

# 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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E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

## 8<sup>th</sup> February 2026 The Second Sunday before Lent

### The Collect

Almighty God,  
you have created  
the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand  
in all your works and your likeness  
in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit  
reigns supreme over all things,  
now and for ever. AMEN

### A reading from the book of Genesis

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

[Shorter form: 1. 1-10; 24-27, 31 ]

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

### Psalm 136. 1-9

Give thanks to the Lord,  
for he is gracious,  
**for his mercy endures for ever.**  
Give thanks to the God of gods,  
**for his mercy endures for ever.**  
Give thanks to the Lord of lords,  
**for his mercy endures for ever;**  
Who alone does great wonders,  
**for his mercy endures for ever;**  
Who by wisdom made the heavens,  
**for his mercy endures for ever;**  
Who laid out the earth upon the waters,  
**for his mercy endures for ever;**  
Who made the great lights,  
**for his mercy endures for ever;**  
The sun to rule the day,  
**for his mercy endures for ever;**  
The moon and the stars  
to govern the night,  
**for his mercy endures for ever;**

### A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans [8.18-25]

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

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

## Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Speak, Lord, your servant is listening:  
you have the message of eternal life.  
**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:  
**And also with you**

Listen to the Gospel of Christ  
according to St Matthew

### **Glory to you, O Lord**

**J**esus taught his disciples, saying:  
'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?  
Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.  
Are you not of more value than they?  
And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?  
And why do you worry about clothing?  
Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith?  
Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.  
But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.  
So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.  
Today's trouble is enough for today.'

[ St Matthew 6. 25-34]

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

## For Your Prayers

That we may seek the kingdom of God and reflect its values in all we do.  
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.  
The people of the U.S.A. and of Minnesota, particularly.  
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; Margaret; Althea; Margi & Bob Osborne, Nathan;

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed; Peter Anderson; our own departed loved ones, and those whose anniversaries of death fall this week:  
Donald Wood, priest;

## 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

### **Elimelech**

*Jereboam:* 'Morning, Elimelech. Can I have a word, please?

*Elimelech:* Of course, Jereboam. It's always good to see you.

*Jereboam:* Actually I wondered if you'd be interested to hear about a new fund; one of my friends at the Gazette has set it up. It works like this: people contribute money to the fund, and then, if one of them suffers a serious injury, my friend pays them back double the amount they contributed in the first place. I've contributed myself; anyone can – apart from soldiers, that is: I guess they're a bit too risky.

*Elimelech:* Look, Jereboam, it sounds interesting, but Jesus used to tell us very definitely to trust in God. "Do not worry about tomorrow," he said.

"Tomorrow will take care of itself." I'm not sure I can then go and contribute to a fund that seems to assume that God won't look after me.

*Jereboam:* I take your point, but think of your wife and children. Think of the security you'd be giving them. I certainly feel so much happier, now that I've paid into a system which ensures my family's well-being, even if something happens to me.

*Elimelech:* I don't know. Surely, if God is willing to care for me, he might be willing to care for my family too.

*Jereboam:* But what about physicians? We need them when things go wrong. Don't tell me that you disapprove of curing people as well!

*Elimelech:* It's difficult, this...really, I'm not trying to be awkward. I suppose I'd say that God works through the hands of a physician, but it's somehow harder to think of him working through this fund.

*Jereboam:* Didn't Jesus sometimes encourage people to accumulate riches?

*Elimelech:* I don't remember ever hearing him say anything like that.

*Jereboam:* What about that parable about servants looking after sums of money? There was the cautious servant who buried the coin he was given. The master condemned him for that, but praised the others who had traded with their money and made a profit.

*Elimelech:* I don't see it that way at all. I've always understood that parable to mean that we have to nurture and develop the gifts that we receive from God. I'm sorry, Jereboam, but you can probably see that I'm not likely to accept your proposal just at the moment. You and I would probably agree that God cares for us, and that all good things come from him. My problem is that this fund seems to be at odds with those principles. Maybe I'll change my mind in due course: I don't know.

