

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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22nd February 2026

The First Sunday of Lent

The Collect

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the book of Genesis

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.' Now the serpent was more crafty than any

other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

[2. 15-17. 3. 1 - 7]

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

Psalm 32 *Beati, quorum*

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

Happy the one whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Happy the one to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

For I held my tongue; my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long. Your hand was heavy upon me day and night; my moisture was dried up like the drought in summer.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

Therefore let all the faithful make their prayers to you in time of trouble; in the great water flood, it shall not reach them.

You are a place for me to hide in; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with songs of deliverance.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

'I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye.

'Be not like horse and mule which have no understanding; whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle, or else they will not stay near you.'

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

Great tribulations remain for the wicked, but mercy embraces those who trust in the Lord.

Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the Lord; shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

R/I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans [5. 12-19]

Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned – sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgement following one trespass brought

condemnation but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so the act of righteousness of one leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one person's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

*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.
Man does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth
from the mouth of God
**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 Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour;

and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him. *[St Matthew 4.1-11]*

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 to the joy of Easter
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; 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:
Joan Priddis

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

Joram

Jereboam: Ah, Joram, how are things? We all thought you'd disappeared. No-one's seen you for ages.

Joram: Actually I've only been away for a couple of weeks.

Jereboam: Have you had a good time, anyway?

Joram: Well, challenging, I suppose you might say: I've been in the desert.

Jereboam: In the desert – what, all on your own? Don't tell me: you've been following what the poet says: "Every soul must pass through the wasteland of solitude."

Joram: Well, I suppose it's a bit like that. Really I was trying to follow the example of Jesus. You might remember that he spent forty days in the wilderness, being tempted by the Devil. I must say, I've no idea how he managed for forty days. After one week I wasn't sure how much longer I'd cope. That's probably a sign of weakness, unless some people are just better suited than others to that sort of existence.

Jereboam: I'm sure you managed better than I'd have done. Anyway, were you tempted by the Devil?

Joram: Well, yes, although I might put it slightly differently. The Devil is always there around us, trying to encroach on our lives. The longer you're alone, the more clearly you see the demarcation between his influence on the one hand and God's influence on the other. You become more able to protect yourself from the Devil, by seeing more clearly the distinction between good and evil. The decision is then clear-cut: you either give in to the Devil or you do everything you can to resist him. In the normal rush of life we are easily confused, and we often fail to notice him. The trouble in the desert, of course, is that you become weak and cowardly, simply because of the tough living-conditions...and you can't take a break, so it's very exhausting.

Jereboam: Perhaps you may have cleared up a doubt I've always had, despite what anyone's told me: if Jesus was as good as people think he was, how come that he was tempted? From what you're saying, he was learning to notice the Devil more clearly. Anyway, do you think that you benefited from your experience?

Joram: I'd say so, yes. It was very tough, but invaluable at the same time.

Jereboam: Come to think of it, you may have answered my other niggling question about Jesus too.

Joram: Which was...?

Jereboam: Which was this: why did he feel the need to tell everyone about his temptation? – which he must have done, since he was alone in the desert, and no-one apart from him can have known about it. I've always wondered whether he wasn't trying to impress people with his strength of character. Now I can see that he was giving people like you an example to follow. Interesting...well, welcome back, anyway.

Joram: Thank you.

THIS WEEK

On 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 to the desert by the Spirit.

After last week's first four days, the next three weeks of Lent represent a period of instruction, originally designed for the Catechumens (those preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil). We can read these readings as a catechism of renewal for us all.

The first weekday reading for the first full week is the great giving of the Commandments: "Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy." Jesus gives the great parable about the last judgment - separating the charitable from the uncharitable: "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." Then, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray. He says that it is an evil generation that looks for "signs." He is the sign - a call to repentance. On Thursday, when we hear the desperate but faith-filled prayer of Esther, Jesus tells us to pray confidently. And he sums up the whole law and the prophets for us: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you." Jesus says our holiness has to go beyond the letter-of-the-law holiness; it must touch our anger, our judgments of others, and be reconciled with those we've wronged. The holiness Jesus proposes for us calls us to love our enemies, even to pray for those who persecute us. We are called to love the way God does.

The Second Sunday of Lent offers us Matthew's Gospel of the Transfiguration. When the stammering disciples are overwhelmed at the reality of who Jesus really is they "were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid."

Next Sunday. In St John's Gospel 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.*"

A homily for the First Sunday of Lent

+ + On a surface hearing or reading, this morning's Gospel may not seem even slightly relevant to our own lives. Of course, they're relevant in terms of our faith just because of who it is who is being tempted – St Matthew is very concerned at the start of Jesus' ministry to tell us exactly who he is - but the three temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness may seem incredibly remote from the kind of things which tend to tempt us. If we look a bit deeper, though, we should be able to see that the temptations Jesus was subjected to point to situations that are very human and very relevant indeed, not only to the human condition in the abstract (if we can ever say that meaningfully) but to the everyday detail of our own lives. The Gospel always addresses **us** - here and now.

Our Lord's temptations don't only concern Jesus as the divine Son of God: he is a representative of the whole of humanity, and they are, in one guise or another, common to all of us whose humanity he shares.

Let's take the first temptation - to turn stones into bread; that is, for Jesus, hungry and fasting in the wilderness, to use his power to satisfy his own desires. Many of us are in that position; to have the power to satisfy our needs and wants. But the crucial question is whether we do this selfishly or in a way which also benefits others, as Jesus constantly did?

