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 later
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

30th November 2025
The First Sunday of Advent

The Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life,in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him 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

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
Many peoples shall come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.'
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

[**2.** 1-5]

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

Psalm 122

R/ **I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to God's house.'**

I was glad when they said to me,
'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'
And now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem;

R/ **I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to God's house.'**

Jerusalem, built as a city
that is at unity in itself.
Thither the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord,
as is decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
For there are set the thrones
of judgement,
the thrones of the house of David.

R/ **I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to God's house.'**

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
'May they prosper who love you.
'Peace be within your walls
and tranquillity within your palaces.'

R/ **I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to God's house.'**

For my kindred and companions' sake,
I will pray that peace be with you.
For the sake of the house
of the Lord our God,
I will seek to do you good.

R/ **I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to God's house.'**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans [**13;** 11-14]

Brothers and sisters, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near.
Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy.
Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy
and give us your saving help.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus spoke to his disciples:

'About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
For as the days of Noah were, so will be

the coming of the Son of Man.
For as in those days before the flood
they were eating and drinking,
marrying and giving in marriage,
until the day Noah entered the ark,
and they knew nothing until the flood
came and swept them all away,
so too will be the coming of the Son
of Man. Then two will be in the field;
one will be taken and one will be left.
Two women will be grinding meal
together; one will be taken
and one will be left.
Keep awake, therefore,
for you do not know on what day your
Lord is coming.But understand this:
if the owner of the house had known
in what part of the night the thief was
coming, he would have stayed awake
and would not have let his house
be broken into.
Therefore you also must be ready,
for the Son of Man is coming
at an unexpected hour.'
[St Matthew 24.36–44]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may find space in our busy lives to prepare for the coming of the Lord.
The government & people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to Russia's war of agression there 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.
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, & Archbishop 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, Nathan;

For the Departed:
The recently departed: Rosemary Whittaker; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall this week: Elizabth Jane Gollop; Edward Priddis; Nancy Stephens.

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

Josiah

Jereboam: Can you help me please, Josiah? I've been wondering about things that set you members of the Church apart from the rest of us. Obviously some of your beliefs are different, but I was thinking about other differences. Maybe I'm just imagining things, but it did occur to me that a lot of Jesus' teaching tends to be quite abstract.

Josiah: In what sense?

Jereboam: Well, if you think back to the Scriptures, we're told not to eat such and such, to make particular sacrifices on particular occasions, and so on...precise stipulations for every situation. Whereas Jesus often seemed to encourage people to follow general principles – you know, love your enemies, that sort of thing. His special prayer, that one they call the Lord's Prayer, deals with just about everything -- heaven, earth, past, present, future – but it's hardly specific at all. Each person can apply it to their own circumstances. That aspect of Jesus' teaching rather appeals to me, I must say.

Josiah: It certainly fits with his general attitude: the external things aren't really that important, compared with what we are like on the inside.

Jereboam: It must be an easy system to follow, in a way. So long as your intentions are right, the precise details don't matter that much.

Josiah: Well, I see what you mean, but in a way I'd say that the opposite is true. It's probably easier to follow objective instructions than it is to control your inner self. When you try to do that, it's hard to notice your own shortcomings. Ever so slowly we lose our sensitivity to certain things, certain issues, certain people even. But it's so gradual that we're simply not aware of it.

Jereboam: So how do you guard against that? Through prayer, I suppose.

Josiah: Yes, of course. Prayer is an answer to just about every question. But we also learn from other members of the Church. We can benefit from the knowledge and experience of people we trust and admire. Often you don't even need to ask their opinions: their example is so clear, that you feel you already understand their attitudes.

Jereboam: I'm sure that's all true, but it doesn't occur only within the Church. It hardly sets you apart from the rest of us.

Josiah: You're right, of course. What else can I say? Well, we also try to keep our attention on godly things. The more you do that, the more those things shine like a light on whatever is ungodly. Or as Paul put it to us recently, "Let us give up all the things we prefer to do under cover of dark; let us arm ourselves and appear in the light." Again, that's not unique to Jesus' followers, but it's a strong characteristic of how we think. Does that help you?
Jereboam: Yes: I've got plenty of material for what I need. Thank you.