*Jereboam:* We'll leave it for now then. Let me know if you have second thoughts.

## THIS WEEK

In Sunday's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples to prioritise the values of God's Kingdom and to strive for them instead of those things such as riches, clothing or longevity. Worry about those things won't add a single second to our lives

Tuesday is the feast day of Saint Scholastica, religious, and sister of St Benedict. Saturday is the feast of Saints Cyril, Monk, and Methodius, Bishop, evangelists of Eastern Europe.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week come from the First Book of Kings, and continues the story of David's family, as his son, the wise Solomon, is now King of Israel. He is honoured and praised for his wisdom, but falls away from the Lord

and worships false gods, and for that the Lord tells him he will lose the Kingdom of Israel.

During the week, the fast-paced Gospel of St Mark continues with stories of Jesus healing, teaching and challenging the authorities. As Jesus and his disciples step on shore, people scurry from all over to bring those in need of healing. The Pharisees, watching for Jesus to break rules, criticise his followers for not washing their hands. Jesus responds, "You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." Jesus teaches his followers, "Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile." Jesus goes to Tyre and tries to slip into a house unnoticed, but a foreign woman finds him and Jesus, impressed by her faith, heals her daughter. He heals a man of his deafness and speech impediment and like so many others he healed, he orders him not to tell anyone. "But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it." Moved with pity, Jesus feeds the huge crowds who had followed him for three days. "They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over – seven baskets. There were about four thousand people."

**Next Sunday** is the Sunday before Lent. In our lectionary we hear the story of Jesus' Transfiguration

## A homily for the Second Sunday before Lent

+ No one is ever going to look back at their lives and think, "I wish I'd worried more about things" Worry is a natural human response; it's part of the brain's defence mechanism to protect us from potential danger. Uncertainty is something we don't cope with very well, while, of course, being an ever-present part of life. It's also true that most of what we worry about never happens, and so we end up suffering from tension, poor sleep, irritability, fatigue, problems concentrating, and a general sense of unhappiness. Jesus in today's Gospel tries to teach us three things: why we worry, the pointlessness of worry, and how to overcome it. We tend to worry when in our minds we try to bite off more than we can chew. Jesus teaches us not to worry about so many things ""What will we eat?"

or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?" (Matthew 6:31). We try to handle too many things on our minds when we worry about the future, about all the uncertainties tomorrow may bring. Worry is, when all is said and done, a particularly pointless thing to get involved in. In fact, it is counterproductive. As Jesus asks in the gospel, "Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?" (Matthew 6:27). The answer is, of course, obviously not. Quite the reverse, worry and all that goes with it can considerably diminish someone's life span rather than increase it, not to mention the quality and immediacy of life while we have it.

So how can we overcome worry? Essentially Jesus is telling us that we can only overcome worry by living in the present moment, focussing on what we need to do today, realising that we can only cross tomorrow's bridges when we get to them. Our Lord teaches us to focus on the present and not on the future, on what is happening now, rather than what might happen at some point in the future. "Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34). So, are we really being told to live a life without plans or not to make provisions for the future - no pensions, no insurance, no thoughts whatsoever about what might happen to us at some point in the future? I don't think so. Rather Jesus is concerned to teach us one of the basic truths of faith, that all our plans for our life, security and welfare in the future should have one starting point, and that is a total trust in God. If God cares and provides for like the grass of the field and the birds of the air, how much more will He care for us who are made in His own image and likeness? So Jesus, again, as in last Sunday's Gospel with a typical rabbinical exaggeration and paradox, is teaching us to replace our many mundane concerns with one over-riding concern: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (St Matthew 6:33). God who gave us life knows that life needs to be sustained. God who gave us our bodies knows that the body needs to be clothed and fed. The best way to assure that the gifts will keep coming is to develop a good relationship with the One who gives them to us, God who is the

source of them all. This is the only sure prescription to overcome chronic worry in our lives.

