

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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Mobile 07867803479
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

**17th August 2025
The Ninth Sunday
after Trinity**

The Collect

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; 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 Jeremiah

Am I a God near by, says the LORD, and not a God far off? Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD. I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long? Will the hearts of the prophets ever turn back –

those who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart? They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, just as their ancestors forgot my name for Baal.

Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the LORD. Is not my word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? [23. 23-29]

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

Psalm 82

R/ Arise, O God, and judge the earth.

God has taken his stand in the council of heaven; in the midst of the gods he gives judgement: 'How long will you judge unjustly and show such favour to the wicked?

R/ Arise, O God, and judge the earth.

'You were to judge the weak and the orphan; defend the right of the humble and needy; 'Rescue the weak and the poor; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

R/ Arise, O God, and judge the earth.

'They have no knowledge or wisdom; they walk on still in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

R/ Arise, O God, and judge the earth.

'Therefore I say that though you are gods and all of you children of the Most High, 'Nevertheless, you shall die like mortals and fall like one of their princes.' Arise, O God and judge the earth, for it is you that shall take all nations for your possession.

R/ Arise, O God, and judge the earth.

A reading from the letter

to the Hebrews [11. 29- 12.2]

By faith the people passed of Israel through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace. And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets – who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

*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

Jesus said to his disciples:

‘I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!

From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.’

He also said to the crowds, ‘When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, “It is going to rain”; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, “There will be scorching heat”; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?’

[12.49–56]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may cultivate the values of the Kingdom in our hearts, minds and actions. All pilgrims – especially for Fr Philip as he walks to Rome, and all who journey to Santiago de Compostela and all the holy places of the faith.

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

For wisdom, restraint and a desire for peace among the nations of the world.

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, &
Arvchbishop of Wales; 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: our own departed
relatives & friends, and those whose
anniversaries of death fall at this time: Sid
Belcher; Mary Aplin; Patrick 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*

Mahalon

Jereboam: So what’s new in the
life of the Church?

Mahalon: Well, we’ve been
hearing a lot recently about what a
wonderful gift faith is. Several of the
elders have been praising the faith of
Abraham, for example.

Jereboam: You know...forgive my
rudeness...I never quite see the point
of commending faith like that.

Presumably the idea is to encourage
you to believe more fervently, but that
doesn’t really make sense. Teach
people about your faith, by all means.
Encourage them to express their faith
through good works: fine...but telling
them to believe more strongly – well,
surely they can’t achieve that just by
trying harder, can they?

Mahalon: It’s not quite like that.
We reassure one another about the
value of our faith, encouraging
ourselves to have the confidence to
believe. That’s important. If you’re
surrounded by enough people who
regard your faith as unnecessary or
inadequate in some way, their
opinions can easily start to affect you.

Listen to this: one of our friends was
recently advised that she ought to give
up her belief in Jesus and her
membership of the Church. Apparently
she’d become healthier!

Jereboam: What? I don’t like the
sound of that attitude...

Mahalon: No: it is an extreme
example. But even in everyday life you
encounter little criticisms or jokes
made at your expense. Sometimes
they’re genuinely meant in a friendly
way, and you like to think that you can
laugh them off, but eventually this all
starts to have an impact, wearing you

down. Then your faith begins to become cautious, wary...it's blunted, if you like. That's one reason why the fellowship of faith within the Church is so important, and why we need to remember the glorious faith of our forefathers. Their resolve reminds us what is possible, encourages us to trust our convictions, and – how can I put this – it urges us to let our faith trickle into every last corner of our being.

Jereboam: I see.

Mahalon: ...and by the way I didn't think you were being rude at all.

Jereboam: Thank you.

THIS WEEK

In today's Gospel from St Luke Jesus says, "I have come to set the earth on fire." He warns us that the divisions we see, even in our own families, and society are too often caused by the choices people make about his mission.

Wednesday is the feast day of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, Abbot and Doctor of the Church, and on Friday we celebrate the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the first part of the week, the daily eucharistic readings give us passages from the Book of Judges. We read of how Israel worshiped other gods and fell into the power of their enemies; how God called Gideon to be a leader of his tribe; of Gideon's son Abimelech who was unfairly made king and his brother Jotham's response; and of Jephtha's promise to God to sacrifice the first person he saw if only he was victorious in battle. After his victory, Jephtha's only child ran to greet him and he sacrificed her. The Psalm reading for that day reminds us that "Sacrifice or oblation you wished not, but ears open to obedience." Two days of readings from the Book of Ruth tell the moving story of Naomi and her loving daughter-in-law Ruth. Ruth leaves her own homeland to return with Naomi to Bethlehem, where Ruth remarries and has a child, Obed, who will become the grandfather of the great king, David.

St Matthew's Gospel this week includes some favorite parables, like the rich young

man. Jesus says "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God," and we know he is introducing the counter-cultural idea that riches may make it more difficult to be saved. Those are followed by stories of the Master of the vineyard who leaves us with the phrase "The last will be first and the first, last." Jesus tells the parable of the landowner who hires workers throughout the day, including the last hours. When he pays them all the same, those who worked all day grumbled. "Are you envious because I am generous?" He offers the parable of the guests who are too busy to attend the wedding feast of the king's son. Friday, Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Saturday, Jesus says, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Next Sunday we celebrate St Bartholomew the Apostle.