That's the real point of almsgiving, in other words, charitable giving to others of our resources of time or money, one of the traditional ways of using Lent, to help other people and in that way help us to get closer to God. Are we free enough in ourselves to do this **even for a time** - like the forty days of Lent? Or do we find that perhaps we give up something for Lent, but are really looking forward to indulging ourselves in forty days' time, revelling now in the feeling of achievement the lack ofwhatever it is we've renounced..... gives us? If this is our attitude, are we using Lent to grow in any way at all? Is this freedom or a kind of enslavement? Maturity or childishness? If we move on to look at the second temptation - Jesus can rule over all the kingdoms of the world if he sells his soul to the devil. In our terms, this could be to

gain advantage over others by 'selling' oneself and forgetting or discarding our values and our consciences in the process.

Of course, we may have *genuinely* worthwhile ambitions, and we want to be able to do good by getting into a position where we can affect things and change things for the better. But first we need to be in the position to wield power and influence. Wanting to do that isn't a bad thing - a great deal of human achievement - progress even - has been brought about by it. But how often does it happen that people succumb to the temptation to take short cuts at the expense or to the detriment of others to get where they want to be?

How often does ambition exist for its own sake. I won't make the obvious comment about recent examples of that.

The Gospels show us that Jesus rejected the temptation to sell himself to the devil; he came to set us free from all forms of slavery and the less obvious forms - like enslavement to our own egos are often the most insidious.

And lastly, the third temptation which was to put God to the test. This is the most destructive of all because, if it takes root, the others will almost inevitably follow. We put God to the test when we try to manipulate God who is meant to do our bidding in exactly the way that we think best; in effect we try to create a god made in our own image, who is really just a projection of our own desires or needs, an extension of ourselves. We want a god that we can wind up at will and then, after we've finished playing with him, put away in a box where he will not bother us - or challenge us - until we need him again. In Christian terms, *idolatry* isn't worshipping false gods - but *really* idols are simply false and self-serving concepts of spiritual things which are designed to flatter us and reinforce our prejudices. And like most toys, we throw them away when they no longer serve their purpose. If this is our attitude to God, then it can't do anything other than affect our attitude to human beings as well.

These are the moral challenges that we face all the time - the temptations to forget who we really are, to use our religion or our beliefs for personal gain, or perhaps, more insidiously still, for psychological reinforcement, to be dazzled by the realpolitik or commercial realities of the

world; to do almost anything to avoid paying *the cost of discipleship*.

The season of Lent, forty days like Jesus' forty days in the desert, gives us an opportunity to reflect on our lives and discern where we are going wrong, where we are falling short of the mark: indulging that tendency to look after ourselves first; falling for the temptation to put others down so that we can get on - and then calling it 'healthy competition' to justify ourselves. Above all perhaps, failing to appreciate the nature of our relationship with God and the quite extraordinary grace, freedom and dignity that is offered us.

We are a consumer society - 'a free market' society as some would have it, although the way things are now it's a curious idea of 'freedom' - but as part of it, whether we like it or not, we can so easily fall into the trap of treating God and our neighbour as yet more products to be consumed or disposed of for our own gratification. But our faith isn't part of the leisure industry: it's a matter of the life or death of our innermost selves. The faith isn't meant to be selling anything, but to be an encounter with reality.

We do have to be very wary, though, of seeing Lent as just a gloomy reminder of just how bad we are as human beings, about how sinful we are. We all somewhere deep down and for all kinds of complicated reasons enjoy a good guilt trip. We can approach Lent with grim determination and when we give up in despair..... well that just confirms us in our feelings of worthlessness. Or we can struggle through it, even revelling in our misery and congratulating ourselves on our new-found appetite for self-denial. We really shouldn't do that; it's the reverse of what Lent should be about.

Lent is really a joyful time; OK, yes, it's a time of learning, a time of growth and for taking the detail of our faith that much more seriously. But we shouldn't confuse being "serious" with being "sombre" or "severe" - they are very different things. We have every reason to believe that, despite our own sometimes deeply felt shortcomings and failures, despite our false pre-conceptions, Lent is a time of grace - a time of gifts - of good news and joyful growth in the Spirit, and a valuable and necessary preparation for the joy of Easter. +

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

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

NEXT SUNDAY

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

Readings:

Genesis 12.1-4a

Psalm 121

Romans 4.1-5, 13-17

St John 3.1-17

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

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

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 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

This first week of Lent is the time we are given to begin and establish our Lenten patterns, to re-align our priorities, and to make use of more reflective time each day. It is a time to fast and abstain from those things that hinder our relationship with the Lord, and to recognise the Gospel demand to be more generous to the poor and those in need..

As we make this beginning, we are offered some beautiful instruction about what is expected of us. These readings describe a very Christ-like love. We can examine our care for the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick or imprisoned. We can reflect upon who in our lives needs us and whether we love them as we want to be loved. And we can look at the deeper things, like our anger or how we treat others, and our response to those who are our "enemies." What is most important this first week, beyond a sharper examination of our consciences, is to see this as a time for God's grace to work in us. So, it is a time to ask for the grace we are starting to see we need. Each morning this week we can ask our Lord to help us focus this day on the neediest people around us. We can ask to begin new patterns this week by practising special charity and love, where we haven't been so generous or kind before. The key is to ask and to be very specific. Then, throughout the day, we can keep talking with our Lord, in the background about these graces we ask for and the concrete circumstances we find ourselves in. It is in the particular events of our day that we will become attentive to our need for our Lord's presence and grace, as well as our need to choose a new pattern. Each evening, we can briefly review the day and recognize some missed opportunities to connect with the Lord or take advantage of a situation here or there, but most of all, we can thank the Lord for the moments of connection that have begun our Lenten journey.

*With thanks to Creighton University's
Online Ministries*