see this most particularly in those who are called to the religious life in community.

But for most of us, the call to be a disciple doesn't come in this way, but it involves growing, like the Apostles, in the presence of Jesus - which for us happens through prayer, through our living encounter with him in the Sacraments, through our reflection on the words and actions of the Gospels – we are called to grow towards an expanded vision of who we are, and our place and value in God's plan for the world.

The call of Jesus to repent, because the kingdom of heaven is close at hand, is a call not to allow the failures of life to

define who or what we are, or what we might become. Because from the time of our baptism we have been brought into the new age of grace, into the kingdom of God's forgiveness, the kingdom of second chances, where we are given the means to live differently, and live in the new world of the Resurrection.

The urge to escape who we are, and *why* we are the way we are, often weighs very heavily upon us. But there are no real escape routes in this life: who we are is intimately bound up with those amongst whom we live, with those who have cared for us or hurt us, with our ways of making a living and passing our time. There are no escape routes, there's no going back and regret by itself is one of the most destructive of all human feelings, but there are clean slates in our relationship *with God*: mercy and grace are freely offered and grace can be freely accepted - what else does the Sacrament of Penance teach us, what does this Sacrament of the Eucharist itself teach us?

The call of God's grace which comes to all of us - *the secret is to put ourselves - through the practice of daily prayer - in a position where we are able to listen* - doesn't offer us a new identity or a way of escaping into a kind of ideal world, without the pressures, anxieties and alienation of what it is to be human.

The call to be a disciple - when the Lord says "follow me" - is a call to grow in understanding of who we are and most importantly of all, who we are called to become - *the people we are meant to be* - in the perspective of the self-sacrificial offering of God upon the cross and the new life which bursts from the tomb at the Resurrection. And that's something to hold on to as we begin now to look towards Lent and Easter. That may seem quite a long way off at the moment - but the time will go very quickly. +

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

The Fourth Sunday before Lent

9th February 2025

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

NEXT SUNDAY The Third Sunday before Lent

16th February 2025

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

Readings:

Jeremiah 17.5-10
Psalm 1
1 Corinthians 15.12-20
St Luke 6.17-26

*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. 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

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

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*

The Weeks before Lent

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday; it falls
on 5th March this year. Easter Sunday is
almost as late as it can be on 20th April.
These four weeks before the beginning of
Lent give us a good opportunity to
approach Lent this year reflectively and
purposefully. Anything worth doing is
worth preparing for carefully and
deliberately, and Lent is no exception to
the rule.

We can ask ourselves what it is we hope
the season of Lent can give us this year in
terms of deepening our faith and
strengthening our relationship with Christ.
We can start with our reflection on the
Gospels in these Sundays leading up to
Ash Wednesday.

What are they saying to us?

What aspects of our lives are calling out
for change and growth? How can we live
more simply, and more in tune with the
needs of the world around us?

How can we truly thrive as children of
God?