

# 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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## 30<sup>th</sup> March 2025 The Fourth Sunday of Lent

### *Mothing Sunday*

#### The Collect

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, 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 Joshua

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the

month in the plains of Jericho. On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

[5. 9-12]

*Reader / This is the Word of the Lord*

*Response / Thanks be to God*

#### Psalm 32

**R/ You, O Lord, are my hiding place.**

Happy the one whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.  
Happy the one to whom the Lord imputes no guilt,  
and in whose spirit there is no guile.  
For I held my tongue;  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all the day long.  
Your hand was heavy upon me  
day and night;  
my moisture was dried up  
like the drought in summer.

**R/ You, O Lord, are my hiding place.**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and my iniquity I did not hide.  
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions  
to the Lord,'  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.  
Therefore let all the faithful make their  
prayers to you in time of trouble;  
in the great water flood,  
it shall not reach them.  
You are a place for me to hide in;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with songs  
of deliverance.

**R/ You, O Lord, are my hiding place.**

'I will instruct you and teach you  
in the way that you should go;  
I will guide you with my eye.  
'Be not like horse and mule  
which have no understanding;

whose mouths must be held  
with bit and bridle,  
or else they will not stay near you.'  
Great tribulations remain for the wicked,  
but mercy embraces those  
who trust in the Lord.  
Be glad, you righteous,  
and rejoice in the Lord;  
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

**R/ You, O Lord, are my hiding place.**

#### A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians [5. 17-21]

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

*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.  
I will leave this place  
and go to my father and say  
'Father, I have sinned  
against heaven and against you.'  
**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.**

**N**ow all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe--the best one--and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what

was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.'

Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!'

Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

[15:1-3, 11b-32]

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

## For Your Prayers

Our holy mother, the Church  
Our own mothers, living and departed.  
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; Val Higgs.

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed: Moya Bowen; Elspeth Leaver; Ron Painter; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time:  
John North-Row; Philip Bell, priest; Horace Davies, priest; May Fitzpatrick; Betty Clay

## 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.*

## Mahali

**Jereboam:** This week I am speaking to Mahali, who, if I am correct, has just been listening to Jesus.

**Mahali:** That's right.

**Jereboam:** There's something about you that suggests it was quite an emotional experience.

**Mahali:** Yes, but I feel very refreshed by it too. Jesus told the story of a young man who asks for his share of his father's money, as a sort of anticipated inheritance, then goes away and wastes it on a dissolute lifestyle. In the end he's starving and so has to return home, where his father welcomes him with open arms. There's a great reconciliation, and they have a celebratory feast.

**Jereboam:** What a lovely story. Presumably he was describing God's capacity for forgiveness.

**Mahali:** Yes, but the story also felt particularly relevant to my family. It's not that my son leads a dissolute life, but somehow he's lost his way. It's worrying, to say the least. My husband and I, we often talk about life as being a bit like climbing a mountain: you're always trying to improve and, if it doesn't sound too pompous to put it this way, you're trying to come closer to God. So with your children you try to set them on the right path, to help them up the mountain – or at least the first stages of it. The problem with one of my sons has been that he seems to be so easily side-tracked and to go off in the wrong direction. My husband and I try to tell ourselves that maybe he'll somehow stumble on another route that leads up the mountain, maybe a route we don't know ourselves. That would be fine, of course, but it's difficult to stay optimistic after so many setbacks.

**Jereboam:** But you were encouraged by Jesus' story....

**Mahali:** Yes, I don't know what I found more reassuring: his story with its happy ending, or the sense that someone with such spiritual authority understands our situation. I feel that I can almost wrap his authority around us all, as a sort of support.

**Jereboam:** I shouldn't be surprised if many parents found similar encouragement from Jesus and his story.

**Mahali:** Perhaps there'll be

more still who will understand when they read your report.

**Jereboam:** I'd like to think so. Thank you, Mahali.

## THIS WEEK

Sunday's 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."

The gospels this week are all from St John. After two days of healing stories, the opposition against Jesus builds. In Cana, in Galilee, Jesus heals the son of a royal official. Back down in Jerusalem, he heals a man who was sick for 38 years, incurring the wrath of his enemies because he did it on the Sabbath.

