

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

11th January 2026 THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD A

The Collect

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; 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: Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he

will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

[42. 1 - 9]

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

Psalm 29

R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters

Ascribe to the Lord, you gods,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory
due to his name;
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders;
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice;
the voice of the Lord
is a voice of splendour.

R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters

The voice of the Lord
breaks the cedar trees;
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters

The voice of the Lord
splits the flames of fire;
the voice of the Lord
shakes the wilderness;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of the Lord
makes the oak trees writhe
and strips the forests bare.
And in the temple of the Lord
all are crying, 'Glory!'

R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters

The Lord sits enthroned above the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned
as king for evermore.
The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people
the blessing of peace.

R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Peter began to speak to those assembled in the house of Cornelius. 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did, both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and

who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

[10; 34 - 43]

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, Alleluia!
John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said: This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to Saint Matthew.

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptised by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

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

For Your Prayers

That we may be faithful to our own baptism and follow the Lord in faith, hope and love.
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 & Bob Osborne, Nathan;

For the Departed:

The recently departed; Les Lines; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall this week:

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

Esther

Jereboam: So, Esther, you saw something extraordinary at the river Jordan the other day.

Esther: It wasn't so much a question of what I actually saw, but yes, I did experience something extraordinary.

Jereboam: What had taken you to the Jordan in the first place?

Esther: Well, I'd heard that this man John was conducting his cleansing ceremonies in the river. That reminded me of Naaman being healed after Elisha told him to wash seven times in the Jordan. So I told myself I had nothing to lose, and I went along to see whether my pains might be cured. I've been suffering for years, you see.

Jereboam: And did it work?

Esther: I think it must have done: I wasn't aware of any immediate impact, but by the end of the afternoon I felt better than I have done for years.

Jereboam: I'm delighted for you; was that the extraordinary experience you mentioned?

Esther: Not exactly, but I'm sure the two things were connected. Just after my cleansing – or baptism, they call it -- a man called Jesus stepped forward. He and John seemed to know each other pretty well already. They had a curious discussion about which one of them was going to baptise the other. In the end it was John that baptised Jesus, and as that happened I felt something shift inside me. I think we all did – it was as if the whole place somehow changed. We realised that there was something remarkable about Jesus. I don't think that he himself particularly changed or

anything, but it's more that we all suddenly realised how special he was. I know this sounds a bit strange, but I had a strong sense that Jesus was connected to God.

Jereboam: Actually I was speaking to someone else who reckoned that Jesus himself is God.

Esther: Oh, I couldn't...well, I was about to say that I shouldn't describe anyone like that, but I'll admit that Jesus does rather give that impression. There's something quite extraordinary about him.

Jereboam: Thank you for being so frank, Esther.

THIS WEEK

Sunday is the Baptism of the Lord. We hear the Lord say in the first reading from Isaiah, "Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit." Those words are echoed in the reading from St Matthew's Gospel, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." This feast marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of the Season of Epiphany, or 'winter ordinary time' in the Church calendar. Saturday is the feast day of Saint Anthony, abbot.

During the weekdays, we begin a three-week cycle of captivating readings from the First Book of Samuel. We read of Samuel's mother, Hannah, who promises the Lord, "if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the LORD for as long as he lives." Samuel hears a call from the Lord and responds, "Speak, for your servant is listening." An epic battle against the Philistines ends in devastating losses for Israel and the capture of the Ark of the Covenant. In his old age, Samuel rules Israel and the elders ask Samuel to appoint a King to rule them.

For the next few weeks, until the beginning of Lent, the weekday gospels are from St Mark's Gospel. Mark offers us a look at the beginning of Jesus public ministry. Jesus calls his first disciples, fisherman at work: Simon and Andrew, then James and John. "Then they left their nets and followed him." He drives out evil spirits and heals the sick. He hears the cry of the leper: "If you wish, you can make

me clean," and Jesus, "moved with pity" heals him. Jesus extends an invitation to the despised tax collector, Levi: "Follow me."

Next Sunday

The Second Sunday of Epiphany gives us readings from the Prophet Isaiah: "I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD, and my God is now my strength! It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant... I will make you a light to the nations..."