THIS WEEK

The First Sunday of Advent and the beginning of a season filled with the riches of resonant and evocative scripture readings. For the next few weeks, the main focus will be on the first reading, with the gospel chosen to accompany it. The prophet Isaiah offers the people of God a promise of peace: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks." St Matthew's gospel speaks of the story of Noah and we hear words of caution from Jesus to prepare "for an hour you do not expect."
Wednesday is the feast day of the great missionary, Saint Francis Xavier..
Unlike most of the liturgical year, the focus during the first part of Advent is on the first readings, this week from the prophet Isaiah. These readings are about promises. Isaiah is consoling, building up and preparing his people to have hope. "One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again." He promises "luster and glory" for the people: "and the fruit of the earth will be honor and splendor for the survivors of Israel." Even though the family lines of King David and his father, Jesse, are almost wiped out, Isaiah proclaims hope: "On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom." The prophet tells of feasting and security: "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines" and "A strong city have we; he sets up walls and ramparts to protect us." Even Jesus' own statement about his mission is seen in the powerful images Isaiah uses to give us courage and hope: "On that day the deaf shall hear … the eyes of the blind shall see … the lowly will ever find joy in the LORD … " "On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people."
The gospels for these weeks are chosen from several gospels. They are meant to match the first readings and to show the promises are fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus brings healing. He raises up the childlike. And Jesus calls and sends the twelve apostles to continue his ministry.
Next Sunday is the Second Sunday of Advent and we hear Isaiah write of peace and prosperity that will come when the "root of Jesse" blossoms. "Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them."
St Matthew's Gospel brings us the famous Advent reading of John the Baptist as the voice of one crying out in the desert, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."

A Homily for Advent 1

s + Advent always seems to come too early - before we are prepared for it. Suddenly, life being what it is these days, we are almost immediately caught up in the preparations for Christmas less than a month away. But, even if it's something of a fading memory, even it seems in parts of the Church itself, Advent is an important season in itself, not just a way of filling the short time before the feast of the Lord's birth.
Yes, Advent is about making preparations and getting ready, and it is **partly** about preparing ourselves spiritually for Christmas, but is also about something else altogether.
What we are given here is a few weeks of reflection to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord into our lives. At Christmas we will be celebrating the coming among us of the Lord who is the fulfilment of Old Testament Israel's longing for the Messiah, a Hebrew word which means literally the Lord's anointed one. But at the first Christmas God came among us in Jesus Christ, in St John's words as the Word made flesh, as God become man - one of us. He came in an unexpected way; his birth, his life and above all his death and resurrection were equally unexpected, equally scandalous to human expectations, equally disturbing to society's preconceptions of what a Saviour ought to be.
Advent - before it was taken over by the dominant commercialism of Christmas – after all, nothing these days nust be allowed to stand in the way of buying and selling things - was designed to be a pause, a deep brath - a time of quiet reflection - an essential period of waiting and watching and praying - a time of mindfulness when we can look at the world and see the signs of God's presence all around us. If Advent is about one thing it's this: the asking of the question: what does this mysterious, anticipated presence of God imply for the way we live our lives where we are here and now.
A few weeks ago, we were reminded in the Gospel that we don't know when the end of the world is going to take place, and we were urged to live each day as if it might be our last: that is in charity, in our care for others, in making the most we can of every opportunity we have of deepening our relationship with Christ. The Gospel today returns to the same subject.
But Jesus in the Gospel reading today re-reinforces our view of him as someone who surprises us. His main point again is about how we should behave **here and now**. He tells us to be alert and not distracted from looking for him by our own cares and anxieties or by all the often very attractive distractions the world puts in our way.
The coming of the Lord, then, for which we are preparing during these four weeks of Advent is also about his active presence in our lives here and now, not only in the past or in the future. We are being asked to be alert and on the lookout for the signs of his presence with us and in our lives today not in the furure: we don't know what the future holds for us: life is only too short and sometimes tragically unpredictable.
But Advent is above all else the season of hope, the hope that exists - whatever we might be feeling subjectively – somewhere beyond bad news, demoralisation, and anxiety for the future. And that hope moves far beyond feelings as its literal *embodiment* is Christ.
It was Bernard of Clairvaux, in many ways one of the most influential and attractive of

the mediaeval saints – and it's surprising sometimes how modern he can be – who speaks in his advent sermons about the *three* comings of Christ - his coming among us as a human being in the Bethlehem stable; his coming to us in the present in word and sacrament into the daily reality of our lives; and his coming again at the consummation of all things at the end of time. We might even add a previous coming – his presence in creation itself.

So the Second Coming isn't at the end of the world at all, but here and now, and that's where this Advent season takes on its most vital role as an opportunity, a space – in which to be reminded of that. The purpose of Advent is to point out to us – ironically at this most pressured of times – that the true realities of life are not necessarily the things with which we surround ourselves and about which we worry so much.

Advent is a place of refuge and sanctuary. The readings of the season, with their paths in the wilderness, the levelling of obstacles, their mingled longing, regret, and a far-off, not quite to be grasped anticipation – like something sensed just over the horizon - are something to hold on to when things start to get too busy for comfort.

We begin Advent by reflecting on the great cosmic themes of meaning and existence, of death and judgement, and then gradually things get more and more narrowed down, appropriately for a faith that views the material and physical as sacredly essential, to a few outwardly obscure individuals about to play leading roles in the great mystery play of salvation in which, of course, we all have our own vital parts to perform.

our task this Advent, and every Advent, is to ask the Lord to open our hearts and minds to his presence, to see him at work in our lives, in the world around us and in the lives and needs of others and ultimately to draw us more and more into the circle of God's love and life.

