

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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6th April 2025

**The Fifth Sunday
of Lent**

Passion Sunday

The Collect

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; 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

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honour me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

[43. 16 - 21]

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

Psalm 126

**R/ The Lord has indeed
done great things for us.**

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with songs of joy. Then said they among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' The Lord has indeed done great things for us, and therefore we rejoiced.

**R/ The Lord has indeed
done great things for us.**

Restore again our fortunes, O Lord, as the river beds of the desert. Those who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed, will come back with shouts of joy, bearing their sheaves with them.

**R/ The Lord has indeed
done great things for us.**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians [3; 4b-14]

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew

born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

*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.**

If anyone serves me, says the Lord, he must follow me; Wherever I am, my servant will be there also.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.**

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St John

Glorify to you, O Lord.

Six days before the Passover Jesus

came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

(St John 12.1-8)

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

For Your Prayers

That, as Easter approaches, we may draw closer to Our Lord in his passion and death

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, Jeabn Papps.

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: Joe Dunn; Evelyn Price; Audrey Sherwood

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.

This week's Jereboam is based on the alternative Gospel for Lent V, St John 8. 1- 11

Rebecca

Rebecca: Excuse me, sir: you write those articles about Jesus, don't you?

Jereboam: Yes, I do.

Rebecca: That man is the most wonderful person in the whole world!

Do you think you could possibly mention in one of your articles that someone called Rebecca thinks he's absolutely wonderful?

Jereboam: Well, I could, yes, but it might be better if we gave some reasons.

Rebecca: All right. He's just saved my mother's life, single-handedly. There was a group of men who had decided to stone her – presumably to death – after she was discovered with a man, doing...doing the sort of thing she shouldn't do with anyone apart from my father.

Jereboam: I think I understand what you mean.

Rebecca: It's not that I'm excusing her or anything, but when men like that decide to stone someone, don't they ever stop to think what will happen to any children involved? It's only thanks to Jesus that my mother's still alive.

Jereboam: How did he stop them?

Rebecca: He simply told them that the first stone should be thrown by whichever one of them had never committed a sin. That made them think all right.

Jereboam: I imagine it did.

Rebecca: I can't help noticing that no-one seems too bothered about stoning the man she was with...

Jereboam: No – I can't say that I'm altogether surprised about that. You must feel terrible: it's a very difficult situation for you, even without the threat of stoning.

Rebecca: It is upsetting, yes. Obviously, like everyone else I'm the product of my mother and my father, so knowing that my mother was acting like that...well, it's like being split down the middle. Jesus appreciated my feelings; I knew that from the way he put his hand on my shoulder. And he told my mother in no uncertain terms to behave herself better in future. That's a bit different from throwing stones, though.

Jereboam: Do you think your mother will have learnt her lesson?

Rebecca: It's too early to say: maybe. She does tend to have cravings for things – all sorts of things. Then when she finally gets hold of whatever it is, it doesn't actually make her particularly happy after all. I guess this is just another example of the same type of situation... But you never know: perhaps Jesus could help her. He seems the sort of straight-forward, understanding person who could guide her towards a happier life. I think I'll offer to go with her to one of his talks.

Jereboam: Look, thanks for speaking to me. You're a very sensible young lady, and I hope that everything works out for you and your family.

Rebecca: Thank you, sir.

THIS WEEK

On the **Fifth Sunday of Lent**, **St John's gospel** brings us the story of the meal at the home of Marthan and Mary at Bethany. Mary anoints Jesus' feet with an expensive ointment. He replies to Judas' criticism by saying she has prepared him for his death and burial.

The first readings this week prepare us for the gospels. We begin with the long, but well worth reading, story of Susanna, which ends in "blessing God who saves those who hope in him." The bronze serpent on a pole reminds us of Jesus' saving cross. Three young men refuse to commit idolatry and show us how God protects "the servants who trusted in him." God entered a covenant with Abraham. In the midst of his persecution, Jeremiah praises God, "For he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!" God promises to unite the people in an everlasting covenant.

Our gospels are again from St John. Jesus continues to challenge the Pharisees, who plot his arrest. Presented with a woman caught in adultery, Jesus replies, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Reminding us of the bronze serpent and his death, Jesus says, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM." To the children of Abraham and to us Jesus declares, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." "Whoever keeps my word

will never see death. ... Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM." They heard what they thought was blasphemy and tried to stone him. Jesus simply told the truth, because, "the Father is in me and I am in the Father." After the raising of Lazarus, the plans were set to destroy Jesus. The high priest says the prophetic words, "it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish."

Next Sunday: is Palm Sunday. As we make our way into Holy Week, hear the gospel about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, Paul's invitation to us to imitate Jesus who emptied himself, and the whole Passion, this year from St Luke's Gospel.

A Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

+ On this Fifth Sunday of Lent the atmosphere of the Church's liturgy changes abruptly. We are standing on the brink of something which has about it both an air of expectation and of foreboding. The words of Isaiah from the first reading take on a fresh resonance for us: "Do not consider the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

God is about to do something new, something startlingly original. We come almost to the walls of the Holy City of Jerusalem itself, the place where the events of the Christian Passover will unfold - the events we will remember and live through during Holy Week and the Easter Triduum, those three great days at the end of Lent and the beginning of Easter.