There was a seventeenth century French spiritual writer, Jean Pierre de Caussade, who spoke of this basic, spiritual attitude towards life - the one commended by Jesus in this morning's Gospel - as '*the sacrament of the present moment*' and what he meant is that only by giving our attention to the here and now can we become aware of both the will of God for us and the needs of our neighbour. What he says is very similar to some of the themes of the Mindfulness movement which has become so popular over the last few years. It's something common to many religious traditions. Be present, give your full attention to whatever it is you are doing or the person you're talking to, without your mind constantly racing ahead to the next thing or the thing after that. It is in the here and now and through the here and now that God is present to us and speaks to us. The present moment, free from distractions and worries about things over which we have no control, is a kind of sacrament in which the grace of God is communicated to us. In this way, he says, by accepting everyday obstacles with faith, humility and love, we grow in our discipleship. God doesn't for the most part expect us to follow him and grow in holiness by doing extraordinary things, but rather by giving heroic, attention to the detail of daily living - God is in the detail of the here and now. It's how we learn to receive from God, to give to those around us and to be Christ to those around us. [Here at the altar - at the Eucharist - we take part in the supreme act of giving. But it's not we who are giving anything, but God who gives to us. Jesus invites us as guests to a sacrificial meal at which he is the host and where he is also the food which is served. Here we are taught the meaning of those words: "*strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*"]

That's quite something to reflect upon as we approach Lent. +

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

### TODAY

#### The Second Sunday before Lent 8<sup>th</sup> February 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 Sunday before Lent 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026

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

#### Readings:

Exodus 24.12-18  
Psalm 2; [99]  
2 Peter 1.16-21  
St Matthew 17.1-9

Fr Michael's day off is Monday this week

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

For all services in the wider Ministry Area  
please see [www.severnyema.co.uk](http://www.severnyema.co.uk)

## St Arvans Tea and Chat

**Saturday February 14<sup>th</sup>**  
and usually every second  
Saturday of the month  
Children's 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 9<sup>th</sup> April until 24<sup>th</sup>  
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](mailto:david-carne@outlook.com))  
for any prayers that you would like  
us to include or for any questions  
that you have.

## Daily Prayer

"My heart is moved with pity," Jesus says in one of the gospels this week, and we see his compassion in the healing stories in this week's gospels. This seems like the perfect time for us to ask the Lord for the healing we need in our lives.

We can take one gospel and pray with it as if we were in the story - like Monday's story. Jesus and his disciples cross the sea and as soon as they land, people rush to bring those who need healing to him. We can imagine ourselves seeing Jesus, the crowds gathering, the jostle of people bringing their sick on mats. People yelling for Jesus' attention.

Then we can imagine a moment where Jesus steps away from the throng and takes us aside. With loving eyes he looks at us and asks us, "Where do you need healing? Where can I be with you?" It is there in that powerful moment that we can speak to Jesus as we would a friend. We can search our hearts and ask the Lord for the healing he already knows we need: "Help me, Lord, with my impatience with my family. Let me not nag at those I love so much. Heal my lack of compassion for them." "Touch my heart, Lord Jesus. Give me the selfless love I need in my marriage and help me avoid the temptation to 'keep score.' Only with your help can I continue to be loving, even

when it feels like some days I am the only one carrying my marriage.”

“Lord Jesus, I become afraid of failing and I feel like one of those people lying on a mat, waiting for you to touch my life. Yet when I sense your healing presence coming close, I roll away from you so you don’t see me. Give me the courage I need to ask for your healing and to get up and answer your call for me to serve.”

When we pray with a gospel, we can carry an image of that prayer with us all day long. As we get out of bed in the morning, cook meals or go about our day, we can be aware of Christ standing with us, ready to heal us, if only we would ask. What is it that needs healing in me this week? Where will I allow Jesus to change my life?

*With thanks to Creighton University’s Online Ministries*

## PREPARING FOR LENT

Anything worth doing is worth preparing for. Just imagine that this Lent is going to be different from every other Lent we’ve experienced. Imagine that there will be many graces offered me this year. Let’s even imagine that God is going to help transform our lives, with greater freedom, greater joy, deeper desires for love and service.

