

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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The Vicarage, St Arvans
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E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

15th March 2026

The Fourth Sunday of Lent
Mothering Sunday

The Collect

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, 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 first book of Samuel

The LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the LORD

said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD." Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the LORD.' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.' Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the LORD chosen this one.' Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the LORD chosen this one.' Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The LORD has not chosen any of these.' Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' He sent and brought David in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

[16. 1 - 13]

Reader / This is the Word of the Lord

Response / Thanks be to God

Psalm 23

R/ the Lord is my shepherd,

I shall not be in want.

The Lord is my shepherd;
therefore can I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green
pastures and leads me beside still waters.

**R/ the Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not be in want.**

He shall refresh my soul
and guide me in the paths
of righteousness for his name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

**R/ the Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not be in want.**

You spread a table before me in the
presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.
Surely goodness and loving mercy
shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
for ever.

**R/ the Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not be in want.**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians [5; 8-14]

Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

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.
I am the light of the world, says the Lord,
whoever follows me
will have the light of 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 John

Glory to you, O Lord.

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.' They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said,

'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him.

[9. 1-9, 13-17, 34-38]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may follow Christ who brings light to our darkness
All mothers and our own mothers, living and departed.
The peoples of Iran and the middle east.
For peace and justice throughout the region. All those caught up in hostilities.
For world leaders – for wisdom, restraint and respect for human life.
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.

For the Departed:

The recently departed; our own departed loved ones, and those whose anniversaries of death fall this week:
Brian Drake.

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

Izhar

Jereboam: Tell me then, Izhar: what do you find so appealing about Jesus?

Izhar: What I really like is that he manages to reconnect religion with God.

Jereboam: I thought the two generally went together anyway.

Izhar: Not in my experience: if you ask me, people get so involved with the ceremony of religion, or the companionship that goes with it, that God and the demands he makes of us seem to be forgotten, or at least watered down a lot. I tell you what really annoys me: it's this attitude you often find towards the sacred chants. People seem to think of them as simply providing a sort of artistic experience, with a comfortable, other-worldly quality. Surely that's missing the main point of the chants, which is to direct people towards God...unless you choose to reinterpret God as simply being a cosy

artistic experience. But then we're getting perilously close to the realms of blasphemy. And I'm so mistrustful of the word "spiritual". It usually seems to imply that people want to keep the mysterious bits of religion, without much of the rest of it. At last there's someone like Jesus to point us back towards God...what a relief! Look, I'm sorry to get steamed up.

Jereboam: That's all right; you're allowed to. Did you hear about Jesus healing the blind man the other day? That sounded pretty impressive to me.

Izhar: Very impressive, yes. In a way it's similar to what I was saying before, though. He's reconnecting healing with God. The only bit of the story I disagreed with was the comment that Jesus must come from God in some way, simply because he's able to heal people. Now I'm not disputing Jesus' authority, but hasn't anyone round here heard of Achani?

Jereboam: Who's that?

Izhar: Achani the healer. I don't know what became of him, but he was quite well known a few years back. He used to perform all sorts of apparently miraculous healing – without so much as a word about God. It was as if Achani had the power to solve everyone's problems, but it was all done without any sort of reference to where this power might come from. It's like the sacred chants: once we try to eliminate God from what we do, we enter dangerous territory...or at least that's how I see it. The great thing about Jesus isn't just his extraordinary powers – which are impressive, I grant you – but it's that he realises where his power comes from, and, what's more, he's prepared to say so openly. Anyway, that's enough of my opinionated rambling. Do you think you'll use any of this for one of your articles?

Jereboam: Quite possibly, yes.

Izhar: I'll probably offend all sorts of people.

Jereboam: Never mind: it'll make them think.

THIS WEEK

The Fourth Sunday of Lent gives us the story of the man born blind. His disciples ask, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus heals the man who now sees more clearly than the

Pharisees the true identity of Jesus. "I do believe, Lord."

The first readings at the Eucharist this week can be read as powerful messages to us from our God about our Lenten journey. They also seem to be chosen with an eye to the persecution Jesus will experience.

Tuesday is the feast of St Patrick
Thursday is the Solemnity of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, foster father of the Lord .

The gospels this week are all from the Fourth Gospel. After two days of healing stories, the opposition against Jesus builds. In Cana, in Galilee, Jesus heals the son of a royal official. Back down in Jerusalem, he heals a man who was sick for 38 years, incurring the wrath of his enemies because he did it on the sabbath. Because of this, and that he called God his Father, they now plot a way to kill him. Jesus says his opponents do not want to come to him for life. Unafraid of them, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for a feast and openly tells people that he has come from God. They did not arrest him then, "for his hour had not yet come." Thinking they know where Jesus is from (in both senses: where he lived now and his origin in heaven), his enemies insist that prophets don't come from where Jesus is from.

