

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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20th July 2025 The Fifth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 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 Genesis

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, 'My

lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on – since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.'

Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.'

[18. 1-10a]

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

Psalm 15

R/ Those who do what is right will dwell in the presence of the Lord.

Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle?
who may abide upon your holy hill?
Whoever leads a blameless life
and does what is right,
who speaks the truth from his heart.

R/ Those who do what is right will dwell in the presence of the Lord.

There is no guile upon his tongue;
he does no evil to his friend;
he does not heap contempt
upon his neighbour.
In his sight the wicked are rejected,
but he honours those who fear the Lord.

R/ Those who do what is right will dwell in the presence of the Lord.

He has sworn to do no wrong
and does not take back his word.

He does not give his money
in hope of gain,
nor does he take a bribe
against the innocent.
Whoever does these things
shall never be overthrown.

R/ Those who do what is right will dwell in the presence of the Lord.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians [1. 15-28]

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him – provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel. I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how

great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Open our heart, O Lord,
to accept the words of your Son.
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.**

Now as Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'
[10. 38-42]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may deepen our lives of prayer and service.
Pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela;
all pilgrims to the holy places of the faith
All who witness to the Resurrection in the life of the Church
The people Gaza, & Israel, & for lasting peace in the Middle East
For wisdom, restraint and a desire for peace among the nations of the world.
For the people of the United States of America.
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
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 Leo, 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 Jackson; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Elisabeth; Anne-Louise; Mary; Peter; Margaret; Althea; Margi Osborne, Marilyn Humphries

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Naylor Firth; John Hall; Cynthia Duffield; own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall this week: Joan Neal; Stanley Phillips; David Marshall; Nancy Shepherd; Kenneth Vinsel, priest; John Rogers; Mary Marshall

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

Gad

Jereboam: Good morning; you must be Gad. I'm Jereboam – Tirzah suggested that I spoke to you.

Gad: Yes. Do come in, Jereboam. I'm delighted to meet you.

Jereboam: Thank you. Tirzah was just explaining to me why she's reduced her active involvement in your Neighbour Group. To be honest, that surprised me. I'm always so impressed with the good work that you all do, looking after people and so on, and I couldn't understand why she wouldn't want to be part of that work. Tirzah said that such an active life had caused her to lose touch with certain aspects of her faith. She didn't quite put it this way, but she reminded me of that story of Jesus with the sisters Martha and Mary. I'm sure you know the story: Jesus commended Mary for concerning herself only with him, and he told Martha not to spend her time worrying so much about little practical things. You must have to deal with these same issues yourself, considering your very active rôle in the group.

Gad: You're right: it's a tricky problem. Jesus said to Martha, if I remember rightly, "few things are needed", and then added, "indeed only one"...I suppose he meant that the only important thing is to serve him. Personally I have to be on my guard and not forget that principle. It's harder than you'd think.

Jereboam: As Tirzah found...

Gad: Clearly there are always going to be practical aspects to all our lives. It's just that I have to include those in my service of Jesus and not let them detract from it. It's like

looking at a tree with lots and lots of branches. The challenge is to keep reminding yourself of how they originally stem from the one trunk – from Jesus, in other words.

Jereboam: So you're not saying that there's anything inherently wrong with the branches.

Gad: Not necessarily, no, but they can distract us. So, like Tirzah, I sometimes lose sight of Jesus amidst all the busy work that we do.

The more active you are, the more you run that risk, I suppose. I probably couldn't manage at all without the help of our community. I need the stillness, the contemplation of people like Tirzah to make sense of my activities and to keep me heading in the right direction. Her prayers help me to connect all I do to my life with Jesus.

Jereboam: Thank you, Gad. I'd like to wish the group well with all its work.

Gad: Thank you, Jereboam. I'll tell the others.

THIS WEEK

Sunday's readings tell us about service. In the Genesis story, Abraham generously cares for three strangers who then tell him that his wife, Sarah, will finally have a son. St Luke's gospel recounts the classic story of Martha and Mary: Martha ran around serving Jesus while Mary sat at his feet listening. "Mary has chosen the better part," Jesus says.