And in St John's Gospel we see the story of John the Baptist and his followers walking down the beach as Jesus walks toward them. John says, "'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'

He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'

A homily for the Baptism of Christ

Just a few weeks ago - I know it seems longer than that - we started to celebrate Christmas, and most probably thoughts of the infant Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem are still uppermost in our minds so that today's feast of the Baptism of our Lord at the end of the Christmas season finds us unprepared to feel the impact of what really happened.

From the Gospel accounts, John the Baptist wasn't a cosy figure and he offered little in the way of comfort and reassurance. He was fierce, outspoken, direct, outlandish looking, and lived a strange kind of life. John would soon be executed by an ruthlessly amoral but fundamentally weak leader for his refusal to be more accommodating.

And for anyone to come to John for baptism was to be cut down to size and jolted into repentance. That was the point of it. So in today's Gospel we see Jesus taking John the Baptist by surprise by coming to him at all.

So, what is going on in this strange episode we celebrate today? This isn't, on the face of it an appropriate thing for Jesus to do. He is the promised Saviour, he doesn't need this at all, and yet he submits to something which symbolises repentance and humility.

What was the Lord doing there? It even struck John the Baptist as odd. This is a total role-reversal. Jesus, God come among us, is behaving like a repentant sinner and submerging himself like the rest of us in the messiness of human reality.

And that's the point. Today we are not very far from the Bethlehem stable at all, in that here by the banks of the river Jordan we see God coming among us to share our human condition and declaring his solidarity and one-ness with his people. Jesus doesn't do this because he has to: he does this as a continuation of the event begun when the angel appeared to Mary - this is God acting out of love and compassion and declaring he will not be separated from us.

And in the weeks and months ahead - and remember Lent & Easter are very early this year - we see that the Lord's birth, life and death and rising again are not isolated incidents but part of the same process of salvation, of God's sharing our life and what that inevitably entails in order to share his eternal, divine life with us.

Here at the baptism of the Lord we look back to Bethlehem and we also look forward to Good Friday and Easter morning. From the very beginning we see Jesus sharing our material nature, taking on the sins of humanity, the fragility of created things. We are not saved from a distance by a Saviour who keeps himself invulnerable and above the human struggle against alienation and those things which lead to death, physically and spiritually.

Today's feast celebrates not just Christ's baptism, but ours. Through our baptism we have been born from above -- from God -- and have become the children of God. Just as Jesus shared our human life through his birth at Bethlehem, so we share his divine life through our rebirth at baptism. We become God's beloved sons or daughters, with whom he is well pleased. Our own our own baptisms may seem very tame ceremonies; there doesn't seem to be much going on, but these are only surface appearances - the true effects are matters of life and death, and by them we are involved in mysteries which change the world.

At the end of the Christmas season our decorations, if they are still up, start to look a little faded and worn – although given the grimness of this year so far I'm

increasingly in favour of doing the mediaeval thing and keeping them all up until Candlemas. But today, just as we think the Christmas glory is departing and leaving us at the start of yet another uncertain year, we have Gospel of new beginnings and a reminder of our own vocation

as part of Christ's Body and disciples of Jesus. As we begin the New Year, the message is the same; God is with us and shares our triumphs and disasters, our joy and our pain, and the sheer attrition and tension sometimes of human life.

Here at the beginning of the New Year, our calling to mind the Lord's baptism and our own prepare us for mission. We are not simply called to a private, cosy, exclusive relationship between each of us and God; rather our baptism commissions us to share the faith we have received.

But I don't mean that in a preachy, sanctimonious sort of way but in the sense of being witness in the world to the God of love. So what does that mean, how do we do that? It's not only seen in the things we oppose, but in the attitudes and causes we actively promote and the values we hold fast to, in the way we view others and behave towards them. We can't separate our faith – what we believe about God or who we believe God to be - or what we say here from the way we speak or, most importantly, act out there in the world, either in our personal capacity or our public roles

And when God calls us to carry out anything he always gives us the strength to perform it. After his baptism Jesus prepared for his mission by spending forty days praying in the desert. And this should remind us that we can't be faithful to our own baptismal vocation without God's help, which we can only find in regular prayer and worship. We ask for his help, seek his presence, receive his grace, and go out in peace to love and serve the Lord. +

St Arvans Tea and Chat

Saturday February 14th
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

Thursday at The Cedars,
Pwllmeyric. 7.30 p.m.

