

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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The Vicarage, St Arvans

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25th January 2026 The Conversion of St Paul, Apostle

The Collect

Almighty God, who caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world through the preaching of your servant Saint Paul: grant that we who celebrate his wonderful conversion may follow him in bearing witness to your truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus,

suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him,

'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one.

Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' He answered, 'Here I am, Lord.' The Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.' But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.'

But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.'

So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the

synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' All who heard him were amazed and said, 'Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?'

Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

[9. 1 - 22]

Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord

R/ Thanks be to God

Psalm 67

**R/ Let the peoples praise you, O God:
let all the peoples praise you.**

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.

**R/ Let the peoples praise you, O God:
let all the peoples praise you.**

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

**R/ Let the peoples praise you, O God:
let all the peoples praise you.**

The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us. May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.

**R/ Let the peoples praise you, O God:
let all the peoples praise you.**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Galatians [1. 11 - 16a]

I want you to know, brethren, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. You have heard, no doubt,

of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being.

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

Alleluia, alleluia!
I chose you from the world,
To go out and to bear fruit,
fruit that will last says the Lord
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you
R/ And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Matthew

R/ Glory to you, O Lord

Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, 'Then who can be saved?'

But Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.'

Then Peter said in reply, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?'

Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

[19. 27-30]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may strive to practice authentically the grace and love of the apostolic 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: Marian Price; Pat Beattie

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
This week's Jereboam is based on the Gospel for Epiphany 3 – St Matthew 5.12-23

Reuben

Reuben: Do come in, sir! Sit down and rest your feet. Can I offer you some wine?

Jereboam: That would be lovely, thank you.

Reuben: And what brings you to Capernaum? I don't recall seeing you around these parts before.

Jereboam: No, it's my first visit. Actually you might be able to help me. I'm hoping to learn about a young fellow called Jesus. I understand that he lives close by.

Reuben: Jesus -- yes: I know him. He's often speaking in the synagogue. Not that I'm exactly the synagogue type myself....or at least I didn't think I was, until I heard Jesus. He's a wonderful teacher, you know. I get so absorbed in what he says, that I'm hardly aware of myself at all.

Jereboam: His message must be quite unusual.

Reuben: Maybe I'm not the best person to ask, because of not being too regular at the synagogue, as I mentioned before. I don't really know what other

people's messages might be like nowadays. As for Jesus, though, well certainly I feel I understand him: he explains things easily and naturally. Mind you, some of his teaching is pretty challenging: he'll say things like, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand," but somehow he doesn't put you off in the way some others might. He urges you to reassess yourself, but at the same time he doesn't make you feel stupid. And he's always got time for everyone – you feel valued and welcomed by him.

Jereboam: Has he lived around here for long?

Reuben: No: he came to the town a few months ago, as I understand it. He reckons it's an important place. Apparently Isaiah used to say that a great light would shine here one day – whatever that means.

Jereboam: In Capernaum?

Reuben: In the whole district, I think...Zebulun, Naphtali and so on. It's quite something to think that old Isaiah reckoned we'd been special here one day. Special...that's the word...Jesus makes you feel special. That's what I was trying to say just now.

Jereboam: It must be very comforting to listen to someone like that.

Reuben: Yes and no. He makes you feel special, which is lovely, but as I say he demands a lot of you too. It might sound like hard work, his way of life, but, to be honest, once you realise he's calling you, you can't exactly turn your back on him. Would you like to meet Jesus then?

Jereboam: Definitely, yes. Do you think you can arrange it?

Reuben: No problem – actually there's nothing to arrange. When you're ready I'll come out with you and show you the way. Just tell him that Reuben sent you along, and he'll understand all right.

THIS WEEK

On Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul.

Monday is the feast day of Saints Timothy and Titus, bishops, Wednesday is that of Saint Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor of the Church, and Saturday Saint John Bosco.

This is the third week of readings from the prophet Samuel, this week from the Second Book of Samuel. A young David is

anointed King of Israel and with his army, captures the city of Zion. In the festivities that followed, Samuel offers the delightful image of a joyful David at the Ark of the Covenant, "dancing before the LORD with abandon ... with shouts of joy and to the sound of the horn." The Lord tells David, "I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his Kingdom firm." David sees Bathsheba, the beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite and after having relations with her, he orders Uriah to the front of a battle where he is killed. Nathan the prophet confronts David, who repents.

