

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, private prayer and a time of stillness.

Our current live-streamed services are as follows: Sunday Eucharist at 10.

a.m., and it can be accessed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/vicaragecello1/>

and 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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1st March 2026

The Second Sunday of Lent

The Collect

Almighty God, you show to those who are in error the light of your truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, 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 book of Genesis

The LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless

those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

[12. 1 - 4a]

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

Psalm 121 *Levavi oculus*

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

I lift up my eyes to the hills;
from where is my help to come?
My help comes from the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

He will not suffer your foot to stumble;
he who watches over you will not sleep.
Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel
shall neither slumber nor sleep.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

The Lord himself watches over you;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
So that the sun shall not strike you by
day, neither the moon by night.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

The Lord shall keep you from all evil;
it is he who shall keep your soul.
The Lord shall keep watch
over your going out
and your coming in,
from this time forth for evermore.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans [4; 1-5, 13-17]

What are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations') – Abraham believed in the presence of the God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

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

Gradual Hymn

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory
God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son;
All who believe in him have eternal life
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory**

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St John

Glory to you, O Lord.

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'

[St John 3.1–17]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may be strengthened as we continue our Lenten journey towards the joy of Easter
The people of Iran and peace and justice throughout the middle east. All those caught up in hostilities.
The government & people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to Russia's war of aggression there.
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; the 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; Margaret; Althea; Margi & Bob Osborne, Nathan;

For the Departed:

The recently departed; Peter Anderson; Colin Westbrook, priest; our own departed loved ones, and those whose anniversaries of death fall this week:
Alan Beattie; Peter Argile; Robert Dare

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

Abia

Jereboam: 'Morning, Abia. Would you know if I've remembered this correctly? "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life."

Abia: That sounds about right to me: well done.

Jereboam: Thank you. Actually I wanted to ask you something about that sentence. It almost sounds as if anyone can obtain eternal life, simply by deciding to believe. Surely it doesn't work like that. I don't think I could believe something just by making a decision.

Abia: No, I'm not sure that I could either. Mind you, you can deliberately decide to nurture your faith. You can take it seriously and devote time to learning more about it and putting it into practice. Maybe we can also approach the question from a different angle. You might like to hear about a favourite image of mine.

Jereboam: What's that?

Abia: I like to imagine Jesus as an unborn child in Mary's womb. I often concentrate my thoughts on that picture. You can even try to imagine the sounds that might have been involved.

Jereboam: That's lovely, but how does it relate to my question?

Abia: Well, Mary didn't suddenly say, "Oh, you know what? I think I'll become the mother of God," any more than you or I just decide to believe something. No – she accepted the role that had been conferred on her, and then fulfilled it to the best of her ability. In one way or another each of us has received our faith; we haven't been the cause of it. Like Mary, all we can do is to accept what we have been given and help it to grow to maturity, for the service of God and his world.

Jereboam: So what about people who don't share your belief? Let's assume that they can't just decide to believe either.

Abia: Who knows if and when the time will be right for any individual person to receive faith? We can only explain our beliefs as fully and as accurately as we can. If someone is to receive faith, it can at least happen in a properly informed way.

Jereboam: Thank you, Abia. That sounds sensible.

THIS WEEK

In St John's Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent we hear the story of Nicodemus visiting Jesus under cover of night. He is told *"just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."*

Monday is the celebration of St David, the patron saint of Wales, transferred from March 1st.

Each day the first reading is chosen to prepare for the gospel and the theme of both readings is complementary.

The second week begins with Jesus telling us: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful... For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." All week we will be taught by Jesus about the simple lessons of being his followers. "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted." Jesus predicts his passion again. Again, they misunderstand, and so he says, "whoever wishes to be great

among you shall be your servant." Jesus tells the Pharisees a parable about a poor man and a rich man. The rich man asks Abraham to warn his brothers about the consequences of this behavior. Abraham answers: "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead." While tax collectors and sinners are being drawn to Jesus the Pharisees complain, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So Jesus tells them the wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son.

Next Sunday: on the Third Sunday of Lent we read of the Samaritan woman who encounters Jesus at the well. He offers her lifegiving waters and then shows her how intimately he understands her. She runs back to town to spread her news: *"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! Could he be the Messiah?"*

A homily for the Second Sunday of Lent

+ There's a definite cloak and dagger feel to today's Gospel reading: it seems to foreshadow and anticipate the atmosphere of Holy Week. It begins in darkness and suspicion and a growing sense of threat and opposition. Nicodemus, a senior Pharisee, a scholar, a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme religious court, and part of the establishment of the day, comes to see Jesus under cover of night. He wants to find out more, but dares not do so openly because Jesus and the Pharisees are already at loggerheads over the interpretation of the law. To be seen openly with Jesus would be to court distrust or worse among his colleagues and his friends. We very much get the impression that, unlike some of the hostile questioning directed at Jesus, this is a genuine enquiry, an eagerly sought meeting; Nicodemus has heard Jesus speak and has been impressed, and perhaps more, by what he has seen and heard. Who is this man who speaks and acts with such authority, grace and compassion? He is drawn to Jesus so he takes the risk of a clandestine meeting. Nicodemus is a seeker after truth and longs to understand more of what lies behind Our Lord's words and actions, the

parables and the signs and miracles, and the word on the street.

