

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

23rd March 2025 The Third Sunday of Lent

The Collect

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

The LORD says this:

Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen

carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. [55. 1 - 9]

Reader / This is the Word of the Lord

Response / Thanks be to God

Psalm 63 1 - 9

**R/ My soul is athirst for God,
even for the living God.**

O God, you are my God;
eagerly I seek you;
my soul is athirst for you.
My flesh also faints for you,
as in a dry and thirsty land
where there is no water.
So would I gaze upon you
in your holy place,
that I might behold your power
and your glory.

Your loving-kindness is better
than life itself
and so my lips shall praise you.
I will bless you as long as I live
and lift up my hands in your name.

**R/ My soul is athirst for God,
even for the living God.**

My soul shall be satisfied,
as with marrow and fatness,
and my mouth shall praise you
with joyful lips,
When I remember you upon my bed
and meditate on you
in the watches of the night.
For you have been my helper
and under the shadow of your wings
will I rejoice.

My soul clings to you;
your right hand shall hold me fast.

**R/ My soul is athirst for God,
even for the living God.**

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians [10; 1 - 13]

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.' We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

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

Gradual Hymn

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.
Repent, says the Lord;
the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.**

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Hear the Holy Gospel
according to St Luke

Glory to you, O Lord.

There were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.' Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" [St Luke 13. 1-9]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may keep a holy and joyful Lent
Those preparing for baptism &
confirmation at 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
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, Yvette

For the Departed:

The recently departed; our own departed
relatives & friends, and those whose
anniversaries of death fall at this time:
Alec Davies; Margaret Argile; Roger
Brooks; Elisabeth Davies; Audrey Lines
Keith Duffield; Dorothy Kneebone

DON'T FORGET!

Clocks go forward NEXT weekend

as British Summer Time begins

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.*

Noah

Jereboam: Noah, you must be
one of Jesus' best-known followers.

Noah: Maybe...that's not for
me to say.

Jereboam: Come on: lots of us
admire your poetry. Anyway, I'd be
interested to hear what you think.
Some people found Jesus' last
session rather difficult. Apparently he
used images like trees being cut down
if they fail to produce fruit. He doesn't
mince his words, does he?

Noah: Of course I admire
Jesus' strong use of language. He also
pointed out that the best way to
encourage a plant to grow is to prune
it...meaning that to correct somebody
can be a form of love.

Jereboam: But perhaps he
doesn't appreciate how demanding his
principles are.

Noah: I think he understands
more than you realise. And I do agree
with him that self-discipline is of huge
importance. As a poet, I'd be lost
without self-discipline.

Jereboam: Really?

Noah: Oh yes: with my work
you need ideas, obviously, but a

crucial part of the process is deciding what to leave out, what isn't right for the context. You can't write well without questioning every word acutely.

Jereboam: But in everyday life self-control can be so difficult. Urges are often powerful, you know; you can't simply reject your emotions.

Noah: Who said anything about rejecting emotions? I'm a poet, you know! From my point of view, the very first thing you always do is to acknowledge all your emotions. Let's suppose that I felt the urge to steal your money...which in truth I don't, but let's suppose I did. The emotions that made up that urge might include excitement about the prospect of spending the money, excitement at doing something daring, appreciation of the bright, shiny coins themselves – none of those emotions is necessarily bad. No, the problem isn't the emotion; it's how you respond to it that counts. Actually the problem tends to be a lack of emotion.

Jereboam: How do you mean?

Noah: Well, I spend hours of my life wondering what's wrong with some particular word or line that I've written. In the end the answer is always the same: there's something insensitive about what I've written, as if I've lost touch with reality. So a love-poem is beautiful if you portray the full human nature of the people you describe. The moment your characters appear less than real, the poem becomes irritating and sentimental. I'd say that evil is similar in one way – it happens when we shut ourselves away from essential truths...like not honouring your ownership of your money. Here's another example: a woman becomes an object of lust only if you ignore her dignity as a human being. So the problems come when you detach yourself from certain emotions, certain sensibilities. We don't need less emotion, we need more of it – a more complete range of emotions, you might say.

Jereboam: You remind me of something I heard once about evil being a lack of something, rather than a positive force in itself.

Noah: There's something in that, you know...

THIS WEEK

The Third Sunday of Lent offers us Isaiah speaking of God's free gift of his life, and of the need to return to his love and mercy. St Luke's Gospel tells us of Jesus' warning that we must be willing to repent now and that our lives could end by accident or through the evil of someone else. The parable of the barren fig tree reminds us of God's patient love for us, even when we show no signs of changing our lives.

Tuesday is the Annunciation of the Lord. In the weekday Gospels, Jesus challenges the people in his hometown of Nazareth to look at him in a new way - "No prophet is accepted in his own native place." In a fury, they drive him out of the temple. Peter asks Jesus the limits of forgiveness. Jesus says that we must forgive again and again. He tells the parable about the servant, who though forgiven himself, does not forgive his fellow servants. Jesus has come to fulfill the law and the words of the prophets, not abolish them. When someone claimed that Jesus must be using Satan's power to heal, Jesus responds "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house." When asked to name the "greatest" commandment, Jesus names two, thus putting together the necessity of loving God with our entire being and loving our neighbor as our very selves. The week ends as Jesus tells a powerful story of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple. I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Next Sunday: The Gospel is the story of the Prodigal Son from St Luke. The younger son, who asks for his inheritance and spends it all, returns and asks to be a servant at his father's house. Instead he is welcomed home with open arms by his father who was filled with compassion. The older son is jealous and will not share in the general happiness but the father

says to him that it is good to "celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."

A Homily for the Third Sunday of Lent ...