In St Mark's Gospel this week, we have many familiar stories. The scribes, hearing of his many healings, accuse Jesus of being possessed by Satan. He replies that a house is divided against itself cannot stand. Mary and other relatives arrive at a home where Jesus is teaching, but Jesus does not go to them, saying, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." He tells the parable of the sower and the seeds which fall on fertile ground and rocky soil. "Those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." He encourages his disciples not to hide their light "under a bushel basket" and tells the story of the mustard seed, the tiniest seed which grows into one of the largest bushes. In Saturday's gospel the apostles are frightened on a boat in a storm until Jesus awakens to calm the wind and seas.

Next Sunday we celebrate the Presentation of the Lord. The infant Jesus is presented to the Lord in the Temple and is recognised as the Messiah by Simeon and Anna. This also marks the end of the 'extended Christmas and Epiphany Season. From today we look towards the coming season of Lent.

A homily for the Conversion of St Paul

+ + Today we celebrate the most significant conversion story in the history of the world. The first reading today from the Acts of the Apostles tells us how Saul of Tarsus, one of the chief persecutors of the young Christian Church had his life transformed by an encounter with the Risen Christ. As we know, Paul, as he became known, became the greatest missionary leader of the early Church and

was instrumental in spreading the faith of Jesus Christ throughout the ancient Roman and Greek world. Paul, or we should more correctly say, the Risen Christ through Paul, changed the entire direction of world history.

Paul's importance is two-fold: for the writings, the letters to the churches, he left behind, and for his taking the Gospel message of Jesus Christ out from a more or less exclusively Jewish culture and environment and bringing it to the gentiles, that is, the non-Jewish people of the Roman Empire.

But it's clear that Saul, the Pharisee and the defender of what he felt to be the orthodox Jewish faith, was at first scandalised and revolted beyond measure by the new faith which placed at the centre of everything not the Law given to Moses but the person of the Crucified and Risen Jesus. Clearly he felt it was his duty to persecute the followers of Christ wherever he found them. And it was on the road to Damascus in the Roman Province of Syria - sometime in the 30 s A.D. that the event happened which changed his life. He met the Risen Jesus. And it's clear from what he says in his letters to the Church at Corinth that he not only had a vision of the Risen Christ which illuminated his entire existence but that this encounter, this meeting also gave him a direct sense of being called to be an apostle - one who is sent out to proclaim the truth of the Resurrection. What happened was that most unusual and rare of religious experiences, a change of heart brought about not by long reflection or study, or the mysteries of human psychology, but by the sudden and direct intervention of God himself - he is changed by divine grace which hits him like a thunderbolt.

And everything he knew and held dear in terms of his life of faith up to that point, he rejects, and all his energy is directed to the service of Christ and his Gospel.

So, perhaps above all, Paul's conversion teaches us that *what counts* is to place Jesus Christ at the centre of our lives so that our very sense of self, is marked by this encounter - this relationship with the divine Son of God.

We can see that from the first moment of his conversion, Paul understands that this God is the God of everyone; in Christ he offers salvation to the whole world and everyone in it. It's this conviction which

leads him to preach and teach the Gospel throughout Asia Minor (modern Turkey - but then very much part of the Roman world) into Greece and eventually to Rome itself where he lost his life for the faith in the persecution of Christians under the Emperor Nero.

Paul's life was changed by those words spoken to him on the Damascus road: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" From then on, Paul's life became a tireless living out of the message of the cross: Christians die to sin when they are baptised and are buried with Christ; they are dead to everything that is sinful and unredeemed in the world. They are made into a new creation, already sharing Christ's victory and would one day rise from the dead like him. Through the risen Christ the Father pours out the Spirit on them, making them completely new.

St Paul's great message is that we are saved entirely by the grace God, not by merit or anything we can do ourselves to somehow 'earn' salvation.

St Paul's writings are undoubtedly - for us - sometimes hard to understand, and the style he uses in his letters to the young Christian communities he founded often reflects the rabbinical style of argument of his day. He comes across as pugnacious and argumentative - he is so concerned to communicate the truth he has been given. Some of his teachings clearly reflect both the limits and the strengths of the culture of his day and his own psychology. But that's the nature of biblical inspiration itself - we have to approach it with discernment and understanding. But Paul always manages to transcend those limits by speaking the truth in love and never using it as a weapon. We have the problem, too, that so many of his words and phrases have entered into our everyday vocabulary as Christians language and into our ways of thinking. What he says is almost too familiar to us and we can't always see the wood for the trees in what he is saying. If we are not careful, we end up thinking 'what exactly can this man with his complex thought-processes and his often contorted use of language have to say to us in the culture of today?'