Because of this, and because he called God his Father, they now plot a way to kill him. Jesus says his opponents do not want to come to him for life. He calls God his father and says, "I have testimony greater than John's." Unafraid of his opponents, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for a feast and openly tells people that he has come from God. They did not arrest him then, "for his hour had not yet come." Thinking they know where Jesus is from (in both senses: where he lived now and his origin in heaven), his enemies insist that Jesus can't be a prophet: "Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."

**Next Sunday:** St John's gospel brings us the story of the woman accused of adultery. Religious leaders bring a woman to Jesus challenging him: "Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" Jesus responded only, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." The crowd quietly dispersed. Jesus seeing there is no one left to accuse the woman says gently, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more."

## A Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

+ Jesus repeatedly got into trouble with the religious establishment. A religious teacher, many people thought – and for that matter still think - is supposed to uphold a conventional view of life, not to rock the boat, not to do anything to cause offence or to give reason to regard religious faith as anything other than a kind of social cement. The critics of Jesus – at the start of today's Gospel, the Pharisees and scribes - were shocked that he mixed with people whose standards were not very high; the "taxcollectors and sinners" St Luke mentions were not necessarily criminals or particularly vicious people: just people who were a bit careless in their way of talking, a bit lax in their religious observances: in ritual hygiene, in what they ate. Just Not Our Sort, not respectable enough to be religious. But Jesus mixed with them, spoke to them, ate with them, talked about God to them as if they were people who would be receptive and capable of understanding.

If Jesus was already in trouble for doing that, he seemed almost determined to get into much more trouble by his explanation of *why* he behaved in the way he did. The story - the parable - he told was, like all his parables, about God and God's *kingdom*; or to put that a different way, I suppose we could say that they were about what happens when God's values prevail. And he spoke about the essential *nature* of God by telling this story which we know as the parable of the prodigal son, about two brothers: one of them was hard-working, disciplined, thrifty, obedient, a worthy heir to his father's fortune; the other was careless, lived for the moment, indulged every appetite, was disloyal, broke his father's heart. One was Our Type and the other wasn't.

But in Jesus' story a lot more attention is paid to the brother who goes off the rails, both by the story's narrative and by the father in the story. The elder brother, impeccable in everything, the model son we might think, gets a not very complimentary walk-on part at the end. It's a shocking story and it's meant to be. But it's an incredibly positive and liberating one. It challenges normal human standards; and if it really *is* about God, it paints a very different picture of what

religious faith is meant to be about. So, The father loves both his sons, equally; but because the younger one is much more of a problem he seems to pay more attention to him. He is obviously broken-hearted at the way he has behaved, and is constantly watching out for him to come back. When he does come back it's as though he'd been missing, feared dead, and is now discovered to be alive. This calls for a celebration - a feast. He's not treated on the basis of what he's done wrong, but on the basis of being his Father's son. And the same is true of the elder brother - 'All that I have is yours' he is told - only *he can't see it*. He describes his years of disciplined living as 'slaving', ("all these years I have been working like a slave for you") and there is no possible way he is going to recognise his dissolute younger brother as an equal member of the family. So we have the strange situation in which the younger, dishonourable brother is welcomed back home enjoying the party in his honour, while the honourable, dutiful elder brother who has never strayed from home feels excluded and resentful.

But the point is that Jesus goes behind the question of deserving to the fact of belonging. It is God, and only God, who decides that we belong. Jesus' critics would have acknowledged readily that God brought their ancestors out of slavery in Egypt and led them into the Promised Land - a land which they had not earned or deserved; but they, like all of us I suppose, found it hard to remember that what started as a gift continues as a gift. The elder son, like so many of us in our attitude to faith, had moved from the privilege of belonging to a situation of slavery, in his own perception at least. It was as someone who deserved a reward that he felt he had a claim on his father, not because of their relationship itself. What he found impossible to accept was that his father acknowledged that the younger son had the same claim regardless of the way he had behaved. It's a metaphor, of course, and Jesus' critics understand that clearly. We can imagine the Pharisees and scribes listening to Jesus tell the story, recognising *themselves* in the elder brother, and concluding thinking that this message was deeply unsettling, subversive of virtually everything they believed, and that they

were being attacked. They were. We all are.