Tuesday is the Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene and Wednesday that of St Bridget of Sweden, one of the co-patrons of Europe. Friday is the Feast of Saint James, Apostle, with its own special readings. Saturday is the celebration of Saints Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The daily readings continue our second week from the Book of Exodus continuing the story of God's faithful deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh has a change of heart and chases the fleeing Israelites. Moses tells them to "Fear not! Stand your ground, and you will see the victory the Lord will win for you today." With Moses' outstretched arm, they pass through the sea on dry land,

while their pursuers drown. Still the people grumble against God in the desert and God gives them manna to eat, with Moses saying, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." Then God comes to the people in smoke and fire. He summoned Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments and Moses shares them with the people in a covenant ceremony, sprinkling the blood of sacrificed bulls on the altar, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you."

In St Matthew's Gospel this week some people come up and ask Jesus for a sign. He answers mysteriously by saying that the only sign they will receive is the sign of Jonah the prophet, whose preaching brought about conversion. His family comes looking for Jesus and he again asks the mystifying question about who is really a relative, an intimate, with him. His answer is that all of us who do the will of his Father. Then we hear the parable of the sower. It is important for us not to be discouraged because all of the seed doesn't find its way to good soil. Jesus encourages us to be sowers of the Word. He will guarantee a rich harvest. To understand his parables is Jesus' gift to us. Finally, we hear the parable about the weeds in the field again.

Next Sunday's readings begin with a reading from Genesis. Abraham pleads for compassion for those few innocent people of Sodom and Gomorrah. God promises him, "For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it." Jesus teaches us to pray in the reading from Luke's gospel, using the familiar words, "Father, hallowed be your name." He urges us to be persistent in our prayer: "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

A Homily for Trinity 5

+ Today's Gospel gives us an important and timely message. I suppose most of us tend to be more like Martha than Mary. If like me, you're a compulsive worrier, we become anxious and we worry about so many things; there always seems to be so much to do and so little time in which to do it, so much so that we have, unless we try very hard to carve it out and protect it, so little opportunity for the prayer and reflection which alone can keep our

everything in our lives in proper perspective, and can prevent our spiritual and religious sensibilities from being sidelined and in some way losing their edge. Without the "one thing needful" Jesus speaks about in this morning's Gospel it's all too easy to end up - despite our profession of faith and belief here - with our relationship with Christ having little influence either on the way we actually live and in forming us as the people we are called to become by our baptism. As Jesus himself said in another context "man does not live by bread alone." The obligations of life have to be met, but without the spiritual nourishment which comes to us through prayer, worship and reflection - without the grace of word and sacrament - the deeper realities can so easily fade into the background and *the joy and hope* which are *all things* which should characterise a follower of Christ can so easily disappear. Many people who hear the story of Martha and Mary for the first time are perplexed by what seems to be the unfairness of Jesus' judgement. The practical hostess who extends the hospitality of her household to Jesus and his followers seems to get a raw deal. She tries to do what she can in the most practical way possible. The obvious frustration which leads to her impatient outburst to Jesus, "*Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself*" is a reaction which in the circumstances seems natural. Yet, whatever *our* instinctive reactions might be, it's clear that Jesus takes Mary's side. So, why? What provokes Jesus' reply to Martha seems to be her irritability and resentment at her sister. But he's doing more than telling her to relax, to chill. He seems to be saying that whatever the daily necessities might be in trying to care for his needs and those of his followers, the pressing demands of hospitality have distracted Martha from the thing that is really important, and that is being in the presence of the one who offers a wholly different kind of nourishment from that offered by practical hospitality. So what are we to make of all this? Jesus doesn't regard practical service as being of no importance - in fact he says repeatedly in the gospels that it's absolutely central to belief in God. But having said that, anyone who follows him needs to take time to sit in the stillness of