If we want it, we will choose it.

Lent will be this wonderful season of grace for us if we give ourselves to it. And, we will give ourselves to it to the degree we really want it badly. So, in these days before Lent, we need to prepare our hearts. We need to prepare by realising how much we want to grow in freedom, how much we need to lighten our spirits and experience some real joy, and how much some parts of our lives really need changing.

So, preparing our hearts is a process of preparing our desires. This means practicing our sense of anticipation. If I imagine Lent as an “ordeal” or a time I dread in some way, then I’ve already predisposed myself to not get very much out of it. These days before Lent are a time to start anticipating something wonderful that is about to happen.

Our Focus: On what God wants to give us. Our sense of excitement and anticipation will grow more easily if we begin to

imagine what God wants to give us. There is really something coming that we can truly look forward to. If we get too focused on ourselves, and what we are going to do or not do, we could risk missing the gift God wants to give us. We have to keep aware of the fact that grace comes from God. This is about God’s great desire to bless us. Then, it is easier for us to imagine that what we really *want* to do is place ourselves in a space to receive what God wants to give us.

### Not starting from a dead stop.

Taking some time to get ready for Lent will ensure that we aren’t going to miss the first week or two of Lent, because we are just getting started. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, but we want to be ready to really take off on that day, rather than just beginning to think about Lent on that day. Part of what makes a vacation or a special anniversary so special is the build-up to it. Before we get to Ash Wednesday, we should start asking ourselves some questions and we should start with some preparations. “What does God want to give me this year?” This question may require that I slow down a bit and *listen* to my inner spirit. For example, even if I’m very busy, I realize I’m hungry when I hear my stomach start “growling.” “What am I going to be doing on Ash Wednesday?” Too often, Ash Wednesday is like every other day, except that I manage to get to church and get ashes on my forehead. Is there anything else I can do on Ash Wednesday? How will fasting and abstaining happen for me, for my family on that special day?

Lent is not something I need to do alone. If I have a spouse, or children, or some close friends, or distant e-mail companions, I can begin now to talk about how we will support each other in this Lenten journey. The anticipation and the preparation are transformed with the companionship of family and close friends. We shouldn’t be deterred by the fear that our spouse or children or friends “won’t be into it.” Jesus said, “Fear is useless; what’s needed is trust.” Let’s begin now to tell others about our desires. Let’s help support others’ expectations. Let’s help others see that Lent doesn’t have to be something I avoid, and certainly can’t be reduced to “giving up candy.” We can help our loved ones to begin to imagine what

they could receive from God in these days.

Ash Wednesday is a great place to start with our planning. “What are we going to eat?” We shouldn’t be embarrassed if we really haven’t fasted in a long time, or perhaps ever before. We can plan to *intentionally* have only one full meal on Ash Wednesday. We can make that meal very meaningful and symbolic. Getting ready, means getting my house ready, too. And, it can mean lots of choices.

In the days before Lent, we can read some of the resources here that give concrete ideas of ways to get ready to begin. The symbols in our home, and the concrete choices we make can *shape* the way we will begin Lent, as individuals and as a family.

And, it doesn’t take much time. It doesn’t take a lot of time to prepare for the beginning of Lent. It just takes desire and focus. God can do so much with that. We can give God more of a space to touch our hearts if we begin to establish some simple patterns. We could wake up each morning, and for something like a half a minute to a minute, stand by the edge of our beds, and just ask the Lord for the grace to let this day be one in which I long for the beginning of Lent. Perhaps we need to ask for specific helps or graces to get ready to begin Lent. Whatever we try to say, our Lord can understand the Spirit trying to speak through our simple words. And all it takes is the time to find and put on our slippers. And each night, in the days ahead, we can practice giving thanks to God before I go to bed. This simple pattern, in the morning and evening can stir our spirits to look forward to and prepare for Lent, as a season of grace. May our Lord bless us all on this journey ahead.