

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
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28th December 2025
THE FIRST SUNDAY
OF CHRISTMAS A
Sunday in the Christmas Octave
The Holy Family

The Collect

Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; 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

I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us, and the great favour to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy,

according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, 'Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely'; and he became their saviour in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

[63. 7 - 9]

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

Psalm 148

**R/Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Alleluia! Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights.
Praise him, all you angels of his;
praise him, all his host.
Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

**R/Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Praise him, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord;
for he commanded and they were created.
He made them stand fast
for ever and ever;
he gave them a law
which shall not pass away.

**R/Praise, O praise the name of the
Lord.**

Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea-monsters and all deeps;
Fire and hail, snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, doing his will;
Mountains and all hills, fruit trees
and all cedars;

**R/Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Wild beasts and all cattle,

creeping things and winged birds;
Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes
and all rulers of the world;
Young men and maidens, old and young
together.

**R/Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name only is exalted,
his splendour is over earth and heaven.
He has raised up strength for his people
and praise for all his loyal servants, the
children of Israel, a people
who are near him. Alleluia!

**R/Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews [2. 10 – 18]

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, 'I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.' And again, 'I will put my trust in him.' And again, 'Here am I and the children whom God has given me.' Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able

to help those who are being tested.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
May the peace of Christ
reign in your hearts;
let the message of Christ
find a home with you.
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

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.' When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.' When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There

he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.'
[St Matthew 2.13-23]

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

For Your Prayers

For peace, hope and joy as we continue to celebrate Christmas
For fidelity and trust in our relationships..
The government & people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to Russia's war of aggression 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; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall this week:
Margo Jenour; Maynard Jenour.

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

Innkeeper

Jereboam: So you're the owner of this establishment?
Innkeeper: Yes sir, I am.
Jereboam: I should imagine that you don't see this sort of thing very often. *Innkeeper:* It's never happened before. Obviously we had the census, for a start. The whole town's been swarming with people – which is why I had to put this family in the stable in the first place. It sounds incredible, but apparently there wasn't a single guest-room left in the whole town. Imagine how I felt, putting a heavily pregnant woman in the stable... I keep telling myself that we should have gone into the stable ourselves and let them use our private room, but I didn't think of it at the start, and they won't hear of it now, even with such a tiny baby. Added to which, the stable's the only place that could possibly accommodate all these extra visitors and well-wishers.
Jereboam: Where have they all sprung from?
Innkeeper: All over the place, really. The whole town seems to have

come at some point or other, and we've had shepherds from over in that direction – they were the first ones here actually. It wouldn't surprise me if we saw people arriving from even further afield too.

Jereboam: Such as myself...I'm hardly local. I made my way here when I heard something special was happening. Any idea what's caused all the fuss?

Innkeeper: Well, there is something unusual about this little family. I can't put my finger on what, though. There's been talk of angels and all sorts – I don't know. They claim this is no ordinary baby, which I can well believe.

Jereboam: What makes you say that?

Innkeeper: Look, I realise that there's something enchanting about every couple with a new-born baby. Somehow the love of the family unit draws you in. The same is true with these people, but on a different scale. I know this sounds silly, but you see them and you want to be part of their family. You want to touch them, be part of their embrace. Not only that, though – you want everyone else to be part of it too.

Jereboam: And, unless I'm very much mistaken, there's a side of you that's wondering: "What have I done to deserve this honour?"

Innkeeper: Absolutely right. These events have transformed us all –transformed the whole place too, in ways I can't describe. I'm delighted, of course, but at the same time it's all a bit of a mystery. Come and see for yourself: they're over this way.

Jereboam: Thank you. Look, while I think of it, I take it that you're still fully booked? I think I might want to stay around for a day or two.

Innkeeper: Absolutely crammed to overflowing, I'm afraid. Your best bet is probably to have a word with one of the shepherds. They're always popping round. I guess they'll know where to find shelter on the hills.

THIS WEEK

The First Sunday of Christmas is also known as The Holy Family.

The gospel from St Matthew is the story of the angel appearing to Joseph in a dream, telling him to flee with Mary and their newborn son, Jesus, to Egypt so Herod could not find them. After a time, they returned and lived in Nazareth, "so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, he shall be called a Nazarean."

Monday is the feast day of St Thomas Becket

Tuesday. When the Holy Family returns to Nazareth, "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him."

Wednesday, we hear the beginning of John's gospel: the story of the Word becoming flesh, among us.

Tuesday, New Year's Day, is the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and also the Naming of the Child, Jesus. In addition, it is a celebration of World Day of Prayer for Peace. A new calendar year begins, and we can always have a new beginning, because of Jesus coming among us.

On Friday, we hear the testimony of John the Baptist about Jesus, from John's gospel. And, on Friday John tells of what he was told about Jesus. Saturday, is the story, from John, about the call of the first disciples - Jesus saying to them, "Come and see." They went and spent the day with him.

Next Sunday we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, although most of the world will celebrate it on Tuesday, January 6. The Epiphany celebrates the light that has come into the darkness of the world and that our salvation was made known to the Gentiles.

A Homily for Christmas 1

+ We've reached the stage of Christmas when it's difficult to say with any degree of accuracy what day of the week it is. But for the Church what differentiates the days between Christmas Day and New Year are the bitter-sweet feast days which make up this Christmas Octave – on Monday, St Stephen the first martyr, yesterday the Apostle John, the profound theological poet of the Incarnation and the Word made flesh, and if it weren't a

Sunday – toay would be the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the young children massacred by Herod's paranoid fear of a possible rival source of power and authority.

