

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

18th January 2026 **The Second Sunday** **of Epiphany [Year A]**

The Collect

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory;
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

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!
The LORD called me before I was born,
while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in

his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.' But I said, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God.' And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honoured in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength. The LORD says, 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.' Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, 'Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.'

[49. 1-7]

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

Psalms 40 1-11

R/ I love to do your will, O Lord.

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He brought me out of the roaring pit,
out of the mire and clay;
he set my feet upon a rock
and made my footing sure.

R/ I love to do your will, O Lord.

He has put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God;
many shall see and fear
and put their trust in the Lord.
Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
who does not turn to the proud
that follow a lie.

R/ I love to do your will, O Lord.

Great are the wonders you have done,
O Lord my God.
How great your designs for us!
There is none that
can be compared with you.
If I were to proclaim them
and tell of them
they would be more
than I am able to express.

R/ I love to do your will, O Lord.

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire but my ears you have opened;
Burnt offering and sacrifice for sin
you have not required;
then said I: 'Lo, I come.'
'In the scroll of the book it is written of me
that I should do your will, O my God;
I delight to do it:
your law is within my heart.'

R/ I love to do your will, O Lord.

I have declared your righteousness
in the great congregation;
behold, I did not restrain my lips,
and that, O Lord, you know.
Your righteousness I have not hidden
in my heart;
I have spoken of your faithfulness
and your salvation;
I have not concealed
your loving-kindness and truth
from the great congregation.

R/ I love to do your will, O Lord.

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians [1. 1-9]

From Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ

Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

[Gradual Hymn]

Alleluia, alleluia!
The Word was made flesh
and dwelt among us;
to all who did accept him he gave power
to become children of God
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St John [1. 29-42]

Glorify to you, O Lord.

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.' The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He

said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

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

For Your Prayers

That we may strive to practice authentically the faith we proclaim.
The unity of all Christians.
The government & people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to Russia's war of aggression there.
The people of Iran, Gaza, & Israel, & for lasting peace in the Middle East, for the people of Sudan.
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: Bill Blakey; Grace Hodgkinson

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 (continued)

Jereboam: Well, Esther, it must be a good twenty years since you and I first discussed Jesus' baptism. So much has happened since then.

Esther: Yes: I still see that event as a sort of turning-point. In a way everything was set in motion that afternoon.

Jereboam: But do you really feel that the motion has been maintained? It seems as if the Church has settled into a sort of routine now.

Esther: Things are certainly much less dramatic than they were when Jesus was with us – but that doesn't mean that the Church has ground to a halt: far from it.

Jereboam: The reason I mention it is that people talk nowadays about the

Second Coming of Jesus.

Esther: Yes...

Jereboam Well, I couldn't help wondering whether there was really all that much difference between you awaiting the Second Coming of Jesus, and us ordinary Jews looking forward to the ...well, the First Coming. Of course we were all caught up in the drama of Jesus' life and death, and I realise that His attitudes and teaching were quite distinctive, but, at the end of it all, did He really make all that much difference?

Esther: I'd say He did.

Remember the impact His baptism had: that was the moment, for many of us at least, when Jesus was revealed as the Son of God. A son of God doesn't exactly appear every day, but just as striking was the fact that this Son of God emerged from amongst us. He was an ordinary person too. God was approaching us both from our level and from beyond it, all at the same time. So our contact with Him became all the more direct and tangible. And that's even before His death and resurrection... So, if you ask me, Jesus certainly did make a difference.

Jereboam: I suppose you're right.

Esther: And there's another thing: He also reached out to everyone, in a way that certainly I had never encountered before. Jesus addressed...and still addresses...the whole of humanity, not just the Jewish race. I'll admit that we can easily lose sight of that. It's often tempting to limit your concept of God to your own little world. I try hard to avoid that.

Jereboam: Can you explain how?