So he comes *by night*, John tells us before the passage we've just heard, under cover of darkness - and the word John uses in his Gospel is ambiguous - it can mean 'darkness' as in the night-time, but also 'darkness' as in doubt and uncertainty. The 'darkness' hides their conversation from those who wouldn't understand, but also prevents Nicodemus from understanding what Jesus at first says to him - Our Lord's words about the wind of the Spirit and the imminence - the 'here and nowness' - of God's Kingdom - the beginning of Christ's new covenant of love between God and his people - leave Nicodemus, deeply rooted in the traditions of Jewish law, struggling to understand. So we can understand what Jesus is getting at when he says to him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?" In other words, 'don't you have the faintest idea what all this is supposed to be about?'

And so Jesus goes on to allude to the episode in the Book of Exodus - well-known to Nicodemus and to all scholars of the law and the scriptures - the story of the children of Israel, wandering in the wilderness on the way to the promised land, being attacked by fiery serpents, the bite of which could prove fatal. Moses, the Exodus account says, made a bronze model of the serpent and wove it around a pole and held it aloft and, the Exodus narrative goes on to say, all who looked upon the image of the serpent were healed. It became a symbol in the tradition and memory of the Jewish people of the healing power of God.

So Jesus relates this story of the bronze serpent to the impending mystery of his passion and death. Like the bronze serpent, Jesus himself will be lifted up and those who gaze upon him in faith will be given new life - the life of the Resurrection. What is being spoken of here is the cross as both the act and the symbol of the healing of the wounds of humanity. We come before the cross with all our brokenness, and the brokenness of the world around us, and with all the hurts, petty and substantial, we receive from others, not forgetting those we inflict on others and on ourselves. And here, in the light of the resurrection, we find both forgiveness and healing. In the presence of the passion and death of the Lord, the

Lord lifted up in a triumph that transcends all tragedy, we are somehow given the key to a more profound understanding of the meaning and purpose of our lives, of our struggles, our pain and suffering and of our mortality. To encounter Jesus is to begin to be united with him in the mystery of his sacrifice and in his dying to himself in order to live for us. At the heart of his message is the need to let go our selfishness and egoism so we might experience the life of God and the gift of Resurrection.

And what of the human element of today's Gospel - what about Nicodemus? We are not told whether he went away from this first secret meeting with Jesus satisfied or still full of questions. What we do know is that, later in St John's account, Nicodemus openly defends Jesus' right to a fair hearing at an assembly of his fellow Pharisees, and that after the Crucifixion, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, at their own expense, prepare the body of Jesus for burial. Tradition says that he became a believer and he is venerated, particularly in the Eastern Church, as a saint.

In this Eucharist, these saving events of the Gospel come alive for us; what we do here is always a celebration, an offering, a lifting up of the mystery of the dying and rising of Christ, which he speaks to us about in today's Gospel. We see him lifted up before us for the healing of the whole creation - and by his wounds we ourselves - and all that is - are healed. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

The Second Sunday of Lent 1st March 2026

- 10 a.m. Sung Eucharist
at St Arvan's
- 11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St Mary's, Penterry
- 4 p.m. All Age Eucharist
at St James, Devauden

NEXT SUNDAY

The Third Sunday of Lent 8th March 2026

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

Readings:

Exodus 17.1-7

Psalms 95

Romans 5.1-11

St John 4.5-42

The Church's celebration of St David's Day is transferred this year to Monday March 2nd

Fr Michael's day off is Tuesday this week

The Eucharist will be celebrated this week at St Arvan's at 10 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday and on Friday this week at 10 a.m. at St Christopher's, Bulwark

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

St Arvans Tea and Chat

Saturday March 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

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 24th 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.

Lent Courses

Tuesday afternoons at 2.45pm in Shirenewton, starting on 24th February. "Finding a Voice" is based on the film, The King's Speech. We will explore what the Bible has to say about such universal issues as discouragement and determination, fear and friendship, calling and courage. Call Carol for further details on 07380 992494 and to order the course book.

Monday evenings from 23rd February 7pm in St Christopher's Church. "Meeting God in John" explores what the Gospel reveals about God through the person of Jesus Christ. Contact Rev Philip Averay for more information and to order your course book. 01291 620980

Daily Prayer

During this second week of Lent we continue to try to make use of more reflective time each day. We are using all the resources available to us to practice new habits and patterns. We are still in the beginning stages of that process, so we shouldn't be discouraged if it takes more practice.

It is good to begin by being reminded that God is rich in mercy to us and that we should therefore be merciful to others. It is great to remember that exalting ourselves is dangerous and that there will be consequences for our mistreatment of the poor. We are like tenants of our Father's gifts to us. We can ask ourselves if we use them gratefully and return the fruits that our Lord desires, or do we reject the prophetic words that come to us? Do we reject Jesus himself? Are we like the Pharisees or the older son who resents the Father's prodigal love for all sinners? This can all be part of the background of our busy, daily life. Each morning, when our feet hit the floor, if only for a few moments, we can ask for a simple grace. At first, it might only be, "Dear Lord, help me today." As we brush our teeth, shower and get dressed we might specify our prayer more: "Dear Lord, give me the grace to recognize my impatience, anger and judgment today. Help to soften my heart to hear your love. I need your healing, Lord." Or we might get even more concrete, "Lord, Mary Beth is such a struggle for me. Help me to remember how much you love me when I see her today. And, when I'm tempted to be impatient or angry with her, just help me pause and give that over to you, in gratitude for your love."

Each of us will be able to grow in our ability to have brief conversations with our Lord. Whether driving or shopping, doing laundry or paying bills, working in our office or walking down the hall to the bathroom, we can use brief "background" moments to connect with our Lord. These moments of "contemplation in action" will give a character and shape to our day. Lent becomes a living reality for us when our days are spent with the Lord, listening to his love for us, calling us to gratitude and freedom.

*With thanks to Creighton University's
Online Ministries*