This air of expectation and foreboding is almost tangible in today's Gospel. There are all kinds of echoes here for us - Mary's fragrant offering recalls the gifts of the magi - the myrrh for embalming the dead. This is a very strange event; as a meal it tends to look forward to and foreshadow another more celebrated meal which Jesus ate with his Apostles on the night he was betrayed. But here we have seated at table presumably as the host, one who has been brought back from the dead, and the one who has restored him to life is himself reflecting on his own impending death and verbally clashing with the one who will deliver him into the hands of his enemies. We almost feel the

darkness and the threat of violence closing in.

Yet once again we see Jesus, who will be the innocent victim whose life is offered for the life of the world, refusing what we might call "victim status." He is the only one who has any conscious idea of what is about to happen, although Mary Magdalene seems subconsciously to understand. Everyone else is still in denial, even perhaps Judas himself. And here Jesus is still concerned to prepare them, to *teach them* why events must unfold in the way they do. By itself, the action of Mary anointing his feet seems emotionally and financially extravagant as Judas points out; what she does is given meaning by the words Our Lord uses to *describe* what she has done - this is an anointing, an embalming prior to his death. "You will not always have me with you," he says to them to underline what he has just implied.

Throughout the New Testament we find a shocking simplicity and that simplicity becomes even more explicit as we approach the events of Holy Week and Easter. Christ does not merely teach the truth, He is the truth; He does not merely show us the way, He is the way; He does not merely give us eternal life, He is that life. How can all these universal values and truths be really and completely present in one individual? Only if that Person is himself universal as well as human; only by the Incarnation; only by what C. S. Lewis called "myth become fact".

It's this shocking simplicity which underlies our whole faith.

For St John, Mary's action in anointing Jesus' feet in today's Gospel indicates her recognition of Jesus as Messiah and more than that, and her wiping of his feet with her hair her submission before him in humility and adoration. John is that Mary believes that her place, *and her place is our place too*, is at the feet of Jesus, in worship and adoration. This is no mere earthly teacher who stands before her, and she recognises this with her whole being.

And the question of who Jesus is absolutely central here. In Jesus we see our God who shares our life and death to free us from sin - and by that we mean our falling short in some way of who we could be - so the things we should take personal responsibility for, and those

habits of behaviour we inherit through the process of history and the general messiness of human life - to bring us back into full relationship with him. This is God's great act of solidarity with the human race, made not as a gesture or merely a symbol, but as the ultimate act of love which leads us to the new life of resurrection. The cross helps to answer our questions about meaning; in a mysterious way it helps us make sense of things. In the crucified Lord, lifted up from the earth, we see what the love of God is all about, a love which holds nothing back, which has no limits placed upon it. In Jesus, crucified and risen, we meet God, the focus of our lives, the source of all our freedom and the reason for our hope and joy.

By relating the episode of the anointing of Jesus, St John gives what happened a clear theological meaning. The death of Jesus is not to be conceived of as tragedy or the triumph of evil over good. The divine purpose is at work here. In the midst of all the cynical political schemes that are being plotted, by Judas among others, Mary's anointing of Jesus gives us a beautiful demonstration of gratitude, love, and devotion. And it says to those who were present, and to us, that this death is like no other. Nothing, not even all the political and religious powers of the day, can stand in the way of our salvation. His passion and death are somehow the key to a more profound understanding of the meaning of the world and of the purpose of our lives. This may be a strange thing to say, but in the cross we don't only see Christ, we also see ourselves. To stand at the foot of the cross is to begin to be united with him in his sacrifice and in his dying to himself in order to live for us. At the heart of his message is the need to let go our selfishness and egoism so we might experience the life of God.

Here, now, as we celebrate the unfolding story of our redemption, as we spend time in prayer, the events of the Gospel come alive for us. We will see and encounter him in a particularly intense and personal way through the celebration of the liturgies of Holy Week which is why we should really do everything we can to experience as much of them as we possibly can. We meet Christ, and he draws us to himself, in all the sacraments, but especially when we come together at the

Eucharist to offer his death and to receive his life in Holy Communion.

Our following of Jesus doesn't end with his death – for by it, he makes all things new through his resurrection. And so we come back to those strange words of the prophet Isaiah with which we began: *“Do not consider the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”* +

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

The Fifth Sunday of Lent 6th 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.

NEXT SUNDAY

PALM SUNDAY

Holy Week begins

13th April 2025

- 10 a.m. Palm Procession
& Sung Eucharist
at St Arvan's

Readings:

Liturgy of the Palms:

St Luke 19.28-40

Liturgy of the Passion:

Isaiah 50.4-9a;

Psalms 31.9-16; Philippians 2.5-11;

St Luke 22.14 - 23.56

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

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

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)

**A full list of Holy Week services will be
included in next week's newsletter**

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

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