Esther: I'll try: let's imagine the process of prayer. When someone prays, they'll probably have in their mind some image or idea of God. At the same time they'll perhaps consider some text of scripture or aspect of faith – in our case perhaps an incident in the life of our Lord. Maybe, together with all that, they might have particular concerns which they want to include. Already it's a complex picture. Personally I add something extra too. I try to visualise some image or other that can represent the whole world – perhaps I might think of a place I've seen far away. That reminds me of the universal nature of God and His Church.

Jereboam: It sounds very difficult, following all those thoughts at the same time.

Esther: Oh, it's not that awkward: more like a drawing that depicts various things. Your attention shifts to different parts of the picture from time to time.

Jereboam: I'll give that a try. Thank you, Esther.

THIS WEEK

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.'

Wednesday is the feast day of Saint Agnes, virgin and martyr, and.

Saturday that of Saint Francis de Sales, bishop and doctor of the Church.

As we begin St Mark's Gospel Jesus is asked why his disciples don't fast. He challenges the religious leaders to have a completely open mind and heart to his teaching because "new wine is poured into fresh wineskins." Jesus is the Lord of the sabbath, bringing a new freedom. It is only chapter three in the gospel, but because Jesus heals a withered hand on the sabbath, the Pharisees already seek to kill him. Jesus withdraws and people from the surrounding regions come to him, and even the demons know who he is. Jesus names twelve Apostles to be with him, to preach and to drive out demons.

Next Sunday

We celebrate the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul.

A homily for Epiphany 2

+ We're conditioned to feel miserable in January. At this point in the year – perhaps because of the prospect of a couple more months of winter weather and the stark contrast with the Christmas festivities just ended, perhaps it is a bit

hard to feel particularly cheerful.

Sometimes we don't help ourselves with all the added pressures of new year resolutions and the miserabilist idea of 'Dry January' – we have Lent for that and it's only a month away.

Add to that the ghastliness of what's going on in the world at the moment, we are probably feeling an urgent need both of the realism and the hope that the Church's calendar offers us. Because from now until the beginning of Lent - towards the end of next month - the Christian year prepares us with some focused and thorough study of the scriptures and their relevance to us today.

All the Gospels present Jesus as the messiah; and it's true to say that the significance of Jesus can't really be fully understood apart from the earlier history of Israel - which is the pre-history of the Church. That's, of course, one of the many challenges facing us in the culture we live in today. How do we make that relevant?

In the Gospel today, John the Baptist describes Jesus as 'the Lamb of God. By the time we get to the first century, that title 'Lamb of God' had also become a way of referring to the 'servant of God', that figure who is the subject of the four great poems in the books attributed to the prophet Isaiah. The servant is 'the beloved' and 'the chosen one of God' which is another description used by John the Baptist to identify Jesus. And the Gospel writers record that these are also uttered by the voice of God the Father at the baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus.

These are *thoroughly* Jewish titles and they take us to the heart of the Old Testament experience of faith. Jesus, St John the Baptist is saying, is the lamb, the servant, the chosen one, the beloved. In Jesus the promise is fulfilled. In Jesus, God visits His people in a 'once and for all' affirmation and sealing of the covenant. In a sense we can even say that Jesus, the Son of David, as he is often called is the embodiment of Israel - that's why the Gospel's make so much of his genealogy and his birth at Bethlehem. Like the servant the prophet Isaiah writes about, he is an man from among the people but he represents them all so that what happens between him and God now happens between the whole people and God. The message running through this

Epiphany Season is that this salvation is presented to the whole world - Christ assumes our humanity to heal our alienation from God and restore us to life. We believe that Jesus is God, the Word made flesh, that is, God among us as one of us. We believe that he does something which is for all human beings and for all creation. He is the light of the nations so that God's salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. He comes to restore and renew the whole world.

As we've said before, the Christian faith speaks about universal things in a specific, personal way. It is the story of the call down the ages of particular individuals and communities to be witnesses to the light of Christ to the whole world.