In this deliberately provocative story, like much of Our Lord's teaching intensely paradoxical, deliberately exaggerated almost to an absurd degree, imbued with layer after layer of implication and meaning, Jesus wasn't in the business of conferring a blessing on the way human society orders its affairs - much less the way we think faith is transactional. He is was talking about the Kingdom - the way God operates - and this is bound to get under the skins of those who were complacent and comfortable in their view of the rightness of their own attitudes and behaviour. It's hard to understand where that popular view of Jesus comes from as someone who wouldn't say boo to a goose - in the Victorian children's hymn's terminology, "*gentle Jesus, meek and mild*". His teaching is continually pushing against every conventional religious stereotype there is; it's meant to challenge, to disturb, to needle - and not only those who opposed him, but those who followed him, *then and now*. We all too easily - whatever our theology might actually say - can fall into the trap of thinking and behaving as if we *deserve* God's love and those who differ from us don't! There's a story about Arthur Stanton, one of the Anglo-Catholic slum priests at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, and one of the greatest preachers of his generation, leaving a substantial sum of money in his will "to the undeserving poor", cocking a snook at the Victorian or Edwardian obsession with respectability in the highly justified belief that the Lord would understand and approve.

The words and the presence of Jesus in our midst - as here in the Eucharist - are constantly exposing the ways in which our hearts and minds and even our attitude to God himself can so easily go astray. It's why the constant proclamation of the Gospel and our constant reflection on it, is so vital in the life of the Church and in our own. Because it won't let us get away with it; it constantly challenges us to an ever authentic following of Christ.

And this is something positive - something we should rejoice in, and give thanks for. We don't get what we probably deserve - no, we are loved without reserve.

In a way, then, we are back to St John's imagery of light and darkness and the light which judges even as it illuminates. The Gospels show us the Incarnation - the reality of who he is and what he is sent to do - leading Jesus inexorably and inevitably to his passion and death: given divine nature and the kind of world created by human nature it couldn't be otherwise. Jesus, the Word made flesh, by revealing his intimacy with the Father, his complete knowledge of the nature of God, made mortal enemies; as we said at the beginning, he got into trouble. And, of course, we will be reflecting on this battle between darkness and light more and more as Lent moves towards Holy Week and Easter. +

**Daily celebrations of the Eucharist** (Tuesday to Saturday) at St Arvan's are at 10 a.m. Friday at 9.30 a.m.

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

### TODAY

**The Fourth Sunday of Lent**  
**Mothering Sunday**  
**30<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

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

### NEXT SUNDAY

**The Fifth Sunday of Lent**  
**6<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

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

11.30 Pet Blessing Service  
 at St Mary's, Penterry.

4 p.m. All age Eucharist  
 at St James', Devauden.

\*Readings:

Isaiah 43.16-21

Psalms 126

Philippians 3.4b-14

St John 12.1-8

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**

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

## **St Arvans Tea and Chat**

**April 12<sup>th</sup>** 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 10<sup>th</sup>  
to April 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.  
at St Christopher's, Bulwark

### ***Living to Please God***

Tuesdays from 11<sup>th</sup> March  
At 2.45 p.m.  
Shirenewton Church Rooms

All are welcome

## **'Mothering Sunday'**

**The Fourth Sunday of Lent** has been known by many different names over the centuries: Refreshment Sunday, Laetare Sunday and, of course, the name which most of us call it today, '*Mothering Sunday*'.

Refreshment Sunday derives its name from the Gospel reading for that Sunday in the older liturgies, the feeding of the five thousand, and the relaxation in Mid-Lent for Christians to be refreshed in order to continue the Lenten journey towards Holy week and Easter.

One of the other names for today '*Laetare Sunday*' takes its name from the opening words in Latin of the Introit for the day "Rejoice you with Jerusalem; and be glad for her: exult and sing for joy with her."

In many churches the clergy wear rose coloured vestments today to mark this Sunday as different from the rest of Lent with its more penitential themes and sombre purple liturgical colour.

The last, and probably the best known name for today, at least in England and Wales, is *Mothering Sunday*, the origins of which go back to Mediæval times when the appointed epistle spoke of "Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all" (*Galatians*. 4.26).

It developed from that point as a day when we give thanks for the Church, as in some way the mother of all baptised Christians, which in the name of Christ himself, feeds us with Word and Sacrament, and also for Mary, the Mother of the Lord, the first Christian disciple – in many ways the mother of the Church - and the one who is commended St John and to all of us as our mother in this morning's Gospel.

Later, this Fourth Sunday of Lent also came to be a day when we honour our own mothers, too, whether they are living or departed and the deep human love and affection they can show to us which, again, has been seen as in a way reflecting the love, care and compassion shown to us by God, the source of all love and compassion, whose glory shines throughout creation.