+ Nothing stays the same for ever. Nothing can. It's an obvious fact of life, and it's always been that way. Having said that change can be hard to come to terms with and to navigate successfully. For a lot of people it's not change itself which is the problem – it's that the pace of change and the speed of news and information – usually bad news - is such that so many people say they are profoundly confused and made anxious and traumatised by what seems to be the ceaseless discontinuity of life as we now live it, the endlessly negative messages it sends us, and the lack of any real sense of a hopeful future.

What is our response to this as followers of Christ, as people who have a certain belief and a meaning to our lives, a knowledge even if partial, of where our lives might fit into the scheme of things and an idea that the narrative of our lives is part of an ongoing stream of belief and practice which will lead to life and hope, not despair and disorientation, and in hope, not despair?

Now, in the news from Ukraine we are seeing human beings at their very worst. A Spanish friend asked me the other day, half-jokingly 'do you still believe in God?' My reply was that my problem was more one of finding it difficult to believe in humanity. But, of course, that's too simplistic, because at the moment we are also seeing human beings at their very best. We are shown hatred, unimaginable horror and violence, greed and cynicism, but on the other hand we are also seeing courage, generosity, compassion and a deep-down sense that hope can prevail against despair.

The most pressing problem for the Church – and by that I mean not just the visible institution, if I can put it like that, but all of us who try to follow Christ - is how do we witness to the reality of the Gospel in a way many people - even perhaps most people - who for all kinds of reasons now know next to nothing about the religious and cultural traditions of our faith - can relate to? How do we translate the

essential message of the Gospel in ways people can understand in a world which is not the one – both in good ways and in bad ways - most of us grew up in? How can we witness to meaning in a world which seems on a day-to-day basis largely devoid of it, and sometimes even rejects the concept of meaning altogether? To put it more succinctly, where is the transformative, life-changing good news in what we are saying and in the way we are living?

Obviously, those are questions we're going to have to leave hanging in the air: we are not going to answer them now, but we can begin by saying that the point about the *conversion* Jesus speaks about in the Gospel today, and which he tells us is essential, is that it can't ever *begin* with other people, or the nature of society – although, of course, it applies equally to those, if the God we believe in is a God of mercy and justice, a God of love – but it always has to begin with me – it has to start in our own hearts and minds. Jesus says we are called upon to repent - that is, to turn in the direction of the things that lead to life. We have to be very wary of that puritanical impression that repentance is about repressive guilt, the kind of attitude which seeks to suck the joy out of life. It was the American cultural critic H.L. Mencken who said that puritanism was the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy. Jesus was many things, but he wasn't a puritan: *"the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."* The world is good, and its good things are meant to be enjoyed. But along with that, and in tension with it, repentance has always been regarded as an essential pre-condition of following Christ, so we have to take care to spell out what it really means. Repentance is the desire to change for the better, it's being drawn to the love of God and our neighbour through the power of the cross and resurrection. Guilt, on the other hand, is really the inability to move on, a morbid fixation on past failures and faults, and those of others, and it's negative and destructive, not only of ourselves but those we live with and amongst. Maybe one of the reasons for a lot of the resistance to the Church's message is that it has so often given the impression of

being against life itself. No, we are called to repent – to learn the lessons, turn our lives around - and move on.

It's interesting, too, that in today's Gospel Jesus completely rejects the idea that misfortune only happens to those who somehow deserve it. Whole political philosophies have been constructed around that mistaken notion. Our Lord acknowledges that, yes, bad things do happen to good people. We could explore that further, too – how long have you got? During Lent particularly we are encouraged to respond to Christ's call in a more concentrated way, (if I can put it like that) in order to make us more open to the love of God to each other. It's meant to be a time when we can learn – from Christ - to live differently, to breathe with a different rhythm and to immerse ourselves in the atmosphere of the Gospels and the values it proclaims. God wants our hearts and minds to be renewed, to be turned in his direction. Our attitude to the society in which we live, and which we have to say is in so many ways is hostile to the values of the Gospel – and maybe not in the ways a lot of religious people like to think – our attitude shouldn't be a question of trying to preserve our exclusive spiritual or religious purity - we are not Pharisees – or puritans - after all - but it's a matter of sharing in the approachable, down-to-earth holiness of Christ who became one of us out of God's total solidarity with vulnerable, struggling, searching humanity. Our belief in the saving power of the cross and resurrection of Christ is meant to make us more fully human - more in tune with the true vocation of humanity - not less.

Remember, too: in the Gospel the fig tree in Jesus' parable isn't able to take care of itself. It needs the gardener to improve its condition. Repentance and change are not things for us to accomplish alone. God himself is the careful gardener who offers us the chance to change, to become what we're meant to be. Ours is the responsibility to respond to the ways in which he seeks to renew us, and Lent is the time given to us to grant us space to respond. +

Daily celebrations of the Eucharist (Tuesday to Saturday) at St Arvan's are at 10 a.m. Friday at 9.30 a.m. Tuesday is the Feast of the Annunciation (Lady Day)

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

The Third Sunday of Lent **23rd March 2025**

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

NEXT SUNDAY

The Fourth Sunday of Lent **Mothers' Sunday**

30th March 2025

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

Readings:

Joshua 5.9-12

Psalms 32

2 Corinthians 5.16-21

St Luke 15.1-3, 11b-32

For all services in the wider Ministry Area please see www.severnwyema.co.uk

Fr Michael's day off is Monday

There are Lent boxes available at St Arvan's for the work of A.C.S. (The Additional Curates' Society)

The Ministry Area

Prayer Group meets

each Thursday 7.45pm – 9pm at David Carne's house, The Cedars, Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric.
email david@bedlambeds.com

St Arvans Tea and Chat

April 12th 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 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