

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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15th February 2026 The Sunday before Lent

The Collect

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; 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 Exodus

The LORD said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.' So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. To the elders he had said, 'Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with

you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.' Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud.

Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

[24. 12-18]

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

Psalm 99

R/ Light shines in the darkness for the upright

The Lord is king: let the peoples tremble; he is enthroned above the cherubim: let the earth shake.
The Lord is great in Zion and high above all peoples. Let them praise your name, which is great and awesome; the Lord our God is holy.

R/ Light shines in the darkness for the upright

Mighty king, who loves justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the Lord our God; bow down before his footstool, for he is holy.

R/ Light shines in the darkness for the upright

Moses and Aaron among his priests and Samuel among those who call upon his name; they called upon the Lord and he answered them. He spoke to them

out of the pillar of cloud; they kept his testimonies and the law that he gave them.

R/ Light shines in the darkness for the upright

You answered them, O Lord our God; you were a God who forgave them and pardoned them for their offences. Exalt the Lord our God and worship him upon his holy hill, for the Lord our God is holy.

R/ Light shines in the darkness for the upright

A reading from the second letter of St Peter [1. 16-21]

We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
From the bright cloud
the Father's voice was heard:
'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him
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

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

[17.1-9]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may be strengthened as we begin our Lenten journey
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; 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:
Hazel Hoskins

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

Nehemiah

Nehemiah: Excuse me, would you be Jereboam?
Jereboam: That's right.
Nehemiah: You write those articles about Jesus, don't you?
Jereboam: Yes, I do.
Nehemiah: Well, I saw him yesterday. I wonder if you'd be interested to hear about it.

Jereboam: I'd be most interested: do tell me what happened. Where was it?

Nehemiah: A little way up the mountain. I'd gone up there yesterday evening – it had been a difficult day, to be honest, and I just needed to get away from everyone for a while. Eventually I started to feel cold and so I came back down, but on the way I heard some footsteps and, when I looked, there were Jesus and three of his friends walking along, just a little way above the level of my path. I think they were heading back to the village too, but I'm not sure.

Jereboam: You're quite sure it was Jesus?

Nehemiah: Oh yes, I've seen him a few times before. I even recognised his friends: they often come along to his teaching sessions.

Jereboam: Did any of them speak to you last night?

Nehemiah: Oh no, I don't think they even realised I was there. I should have called out, but it didn't occur to me at the time.

Jereboam: But maybe you heard what Jesus was saying to his companions?

Nehemiah: No, I couldn't hear them at all.

Jereboam: Look, I don't mean to...

Nehemiah: Don't tell me, I know what you're going to say: "Come on, Nehemiah, just because you've seen the man, it's not really that remarkable, is it? We can't write an article about just seeing someone."

Jereboam: Well...

Nehemiah: But the thing is, it was remarkable: he was glowing – that's the only way I can describe it – as if there was something lighting him up from within. Or, I don't know, maybe he wasn't glowing at all, maybe it was just that there was some force drawing my eyes towards him.

Jereboam: How did you feel?

Nehemiah: Really warm and...comforted. You know if you see a fire in the distance? It somehow makes you feel warm inside, even though you're too far away to feel the heat. It was a bit like that.

Jereboam: And what about his friends? Did they glow or attract your gaze?

Nehemiah: In a way...but it wasn't so much that they were glowing, more that they were surrounded by his glow -- absorbed by it, you might say. The four of them had become one unit. If I can make another comparison, it was a bit like seeing a really loving couple when they walk along. Even if they're not touching each other in any way, you can somehow sense the special bond between them. It was rather like that. Jesus' glow seemed to link them all together...and that's about it: there's not much more to say. All a bit vague, isn't it?

Jereboam: It will be really useful, Nehemiah. I'm most grateful to you.

THIS WEEK

Sunday is the Sunday before Lent. We hear in the Gospel of Jesus' Transfiguration on Mount Tabor as he is revealed in glory to his closest followers. We have only three days before Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent.

Beginning of Lent

The Season of Lent begins with four days which serve as an introduction to the four Lenten practices of Prayer, Fasting, Repentance and Almsgiving.

Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting and abstinence. We wear ashes on our foreheads to remember who we are and express our desire to turn away from sin and to believe the Good News. The Prophet Joel helps us begin our journey: "return to me with your whole heart."

"Rend your hearts, not your garments," reminds us that this is an interior journey. The Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 51, has the response: "Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned against you." St Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians says, "be reconciled to God ... we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain ...

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." In St Matthew's Gospel Jesus gives us a guide for our Lenten practices, "Take care not to

perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them."