And, of course, today's readings for the First Sunday of Christmas refer to that directly as we hear of the Holy Family fleeing for the lives to Egypt as exiles and refugees, seeking asylum from Herod's monstrous cruelty..

Although joy is always present throughout these days of celebration, human vulnerability is never far away in the Church's telling of Christmas, and we don't let the sentiment and the tinsel blind us to the reality of the world we have made, and the paradise we've all helped disfigure by our cruelty and hatred or our complicity in it. Otherwise the joy we proclaim so eloquently at this time of year would be unreal, and the hope we have would be mere escapism – worse than that, maybe even the greatest lie ever told.

So today, even as we continue to celebrate God's coming among us as the light of the world, we can feel a sense of darkness, foreboding and danger. The real world – or at least, the world as it often is - intrudes on our rejoicing with its violence, hatred and division. Today's Gospel contains those words that speak to us as much of *today's world* as that of Roman-occupied Judea in the early first century:

'A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loudly lamenting: it was Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they were no more'

It's inevitable that our thoughts turn to the children of Gaza, the innocent victims of a seemingly endless cycle of violence and retribution, we can think today of the ongoing reports of children killed or kidnapped and trafficked by the Russian invaders of Ukraine, or those displaced and starving in the Horn of Africa. And the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt easily brings to mind those fleeing from violence and terror who are being demonised indiscriminately by the performative cruelty of politicians without vision and a public too easily stirred up by an irresponsible press out to deflect attention from those who pose a far greater threat to the social fabric – indeed the future of

the planet itself - through their unrestrained greed.

Tomorrow we commemorate another martyr, St Thomas Becket, caught up in a very medieval struggle between Church and the Plantagenet English State, although given the tendency of both to abuse their authority, from a modern perspective we may not see very much merit in the case of either side. Time and distance allow us an escape from the 'footballification' of taking sides. But there are early echoes, too, in that brutal assassination before the altar of more recent Christian martyrs like St Oscar Romero who made a stand against the barbarities of totalitarianism, and the thuggery of corrupt, armed militias. But today is primarily the Feast of the Holy Family. Traditionally, as opposed to the recent past, the Church hasn't tended to sentimentalise family life, and we ourselves may know only too well that it can be the source of profound sorrow as well as nurturing joy. But the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus offer us an example of how to live together, in spite of everything the world may throw at us. Above all, like Christmas itself, today is a feast of anxious hope that turns to joy and stretches to eternity.

These are a few lines from the long work of the French writer, Charles Péguy, *'The Mystery of the Holy Innocents.'* It follows on from his famous declaration that *'hope is a very little girl.'*

*I am, God says, the Master of the Virtues.
It is Faith who holds fast through century
upon century
It is Charity who gives herself through
centuries of centuries,
But it is my little hope
Who gets up every morning."*

The celebration of Christmas is important. It's vital for all of us, I think, to be able to celebrate this season of joy, hope, and light *fully* and to feel no particular pressure to return to normality – whatever normality is. So let's observe these Twelve Days of Christmas –

a few more in the modern calendar – while we can, and as the daylight slowly begins to lengthen each day, use the time just to relax – to *chill* in a non-temperature related way – and maybe to reflect on what we want to do - and what we can do - to help make the world a better and happier place – more reflective of God's

Kingdom - in the little ways we can, in the places where we have any kind of influence, even if its only in our own lives, in our homes, within our own families and friendships.

So today, in a spirit of hope, I'll give the last word to G.K. Chesterton, and the last lines of his poem *"The House of Christmas."*

*To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way
of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home."*

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SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

The First Sunday of Christmas

The Holy Family

28th December 2025

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

NEXT SUNDAY

The Epiphany of the Lord

4th January 2026

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

Readings:
Isaiah 60.1-6
Psalm 72. [1-9,] 10-15
Ephesians 3.1-12
St Matthew 2.1-12

Fr Michael is off duty this week

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

Many thanks to all who have worked so hard in our preparations for Christmas and in our Advent & Christmas services and events, and to those who have decorated our churches so beautifully for the Christmas Season

Daily Prayer

Our celebration of Christmas continues this week.

It helps to recognise this and let ourselves enter each part of the mystery of the Incarnation. We are living in the flesh each day of our lives. He came to enter this life and be with us in it. After the Christmas Octave, we have this wonderful Christmas season, days to let the blessing of Christmas settle in before we move toward Ordinary Time again.

Each of us can begin the calendar New Year by staying in touch with ourselves in the flesh - as people who are touched by Jesus' coming. We can turn to our Lord throughout each day in prayer: over the kitchen sink, by the dishwasher, in front of the washing machine. This practice can make sacred any part of our ordinary lives" that we hold up to God.

During our preparation for Christmas we asked the Lord to open our hearts, to let us wait with patient trust, and to come to us. Last week we experienced joy and the mixed challenges of Christmas. This week we have the opportunity to reflect in prayer to the God who came to

be with us.

Thank you so much, Lord, for becoming flesh for me. And, thank you for being with me now, in the midst of each day's joys and sorrows. I ask you to increase my trust in you, my desire for closeness with you and my commitment to turn to you all day long. Continue to be with me when I have to make difficult decisions, when I need extra patience and care when in challenging situations. Continue to let my heart experience the joy of Christmas this week as I see signs of your presence with me. When these words take on our own voice and our details, it will feel very personal. And, when we speak about our fears, our needs, when we express our gratitude and our deep desires, we are living and intimate relationship with the one who became flesh that we might never need feel alone again.

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

St Arvans Tea and Chat

Saturday January 10th
and usually every second
Saturday of the month
Childrens activity table
For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

The Ministry Area Prayer Group

will resume in the New Year