

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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The Vicarage, St Arvans

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2nd March 2025

The Sunday before Lent

The Collect

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; 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 book of Exodus

Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the

congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterwards all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

[34 29-35]

Reader / This is the Word of the Lord

Response / Thanks be to God

Psalm 99

R/ Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God

The Lord is king: let the peoples tremble; he is enthroned above the cherubim: let the earth shake.

The Lord is great in Zion and high above all peoples. Let them praise your name, which is great and awesome; the Lord our God is holy.

R/ Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God

Mighty king, who loves justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the Lord our God; and bow down before his footstool, for he is holy.

R/ Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God

Moses and Aaron among his priests and Samuel among those who call upon his name; they called upon the Lord and he answered them.

He spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud; they kept his testimonies and the law that he gave them.

R/ Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God

You answered them, O Lord our God; you were a God who forgave them and pardoned them for their offences. Exalt the Lord our God and worship him upon his holy hill, for the Lord our God is holy.

R/ Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God

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

Since we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practise cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

[3. 12 - 4. 2]

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
From the bright cloud
the Father's voice was heard:
'This is my Son, the Beloved.
Listen to him

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.

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' Peter did not know what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And the disciples kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

[St Luke 9. 28-36]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may prepare our hearts and minds for Lent and Easter
The government & people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to Russia's war of aggression there.
All who are caught up in war or conflict
All those without adequate food or shelter

The people of Gaza, Israel, Lebanon & Syria, & for lasting peace in the Middle East

The people of the U.S.A.
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; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron; Margaret; Althea; Naylor & Eira Firth; Margi & Bob Osborne, Jen James; Yvette

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Helen Herbert; Sylvia Eggert; Joan Kenington; Pauline Lawson; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Alan Beattie; Peter Argile; Robert Dare; John Cann.

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.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah: Excuse me, would you be Jereboam?

Jereboam: That's right.

Nehemiah: You write those articles about Jesus, don't you?

Jereboam: Yes, I do.

Nehemiah: Well, I saw him yesterday. I wonder if you'd be interested to hear about it.

Jereboam: I'd be most interested: do tell me what happened. Where was it?

Nehemiah: A little way up the mountain. I'd gone up there yesterday evening – it had been a difficult day, to be honest, and I just needed to get away from everyone for a while. Eventually I started to feel cold and so I came back down, but on the way I heard some footsteps and, when I looked, there were Jesus and three of his friends walking along, just a little way above the level of my path. I think they were heading back to the village too, but I'm not sure.

Jereboam: You're quite sure it was Jesus?

Nehemiah: Oh yes: I've seen him a few times before. I even recognised his friends from when I've attended his teaching sessions.

Jereboam: Did they speak to you last night?

Nehemiah: Oh no, I don't think they even realised I was there. I should have called out, but it didn't occur to me at the time.

Jereboam: But maybe you heard what Jesus was saying to his companions?

Nehemiah: No, I couldn't hear them at all.

Jereboam: Look, I don't mean to.
Nehemiah: Don't tell me, I know what you're going to say: "Come on, Nehemiah, just because you've seen the man, it's not really that remarkable, is it? We can't write an article about just seeing someone."

Jereboam: Well...

Nehemiah: But the thing is, it was remarkable: he was glowing -- that's the only way I can describe it -- as if there was something lighting him up from within. Or, I don't know, maybe he wasn't glowing at all, maybe it was just that there was some force drawing my eyes towards him.

Jereboam: How did you feel?

Nehemiah: Really warm and...comforted. You know if you see a fire in the distance? It somehow makes you feel warm inside, even though you're too far away to feel the heat. It was a bit like that.

Jereboam: And what about his friends? Did they glow or attract your gaze?

Nehemiah: In a way, But it wasn't so much that they were glowing, more that they were surrounded by his glow...absorbed by it, you might say. The four of them had become one unit. If I can make another comparison, it was a bit like seeing a really loving couple when they walk along. Even if they're not touching each other in any way, you can somehow sense the special bond between them. It was rather like that. Jesus' glow seemed to link them together...and that's about it: there's not much more to say. All a bit vague, isn't it?