On Thursday we read in the book of Deuteronomy how Moses urges his people to turn away from sin. "Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him."

Friday and Saturday: It is the long tradition of Lent to prepare us for our journey by having us reflect on Isaiah, Chapter 58, as we begin. "This is the fasting that I wish" gives us the true picture of fasting: letting God's Spirit transform us. It is a call to conversion. Jesus confirms his desire to help us, "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."

Next Sunday, the First Sunday of Lent, we begin our Lenten journey, remembering how God re-established the covenant, after the flood, and we reflect on how Jesus began his public ministry with a retreat of forty days - led into the desert by the Spirit.

A homily for the Sunday before Lent

+ On this Sunday before Lent, the Sunday which used to be known as

Quinquagesima – meaning fifty days before Easter - the Church, for other reasons too, but also to encourage us all in what we are preparing to do in Lent, gives us as the Gospel a glimpse of the true glory of Christ.

We are told that the apostles Peter and James and John saw their Master changed as they looked on - that his face shone, as the face of the prophet Moses had shone after his encounter with God. He appears in front of them flanked by the two most significant figures from the spiritual history of Israel, Moses and Elijah.

In this way the apostles were not only granted a vision of Jesus as the Messiah but given a glimpse of his true reality and significance. They emerge from the experience bewildered and shaken but also renewed in their discipleship and better able to face the uncertain and troubling future.

So, it makes sense at this stage in the Church's year, with Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent only a couple of days away, to be reminded of the story of Christ's Transfiguration. We know very

well that penance and self-denial and self-sacrifice – however we intend to interpret those things in a practical way - are an essential part of Lent, but they're not the only part. Lent is also meant to be a joyful time of renewal as we travel to the heart of what the Faith has to say to us and to the world. Tragedy and joy walk hand in hand in the story of Jesus, as it does to a greater or lesser extent in our own human journeys, and we are being told that we cannot get to the life of the Resurrection without first walking the Way of the Cross. As the Gospel story unfolds, it gradually becomes apparent that the Apostles are being called to something which will involve them in a sacred drama which plays itself out through self-sacrifice and the taking up of the Cross. It's highly significant that, in St Matthews's Gospel, six days before the Transfiguration Peter had confessed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus had told them that he would have to meet rejection and death. So now - just before Lent starts, is as good a time as any to ask ourselves the question as to what we think the Christian life is about? What does it mean for us to be followers of Jesus? What are we actually looking for?

It depends on our psychologies, I suppose, but many of us are simply looking for peace of heart and mind in a bewilderingly fast-paced world. Many of us look for an overarching sense of meaning both to our own lives and the world of which we are a part. Many people cherish the moral and ethical values we are taught in the Gospels and the traditions of the Church. Some people seek consolation because they are in pain and want to join their suffering to the sufferings of Christ. Others find here a endless source of energy and inspiration to make our world a better and more just place. The list goes on. We might - we probably do - relate to all of them in one way or another.

But the message of today's Gospel throws something else into the mix. When Jesus climbs the mountain with his closest companions and is then revealed to them in glory flanked by the figures of Moses and Elijah, we are not only being told that Jesus is the promised Saviour, the fulfilment of God's promises to the people of Israel, but as we see Jesus's own human nature being filled with the glory of his divine nature, we are being shown our own eternal destiny.

We are, each one of us, called to be transfigured. But what do we mean by that?

There's a story about a man travelling a long way to see the great eighteenth/nineteenth century Russian Saint, Seraphim of Sarov. He tells him that he was already trying to live a good life by helping others. He tried to pray and he regularly went to church to take part in worship. Yet he was still unsatisfied, he was searching for something more.

And St Seraphim told him that Christianity is not so much about *doing something* as *becoming* someone. It isn't at its heart about following a code of behaviour, but about a process of transformation, the transfiguration, of the human person. Of course, prayer, service to other people in need, God wants us to do all these things, but Seraphim says they are all really part of the true goal which is to be completely open to God's Spirit, so that the light of Christ can shine in us and through us. Then what we do and how we treat people will be transformed because Christ will be acting in us.

The message of the Transfiguration is that this gift of divine glory that the Apostles see shining from Jesus on the holy mountain is meant to include both us and the whole world, and to give us a vision of the possibilities of a world transfigured and changed by the love and presence of God – a very different world from the one we're living in now with all its greed, cruelty and hatred.