the presence of God in order to know whether what they are doing is in fact what God wants them to do and that their values are those of the Kingdom. The Lord tells us in this particular instance when confronted by Martha's impatience and resentment that Mary's is the better part – the one thing needful – but in some way we have to combine the virtues of them both, by finding a true balance between prayer, worship, and service. St Benedict shows us that these distinctions are not as absolute and set in stone as they might seem – prayer can also be service to those in need, we worship Christ in the poor and suffering he loves. In any case, true prayer, worship which brings us into contact with the overwhelming mystery of God, if it's authentic, results in action. Prayer and worship without the practical love and service of other people can become just a matter of going through the ritual motions. Worse still, they can be a way of trying to construct to our advantage a hollow substitute for the living God. On the other hand, service without prayer and worship can become misguided, self-serving, fanatical or just leading to burn-out. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who we now know went through her own doubts and long dark night of the soul, was asked how she did what she did. My secret is simple," she said, "I pray." A place within the church for authentic encounter with the living God can only lead to the loving service of humanity. But it's always going to be a balancing act. For most of us our vocation is to hold the duties of prayer and service together in constant tension. It was St Dominic in the middle ages who wanted his friars to develop "a cloister of the heart", a place of sanctuary within our hearts and minds, a way of carrying prayer and contemplation with us whatever it is we are doing. The idea was to pray constantly – not necessarily by spending life on your knees, or by using a kind of repeated prayer mantra, but by making every part of life a prayer. Choosing the better part, the part of Mary, is not about desperately trying to find a place in our lives for God, trying to fit him in the odd unoccupied corner, but about being led to a place at Jesus' feet, nourished by his word, fed with his life. As Christians we can sometimes be appallingly arrogant in

a belief that we have all the answers to the questions and problems of the world. But we are not *selling* a product or a message, we are meant to be *living* it. We are not salesmen, we are disciples. We are not supposed to be the teachers of the world, but we are meant to try to live as those who are taught – taught by Christ himself.

The Old Testament reading today is important, because it illustrates what we are talking about. This mysterious episode from the very earliest beginnings of the story of the Jewish people has often been seen as a kind of early revealing of the life of God as Trinity.

We can think of that very well-known and loved icon by the Orthodox icon writer Andrei Rublev called "the hospitality of Abraham" sometimes confusingly referred to as the 'Old Testament Trinity'. 'Abraham and Sarah receive the three men coming out of the desert in the shimmering heat of the day and, despite the inconvenience, show generosity to their guests, but in reality what happens is the reverse of what it first seems to be, because the three are there to bring God's own generosity to *them*.

At the centre of our Christian lives is an act of hospitality. Here at the Eucharist we take part in this act of hospitality, not of *our* hospitality to others but, as in the first reading today, of God's hospitality towards *us*. Jesus invites us as guests to a meal at which he is the host and the servant – where he is also the food which is served. Here, at least, we are both Mary and not Martha. BUT ... following the example of Mary, our taking part in the Eucharist and being fed here with God's life enables us to do things in the right order – to choose the one thing needful – that is, to spend time in his presence and then be sent out into the world to follow his example of service. Martha perhaps as she's meant to be. +

St Arvan's Summer Barbecue:
Saturday 2nd August
 in the Vicarage garden.
 Tickets £15.

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

Trinity 5 20th July 2025

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

NEXT SUNDAY

Trinity 6 27th July 2025

10 a.m. Holy Eucharist
 at St Mary's Priory, Chepstow

This is a joint service for the whole Ministry Area, as Fr Philip begins his pilgrimage to Rome. Please come and support him.

Readings
 Genesis 18.20-32; Psalm 138
 Colossians 2.6-15, [16-19]
 St Luke 11.1-13

Fr Michael's day off this week is Monday.

Daily celebrations this week:
 Tuesday, Wednesday at 10 a.m.
 Friday's mass is at 09.30.

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

An illustrated talk about the Camino de Santiago
Friday 25th July 7 p.m
at St Arvan's Church
 Refreshments afterwards
 All welcome

The Ministry Area Prayer Group

meets every Thursday 7.45pm – 9pm
 This week at St Peter's, Newchurch.
 For further details email david@bedlambeds.com

St Arvans Tea and Chat

August 9th and usually every
second Saturday of the month
Childrens activity table

*For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084*

**There will be only one
celebration of the
Eucharist for the whole
Ministry Area on
Sunday 27th July at 10 a.m.
at St Mary's Priory,
Chepstow, as Fr Philip
Averay begins his walking
pilgrimage to Rome.
Please come and support
him.**