Jereboam: It will be really useful,

Nehemiah. I'm most grateful to you.

THIS WEEK

On the Sunday before Lent we hear the Gospel of Christ's Transfiguration. His apostles are given a glimpse of his true glory, the glory of Resurrection, before the events of his Cross and Passion. The readings today prepare us for the coming season of Lent.

This week, the first readings at the Eucharist until Wednesday continue from the book of Ecclesiasticus. On Monday in the Gospel we hear Jesus adding to the depth of the Ten Commandments and describing how difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. On Tuesday, Jesus talks about the rewards for those who have "given up everything" to follow him.

The beginning of Lent

The Season of Lent begins with four days that serve as an introduction to the four Lenten practices of Prayer, Fasting, Repentance and Almsgiving.

Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting and abstinence. We wear ashes on our foreheads to remember who we are and express our desire to turn away from sin and to believe the Good News. The Prophet Joel helps us begin our journey: "return to me with your whole heart."

"Rend your hearts, not your garments," reminds us that this is an interior journey. The Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 51, has the antiphon: "Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned." St Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians says, "be reconciled to God ... we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain ... Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." In St Matthew's Gospel Jesus gives us a guide for our Lenten practices, "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them."

On Thursday the book of Deuteronomy tells us how Moses urges his people to turn away from sin. "Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him."

Friday and Saturday: It is the long tradition of Lent to prepare us for our journey by having us reflect on Isaiah, Chapter 58, as we begin. "This is the fasting that I wish" gives us the true picture of fasting: letting God's Spirit transform us. It is a call to conversion. Jesus confirms his desire to help us, "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."

Next Sunday: on the First Sunday of Lent, as we begin our Lenten journey, we recall in the reading from the book of Deuteronomy how God was faithful to Israel, leading them out of Egypt to a land of "milk and honey." St Luke's gospel gives us the temptation of Jesus

when he was "led by the Spirit" into the desert. Jesus resists the devil. "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."

A Homily for the Sunday before Lent

+ Lent begins on Wednesday, and this Sunday is always a good time to stop for a moment and ask ourselves how we want to approach the Lent and how to find a workable pattern to our attempts at renewing and deepening our lives of prayer and service. We always have to bear in mind, though, that Lent isn't really about trying by our own efforts to become more holy (there are one or two warnings about trying to do that in the Gospels, if we recall) but to establish the conditions within our lives so that God can make himself known more fully to us. All the extra effort we make by way of prayer, self denial and time spent in the service of other people is simply designed to allow God himself into our hearts and our lives in a deeper more meaningful way. It's a timetabled attempt over the next six weeks to live more fully by the values of the Gospel -- the values that seem to be in very short supply in those who rule the world out there, but which also strike a chord in the hearts and minds of most people of goodwill if they reflect on them because they show us who we should be and could be. In some ways, then, Lent is about time management: we have to put aside the time and the space, and for most of us that's a sacrifice because there are always other things we could be doing instead.

So on this Sunday before Lent the Church, to encourage us all in what we are doing, gives us as the Gospel a glimpse of the true glory of Christ in the account of the Transfiguration. We are told that the apostles Peter and James and John saw their Master changed as they looked on - that his face shone, as the face of the prophet Moses had shone after his encounter with God. He appears in front of them flanked by the two most significant figures from the spiritual history of Israel, Moses and Elijah. In this way they were not only granted a vision of Jesus as the Messiah but given a glimpse of his true reality and significance as God the Son. They emerge from the experience somewhat bewildered and shaken but also renewed

in their discipleship and better able to face an uncertain and troubling future. Having said that, I've always been a little bit puzzled about the meaning of Peter's words in this story: this is what he says in St Luke's version, in this morning's Gospel: *'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'* The apostles and disciples (again really encouragingly for us) are often depicted in the Gospels as hesitant and a bit slow either slow to catch on or reluctant to follow through with the implications of Jesus' teaching really are, so what are these strange words of Peter meant to convey? Partly, of course, that he was tired, also startled out of sleep by a terrifying vision and saying the first thing that came into his head, but also perhaps that he thought that the life of heaven - the life of the Kingdom of God - had already arrived. There's also a sense that here on the hill-top they were safe and secure, surrounded by the glory of the divine light and removed from the controversy and sense of threat which was beginning to close in on them. So Peter's offer to build houses on the top of the holy mountain is perhaps a wish to make this fleeting glimpse of the life of heaven a permanent reality.