Jesus in the Gospels doesn't encourage us to spend time interpreting the signs around us concerning the end of time. No one knows when that will be, he says, and in a series of startling images, including using the Old Testament story of Noah's flood, he urges us all to keep spiritually awake and alert. And finally, he describes his Second Coming in a semi-humorous, or at least in a wickedly ironic simile, as being like a thief in the night. If the owner of the house had known what time to expect the intruder to break in, then he wouldn't have gone to sleep and wouldn't have been taken by surprise. Christ the thief in the night breaking into the safety and comfort of our lives is quite an image with which to begin the season of Advent.

And one of the traditional Advent themes is concerned with the end of life and the sheer unpredictability of that and our consequent vulnerability as human beings. The message is clear: live each day as your last because it could be - not in the hedonistic sense of cramming every last once of human experience and enjoyment into the time we have left, but - living in love and charity with your neighbours - as the 1662 Prayer Book used to describe it - of cultivating the things of eternity, the values of love and compassion we see in the Gospels themselves, and that one relationship - with Christ himself - which will in some mysterious way through Christ's Resurrection - survive beyond this short space of time we are given to live.

In Advent we are encouraged to recognise our own separation from the things that really matter alienation and also our longing for redemption. We ask to be aware of our own inner spiritual poverty which is only made rich by Christ's coming among us. Our Advent task, then, is to prepare not for the end, but for a new beginning. We must hold on to that +

St Arvans Tea and Chat

Special Christmas Event
December 14th
and usually every second Saturday of the month
Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift please ring Diane on 628084

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

The First Sunday of Advent
30th November 2025

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

NEXT SUNDAY

The Second Sunday of Advent
7th December 2025

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvan's
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist at St Mary's, Penterry

Readings:
Isaiah 11.1-10
Psalm 72.1-7; [18, 19]
Romans 15.4-13
St Matthew 3.1-12

Daily Celebrations of the Eucharist at St Arvans this week: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday at 10 00, Friday at 09.30
Please check as times may alter

Fr Michael's day off is Monday this week

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

Advent Courses

Daytime: Tuesdays at 3pm, starting on 25 November, in Shirenewton Church Rooms. . Contact Carol 07380 992494 for further details.

Evening: Thursdays at 7.30pm, starting on 27 November, in The Cedars, Pwllmeyric. Contact Father Michael on 01291 622064

We will be exploring: *Who am I, and Why am I here*?– a course in 4 parts by Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds, considering what it means to be a Christian in a world challenged by war, poverty, climate changeThere will be a small charge to cover course materials.

The Ministry Area Prayer Group

meets every Thursday 7.45pm – 9pm
For further details email
david@bedlambeds.com

In Advent the Prayer Group takes part in the Thursday evening Advent group.

Daily Prayer The First Week of Advent

It seems like a contradiction, but it becomes easy to stay focused during Advent. There are many distractions at this time of the year, we seem to get very busy, and at times have to go to a number of parties and social events. But, the heart of this season is all about expectant hope. So, we begin our Advent journey by giving ourselves some time to reflect this week on how much God promises us.
Each morning, while we are first coming to consciousness, we can focus for just a few moments, to name a desire, to name an emptiness or feeling of anxiety or worry. It is into places just such as these that our Lord came to be with us. So, this week, we can begin to invite our Lord to be Incarnate in our lives, in the places we need him the most.
Our goal this week is to let ourselves feel like those to whom the promises of our God are made. We want to get in touch with ourselves, especially those parts of ourselves that are in need of a Saviour. We do this by keeping our focus on the places that feel like a desert, the places that feel like we've been through a war, the places that feel like a lifeless stump. When we have a hard time seeing, we ask for the grace to be able to believe the promise that we shall see. When we seem deaf, we place our trust in the One who assures us that we will hear. And when we feel beaten down and awfully lowly, we turn to the One who promises that we will "find joy in the Lord." And, who among us doesn't have days on which we are aware of various kinds of wounds? On the day of promise, "the Lord binds up the wounds of his people."
As we let these deep realities of our daily, busy lives come into focus and interact with the readings, something wonderful happens. We become more and more aware of our need for God. Very naturally and quite spontaneously, a prayer comes forth from deep within us, which we can say in the smallest moments of our busiest days. "Come, Lord." "Come and save me." "Come and be with me in all of these messy, empty, dry and disordered places in my life." "Come, Lord. I feel my longing for you grow. I feel my hope grow. And, as I place my hope in your promises, Advent begins to come alive in me."
All of this preparation can happen in the simplest way, before the first Christmas decoration goes up. And, for each moment of each day that we encounter a place that we desire, that we long for our Lord's coming, we can express our thanksgiving.
Each night we might pray: *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? (Ps. 27)*

With acknowlegements to Creighton University's Online Ministries, Omaha U.S.A.