Lent – coming along in a few days – reminds us that following Christ is, as the word '*follow*' implies, a matter of movement - a commitment to a journey - a pilgrimage of faith. We are called to change and let go and move on as we grow in our friendship with Christ, and travel to the life of the Resurrection.

And we are given food for this journey: every time we gather for the Eucharist, we experience a moment of transfiguration when, quietly and unseen, our divine Lord is transfigured and transformed before our eyes as the forms of bread and wine upon the altar become his Body and Blood.

When we receive him in Holy Communion the reassurance of God's love for us, the grace we receive and take into ourselves helps take away from us fear and doubt and strengthens us to get up and face with courage the challenges and trials, the setbacks and sufferings that we have to

through before we can share in the divine glory of Christ.

This is a bit of a physician heal yourself moment, but when we come to the altar to receive him this morning, we should remember the ending of the Transfiguration story in today's Gospel: "But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone." +

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

The Sunday before Lent 15th February 2026

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

ASH WEDNESDAY:
Holy Eucharist at 10 a.m. at St Arvans

NEXT SUNDAY The First Sunday of Lent 22nd February 2026

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

Readings:
Genesis 2.15-17; 3.1-7
Psalm 32
Romans 5.12-19
St Matthew 4.1-11

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 Thursday and on 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 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.

Daily Prayer

We may feel like we never have enough; enough money, time, love, status or anything else that seems to be the focus of our lives. We live lives that are packed with activities, meetings and obligations - keeping our hearts distracted away from our relationship with God, from our families and from others in our lives who need our love most.

In these few days before Lent begins, we can begin to prepare our hearts by asking ourselves how we want Lent to be different this year - what we want to ask the Lord to give us - and more importantly, we can ask what the Lord wants for us this Lent. What gift of generosity, love or attention can we share with others in the weeks ahead? How can we focus on the Lenten season and ask that our hearts be opened to what is real - not to the externals which distract us so much? How will I be with my family and friends this

Lent? What will I do that sets this season apart from my normal routines? How can I name, anticipate and feel the gifts the Lord showers on me with such love in the weeks ahead? And every morning, we can begin by sitting at the side of our beds with our hands open on our laps, asking God to help us receive these gifts with open hearts. We can carry that focus with us throughout the day, remembering in the quiet moments what we are asking for. Always, we end our day simply thanking God for the love and gifts of the day.

For the first four days of Lent, it will be a great help to set aside some time, even if it means getting up earlier each morning, to read and reflect about what Lent can mean and to let that soak into our hearts. The key is not to be sombre or severe in any way, but to know that this is a time of great grace so that we can be attentive to it. The first thing to remember is that these 40 days are a gift to us. We are not trying to save ourselves by our Lenten practices. God has already saved us. We are only trying to let God get our attention and to give grace a chance to work in us. These days are critically important for choosing to establish some Lenten patterns.

Depending upon our age or health, we may want to do some fasting and abstinence, in regard to food. But, each of us can choose what else we can fast and abstain from during Lent. What practices of mine get in the way of my being open to hearing God's Word and responding freely? That's what needs transforming. Giving up needing to be right, fasting from my impatience, totally abstaining from escapist fantasies will open our hearts to God's grace. None of that takes extra time. It just takes desire. Adding new acts of kindness, gratitude and love each day for family and friends will open our hearts to the greater acts of charity and generosity for the poor.

Finally, Lent is the perfect time to choose to grow in gratitude. Every night, before going to bed, let us be faithful to giving thanks to the Lord who has given us so many blessings and offers us new graces each and every day.

A Prayer on Ash Wednesday

Lord, it feels like we are embarking on a Lenten journey together, you and I. Today we are invited to let the Holy Spirit purify our hearts, and strengthen us in love. That feels like what I am looking for - or what you are looking for in me.

I want to remember how much I need you in my life and how much my life needs redemption.

I want to remember it clearly and in the background of my day today and all through Lent.

On this special day, Ash Wednesday, may my small sacrifices in fasting be a way to clear away the clutter in my life to see you more clearly.

May my longing for meat and other food, help me to focus my life today more outside myself.

Let me be aware of those who are in so much more suffering than I am and may I be aware of them as the brothers and sisters you have placed in my life.

Lord, I know there is darkness within me and around me.

Bless these days with your Word.

Let your Light shine in the darkness.

Help me long for that Light until we celebrate it at the Vigil six weeks from now.

And most of all Lord, help me to honour this day with the ashes on my forehead. They help me remember where I have come from and where I am going.

May I acknowledge to you my sins and my deep need for your loving forgiveness and grace.

I pray that this Lenten season will make me so much more aware of how much I need your healing in my life.