It makes perfect sense as we prepare ourselves for Lent to be reminded of the story of Christ's Transfiguration. We know very well that penance and self-denial and self-sacrifice are an essential part of the weeks ahead of us, but they are not the whole story. This is also a joyful time of renewal as we travel to the heart of what our Faith has to say to us and to the world. So, as we approach Lent in the context of this morning's Gospel, we could ask ourselves exactly what we expect of our Christian lives and practices of faith, or religion or discipleship or whatever you want to call it? What do we expect from Christ himself?

Many of us simply seek in the life of faith a sense of peace in our hearts and minds or a sense of meaning in an otherwise random universe. Many of us might value the sense of discipline and the ethical standards the Christian faith expresses. Many of us look for consolation for the pains and troubles of life - something hopeful to cling on to when otherwise everything seems bleak and without much hope. Many of us might find in our practice

of faith a source of inspiration to help make the world a better, kinder, more just and compassionate place. There are all kinds of perspectives - each of them good in themselves, none of them contradictory and we probably relate in some way to all of them, perhaps at some points in our lives more than others.

But today, we are given another possibility, prompted by this morning's Gospel from St Luke: we have a joyful expectation that we might be transformed and raised up to experience with Christ in the glory of his Resurrection.

What I mean is that we are all journeying in faith as part of the Church Jesus founded. We, too, may sometimes wonder where it's all going. Perhaps like Peter on Mount Tabor we sometimes want to cling on to what seems like the stability and permanence of our lives of faith, maybe we want to hang on to those high moments of spiritual life which happen from time to time. But faith like life itself is a journey. Journeys are about movement. Our lives of faith can't be lived always on the heights nor can they have at their hearts a sense of total earthly security and permanence - those things simply don't exist. And if we look at our own *personal* pilgrimages of faith, we ourselves are called to change, to let go and move on as we grow in our friendship with God and travel with Christ to the life of Resurrection. But that's not to say we are left without our times of joy and peace and strengthening. Look at it this way, every time we gather for the Eucharist we experience a moment of transfiguration when, quietly and unseen, our Lord is transfigured and transformed before our eyes as the forms of bread and wine upon the altar become his Body and Blood - our food for the journey, the sacramental food which strengthens us in our pilgrimage. When we receive him in Holy Communion, the reassurance of Christ's love for us, the grace we receive and take into ourselves, helps lead us away from fear and doubt and gives us the courage to get up and face our tomorrows until we can be brought to share fully in the divine glory of Christ. +

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

The Sunday before Lent

2nd March 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 First Sunday of Lent

9th March 2025

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

11.30 Liturgy of the Word at Itton

Readings:

Deuteronomy 26.1-11

Psalms 91.1, 2, 9-16 or 91.1-11

Romans 10.8b-13; St Luke 4.1-13

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.

ASH WEDNESDAY – 5th March

There will be a celebration of the Eucharist with the blessing & giving of ashes at St Arvan's at 10 a.m.

For Ash Wednesday services in the wider Ministry Area please see the M.A. Website – (address above)

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!

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

in the Ministry Area:

Living Hope

Mondays March 10th
to April 14th at 7 p.m.
at St Christopher's, Bulwark

Living to Please God

Tuesdays from 11th March
At 2.45 p.m.
Shirenewton Church Rooms

All are welcome

St Arvans Tea and Chat

March 8th and usually
every second Saturday
of the month

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

Details of Lent Courses