And our sense of being called, the personal faith-stories we all have are part of this story of God's relationship with the human race which happens in a particular place, in the story of the Jesus, the messiah, the Christ, the Saviour. In him the relationship of God with his people reached its fulfilment in the specific events of Good Friday and in the empty tomb of the first Easter morning

And we believe that that story of a promise being fulfilled has a universal and eternal significance, it is something which is relevant to all people in every time and place. Christ is 'the light of the nations', He takes away 'the sin of the world.' God knows there are enough of those!

In the Church's year, we have just completed the season of Christmas with its great feasts of the Nativity, the Epiphany and the Baptism. We have seen Jesus revealed to his own people in the person of the shepherds and others and to foreigners and outsiders in the Wise Men.

In this period of the Sundays after Epiphany, we are reminded, as St Paul tells us, that we are called to be saints, God's holy people, and have a responsibility to be those who seek to share and reflect the light and love which Jesus, the Lamb of God has brought into the world. We are God's holy people, not in the sense that we are meant to behave as unrealistic plaster saints but are real flesh and blood people with our fair share of faults and failings but who have come to experience God's compassion and mercy and are called to reflect that love and mercy in the way we live.

In the Gospel today Jesus says to those who were curious about who he is, and where he comes from, to "come and see" He extends the same invitation today - through the Church, through our local churches he provides human communities where his message can be heard and his presence experienced. But, of course, it's largely up to us in the Church today whether here and elsewhere people will be enabled to find the living presence of Jesus himself here, and go away thinking they want to find out more.

What we say and what we do has to be authentic - the message we proclaim has to be borne out by what we do. Come and see!

To go back to the idea about our faith speaking directly to the specific and the particular: Christ has been born for us; He will die for us and rise to bring about our own personal resurrection. He is at the centre, not only of the life of the world, but of the specific detail of our own lives. He can't either be reduced to the status of a human role model, a good example to follow, and as a result be bound to the earth, or be confined, safely and in a way we find unchallenging, to thoughts of heaven and to the next life. As we repeat week after week in the creed Jesus is true God from true God. "The Word was made flesh" the Christmas Gospel told us, and because of that all the barriers which separate us from God come tumbling down, and all the preconceptions and assumptions people have of about the essential irrelevance of religious things to everyday life as we human beings actually live it, should be turned upside down because of the revolutionary claim that we make that God himself in Jesus shared our human life.

And yes, incredibly, we do meet him here at the Eucharist, where he offers us life, and gives us through his Body and Blood the grace to become the people he wants us to be, God's holy people. *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to his supper.*

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

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

NEXT SUNDAY

The Conversion of St Paul 25th January 2026

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

Readings:

Acts 9.1-22

Psalm 67

Galatians 1.11-16a

St Matthew 19. [24-26,] 27-30

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, and Saturday, and on Thursday & Friday at 9.30 a.m.

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

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 7.30 p.m.

Daily Prayer

This year we have only a few weeks of the Epiphany Season. These weeks between the Christmas season and Lent are an important time to continue to work on our habits of focusing our prayer early in the day and talking with the Lord throughout the day, in the background of our busy lives. This is how we become “contemplatives in action” and deepen our relationship with God

How do we do that with the hectic pace of our lives? We hear people say “I don’t have time to pray.” It isn’t about finding more time but more focus in our day with God. With that active focus, we find ourselves surprised at the time we really do have. There are dozens of times in all of our days when we can choose to focus on our relationship with our Lord, and that can transform our lives.

It all begins with our mornings. This week, when we first get up and perhaps for a few moments in the shower or getting dressed, let’s tell the Lord that what we want today is to be more conscious of how what we do is responding to his call to us to be his disciple. Then, during the day, in those moments while driving or shopping or perhaps going to a meeting, we can reflect about how we are living our call in this or that activity we are engaged in.

And each evening, for even a few moments, we can review our day And recognise the moments of real connection and grace, giving thanks for them, and resolving to take even greater advantage of these opportunities the following day.

*With thanks to Creighton University’s
Online Ministries*