A Homily for Trinity 9

A short address for these dog days of August.

Jesus' words in today's Gospel can easily lend themselves to misunderstanding, particularly when the world seems full of people only too willing literally to cast fire on the earth in the name of religious faith of one kind or another, nationalism, twisted political ideologies or just naked greed – and, of course, a toxic mixture of them all.

But - of course - that isn't Our Lord's meaning at all, the fire he speaks of isn't the fire of violent destruction but the fire of love and the love of God is such that it inevitably arouses fear, opposition and division. As St John says, the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness comprehends it not. Our Lord's life itself illustrates what he means. His teaching, his example, his presence leads to opposition from those who simply don't or won't understand, or from those who respond violently to the obvious and shaming contrast between the one who is the living embodiment of love and truth and grace, and their own deeply flawed human realities. Love and truth and compassion judge by their very existence – by the comparisons they provoke. So, there are various responses to an

authentic encounter with Christ, the literal embodiment of God's love, mercy and justice, but indifference isn't one of them. He holds up a mirror to our human imperfections, individual and collective – and a lot of people don't like that. Take it down, stamp on it – crucify. So often we give the impression that the Christian faith is about peace at all costs, but there is a dramatic difference between the peace which comes to us from God, forms us and leads us to express it in our lives, and the peace which is a result of timidity and fear - the false peace which comes from just not caring enough. Today's Gospel is the end of the chapter of St Luke's Gospel we have been listening to over the last few Sundays, and we have heard about the dangers of greed and the spiritual blindness it leads to, along with Jesus' instructions to his followers to stay awake, responsive and vigilant and to be those who follow the one who comes among us as one who serves. Hearing this has been uncomfortable enough for us, who can't help but notice the contrast between Jesus' words and our own often extremely sluggish and reluctant attempts to respond to them. But today we hear the terrifying predictions of the possible division and opposition and the tearing apart of human relationships which can come in the wake of a decision to follow him. To put it starkly: we follow a Lord whose earthly life was brought to an end precisely by those who found the contrast between the cost of sacrificial love and the compromises we make in the name of self-preservation and power impossible to bear. Christ himself, although coming from the heart of his religious tradition, lived and taught outside many of the formal religious conventions of the day - and, as we know from all the gospel accounts attracted to himself those who were in some way excluded or marginalized. He was put to death outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem. Those who follow him have always been called, in some shape or form, to go beyond the walls of security and habit and comfortable *human* traditions to embrace the insecurities of possible intellectual and cultural isolation, or rejection, ridicule and worse. . Following Christ is *profoundly* counter-cultural, almost an act of rebellion or internal exile from the spirit of the world. And of course it always has been - even in what is rather optimistically referred to as

the Christian culture of the past. Let's not be wistfully or angrily nostalgic for something that never really was, but recognise that to meet Christ and follow him always means a turning around of our lives and habits towards beauty, truth, mercy, kindness and gentleness - those things that lead to God.

To walk in faith and trust, to venture into the unknown like Jesus' first disciple, Mary herself at the Annunciation, is to be prepared to trust, and fall into the dangerous hands of the living God, and that itself is very much an eccentric violation of today's cultural and social norms.

In the course of our lives we make millions of decisions of greater or lesser importance, we take in all kinds of information which we filter and either accept or discard sometimes subliminally.

The decision for or against faith is probably the biggest we will ever make, certainly if we take its demands seriously. There are those who, without making any attempt actually to engage at an intelligent level with the real issues of life and death which faith raises, imagine that faith is a kind of teddy bear or security blanket which people who can't cope with too much reality carry around for reassurance and comfort against the harshness of the world. But many of us would want to argue that the opposite is true - that it looks the realities of life, death, and human nature fully in the face. We might say, too, that that metaphor, poetry and music, mystery, art and symbolism are ways of exploring reality and truth - and our place in the world - which can't adequately be expressed in any other way.

But I think unlike the angry cruel, puritanical and unbending certainties of fundamentalisms (of all the world's religious traditions, even our own), authentic faith, like life itself, commits us to embracing uncertainty and the unknown. Faith is a pilgrimage that will inevitably lead us to travel beyond the fashionable assumptions of this or any other period in history, and even at times - like Jesus himself - outside the protection and comfortable conventions of society. That has to be so if the journey we undertake is heading in the direction of the eternal realities of the kingdom of heaven, and the present day values of the Gospel.

This probably sounds a little bit uncompromising, but then so does this morning's Gospel. +

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

Trinity 9 17th August 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, Kilgwrrwg

NEXT SUNDAY

**St Bartholomew, Apostle
24th August 2025**

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

Readings
Acts 5.12-16
Psalm 145.1-7
1 Corinthians 4.9-15
St Luke 22.24-30

Daily celebrations at St Arvans are at
10 a.m.; Fridays at 9.30 a.m.
Wednesday's Eucharist this week is at
St Mary's Priory, Chepstow at 10 a.m.

Fr Michael's day off is Monday.

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

The Ministry Area Prayer Group

meets every Thursday 7.45pm – 9pm
21st August at St Arvan's
28th August at St Thomas Becket,
Shirenewton
For further details
email david@bedlambeds.com

St Arvans Tea and Chat

September 12th
*and usually every second
Saturday of the month*
Childrens activity table

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