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

The Baptism of the Lord 11th January 2026

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist
at St Arvan's
11.30 a.m. Liturgy of the Word
at St Deiniol's, Itton

NEXT SUNDAY

The 2nd Sunday of Epiphany 18th January 2026

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

Readings:

Isaiah 49.1-7
Psalm 40.1-11
1 Corinthians 1.1-9
St John 1.29-42

Fr Michael's day off is Monday this week

The Eucharist will be celebrated this week at St Arvan's at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, and on Friday at 9.30 a.m.

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

Daily Prayer

In this first week after the end of the Christmas Season, we might find ourselves feeling a little let-down, especially in parts of the world where it seems cold and dark most days. This is where we can ask for the grace to let the stories of the weekday gospels come alive in our hearts.

The vivid narratives of this week's gospel are packed with stories of Jesus' entering into the lives of real people and touching them in extraordinary ways. These are not far away stories, but ones that have a real meaning for us. This is a week of invitation from Jesus to us, with two invitations for us to ponder in our hearts this week.

Jesus encounters Levi, a Jewish tax collector. Because of his profession, he was probably wealthy but he has humiliated his family and made himself a pariah to most of those around him. Jesus' response to this "outcast" was to invite him to be one of his closest disciples - and to dine at his house.

In our own lives we may find a loneliness or separation from people in our family or others in our lives. We have parts of our lives that are dark and embarrassing and seem unchangeable. It is into this very darkness and discomfort that Jesus extends the same invitation to us - "Follow me." This clear and personal call to us is from Jesus who already knows us and our failings and yet asks us to be with him. We can hear this invitation more clearly if we can be touched with awareness of our own failings and understand more deeply how much we need a savior in our lives. It is then that our hearts open to accept this invitation.

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

Chalk and a explanatory leaflet (*printed below*) is still available at St Arvan's for the blessing of our houses

Epiphany Blessing of Chalk

"Chalking the door" is a traditional way to celebrate and physically mark the occasion of the Epiphany and to ask for God's blessing of our lives and homes. With time the chalk will fade. It is a reminder to let the meaning of the written symbols sink into the depths of our heart and be manifest in our words and actions.

Instructions for Blessing the Home:

Using the blessed chalk write **20 + C + M + B + 26** on the lintel of your front door (or front porch step or other convenient location) while saying:

"The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, followed the star of God's Son who became human two thousand and twenty-six years ago. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the new year. **Amen.**"

The following prayer may be said:

Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence. Bless all who live or visit here with the gift of your love; and grant that we may manifest your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen us in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

THE EPIPHANY PROCLAMATION 2026

Dear brothers and sisters,
The glory of the Lord has shone upon us, and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of his return. Through the rhythms of times and seasons let us celebrate the mysteries of salvation.

Let us recall the year's culmination, the **Easter Triduum** of the Lord: his last supper, his crucifixion, his burial, and his rising celebrated between the evening of the Second day of April and the evening of the Fourth day of April **Easter Sunday** being on the Fifth day of April.

Each Easter -- as on each Sunday -- The Holy Church makes present the great and saving deed by which Christ has forever conquered sin and death. From Easter are reckoned all the days we keep holy:

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, will occur on the Eighteenth day of February.

The Ascension of the Lord will be commemorated on Sunday, the Seventeenth day of May.

Pentecost, the joyful conclusion of the season of Easter, will be celebrated on the twenty-fourth of May.

And, this year, **the First Sunday of Advent** will be on the Twenty-Ninth day of November, 2026.

Likewise, the pilgrim Church proclaims the Passover of Christ in the feasts of the holy Mother of God, in the feasts of the Apostles and Saints, and in the commemoration of the faithful departed.

To Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come, Lord of time and history, be endless praise, for ever and ever. **Amen.**