But in many ways, despite belonging firmly to the world and culture of the New Testament, St Paul's lived experience is closer to ours than is, say, that of the other apostles and disciples. Paul didn't

know Jesus in the flesh - before his resurrection and ascension. As we do, he knew only the Risen Lord. Yet his relationship with Christ is an intensely personal one: his experience of being loved by Christ - saved by Christ - colours everything he says and does.

His call to become the teacher of the Gentiles is, at the same time a call to suffering in communion with Christ who redeemed us through his Passion, death and resurrection. In a world in which falsehood is powerful, the truth is paid for with suffering. The one who desires to avoid suffering, to keep it at arms length, keeps life itself - and its greatness - at arm's length. Without romanticising human suffering in the slightest, Paul says that there can be no love without suffering - without the suffering of renouncing ourselves and our egos, of the transformation and purification of our selves for the true freedom of serving God.

This Eucharist - the centre of our Christian life - is centred on Jesus' sacrifice for us; it is born from the suffering of love which culminated in the Cross. We live by this love that gives itself. It gives us the courage and strength to suffer with Christ and for him in this world, knowing that in this very way our life acquires eternal meaning and becomes mature and truly human and leads to the life of Resurrection.

We give thanks to God today for having called Paul, and making him the light to the Gentiles and the teacher of us all, so that we, too, might be witnesses of the Resurrection, marked by the impact of Christ's love.

As we approach the altar today may Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles, pray for us to Christ, his Master and ours... +

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

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES **TODAY**

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

NEXT SUNDAY

kept as

The Presentation of the Lord **1st February 2026**

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

Readings:

Malachi 3.1-5
Psalm 24. [1-6,] 7-10
Hebrews 2.14-18
St Luke 2.22-40

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

The Ministry Area **Prayer Group**

Thursdays at 7.45 – 9.00 p.m.
During the colder months we meet at The Cedars, Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric, NP16 6LE
From 9th April until 24 th September 2026 we will be meeting in Churches around the Ministry Area. Please join us, everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary!

Please contact David on 07887 853479 (david-carne@outlook.com) for any prayers that you would like us to include or for any questions that you have.

Daily Prayer

This is a week where in the Gospels Jesus speaks of seeds being planted and of growing. We are still at the beginning of a new year, and this is a good time to answer the call in our hearts to spend more time with Jesus, in prayer.

"I'm not very good at prayer," we might say. "I don't have the time to pray."

Jesus is not waiting for us to be perfect before we talk to him - he is simply waiting, right now, for us to come to him in our own humanity. This week we are invited to uncover the light of our faith, the light that warms the longing we feel in our souls for something different or deeper in our relationship with God. At this beginning of the year, we might step back and examine the ways we talk with Jesus - and the ways we hold him at arm's length.

We are being called into a relationship, a friendship, with someone who delights in us and waits for us to release our fears and come out of hiding. Where do we start? With the desire to do so.

It can be so simple to take the empty moments of our day and just tell the same Jesus who healed and loved on earth, what is in our hearts. In the early morning moments before we get out of bed, while in the shower or traveling to work, cooking or walking the dog - we can stop and open our hearts. "Lord Jesus, you know what is in my heart. You know what my needs are. Help me to be more open to the way you are calling me in my life."

Our prayer can be as simple as opening our hands on our lap for a moment and saying in our own words, "Show me how to come out of hiding. Give me the courage to let go of my fears and bring myself to you in honesty. Let me drop the many defenses I carry that keep me from feeling how deeply you love and accept me."

There is no right or wrong way to approach the Lord - the only right thing

is that we come with an open heart and our own desire for something deeper.

Every evening as we end our day, we can sit at the edge of our bed with our hands open and say, "Thank you." We can reflect on the many ways we felt the love of God in our lives that day. What tiny seed was planted in my life to bloom? Where did I reflect love of Christ in our interaction with others.

*With thanks to Creighton University's
Online Ministries*