Next Sunday The Fifth Sunday of Lent brings us closer toward the Passion and death of Jesus. In John's Gospel, we hear the story of the raising of Lazarus. Jesus is not there when his dear friend, Lazarus dies, but after meeting with Lazarus' grief-stricken sisters and himself weeping, he stands at the door of the tomb. "'Lazarus, come out!' Jesus commands. The man who had been dead came out. His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of burial cloth, and a cloth covered his face. Jesus then told the people, " 'Untie him and let him go.' "

A homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

+ The best known name for this Sunday of Lent is *Mothering Sunday*. The origins of the name go back to Mediæval times when the appointed entrance music and

the epistle – the New Testament reading - spoke of "Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4.26). So it developed from that point as a day when Christians gave thanks for the Church, the mother of all baptised Christians, and for Mary, the Mother of the Lord, the first Christian disciple and the spiritual mother of all of us. It's strange how these things happen, but by extension, today also came to be the day when we honour our own mothers, and the care they show to us which, again, has been seen as a kind of foretaste of the love and compassion of God. As well as that the Fourth Sunday of Lent was called Laetare Sunday - the Latin for 'rejoice.' [It's customary in some churches for the priest to wear rose coloured vestments today to mark this Sunday as being somewhat different from the other Sundays in Lent with their more penitential themes and purple colour.] Compared to the other Sundays in Lent, today's mood is a bit different.

Today's readings invite us to reflect & think deeply about the vital theme of light and darkness. And this is the issue which runs through all of our readings today and has such an importance for us half way through the Season of Lent, as we approach that point in the Church's year which is the most solemn time (in the sense of being both the most significant time) for all of us. Today we have this quite long Gospel (we've heard it in a slightly abbreviated form) about the man born blind who is cured by Jesus. The first message St John gives us in today's Gospel is that sickness is not a punishment for sin. Throughout history there have always been those who have equated illness with sinfulness, either our own or those of our parents or further back in our ancestry. Jesus makes it very clear that sinfulness and sickness are not connected in that kind of way at all. The Pharisees are so concerned to protect their idea of the goodness of God that nothing can happen without an immediate and obvious, sometimes cruelly simplistic, explanation. Their reasoning seems to run along the lines that sickness or handicap come about as a direct result of past sinful behaviour of some kind – even that of parents and grandparents - and they won't not be shifted from that belief. Such a world-view makes matters simple and

easy to understand. For the Pharisees and those like them there can be no injustice in the world. Everybody in this life exactly what he or she deserves. Even when people suffer and die it has to be because of something they have done. In some way it has to be their own fault. But Jesus will have none of this and rejects this view utterly. The Gospel - which announces the realities of the Kingdom of heaven - has nothing to do with worldly success and most certainly not success in our inheritance from the human gene pool.

The second message of today's Gospel continues a theme which runs through Jesus teaching throughout his earthly ministry: that the Sabbath is made for us and we are not made for the Sabbath. This means that there is nothing wrong in keeping a holy day, but that keeping a day holy doesn't mean refraining from acts of love and care for other people. Jesus is always clear that he did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them. But that fulfilment moves always in the direction of love, and mercy - that's the nature of the life of God the Holy Trinity.

A third element in today's Gospel concerns our own call to proclaim the goodness of the Lord and his presence in our lives. Christ is the light of the world, as the very beginning of St John's Gospel says, he is himself the light of God shining in the darkness, and which the darkness of a world filled with alienation and sin can't overcome or comprehend.

St John tells us that the parents of the man born blind simply don't want to get involved in religious controversy (and given the reaction of the Pharisees to their son they can perhaps be forgiven for that) and they seem to be looking for any possible way to avoid becoming embroiled in the increasingly dangerous dispute going on between the blind man himself and Jesus on the one side and the religious authorities, represented by the scribes and the Pharisees, on the other. You would think that they would be delighted that their son could now see, but instead they show a very human fear of what the authorities might do to them given the opportunity. That's very familiar in today's world - we're seeing it almost everywhere. They don't really *know* Jesus, their contact with him has been only second-hand at very best. They really

don't know what to believe - they most likely may have accepted to a large extent the prevailing cultural view of the Pharisees about the relationship between sickness, sin and guilt.

So, the opportunity - the opportunity of faith and discipleship - passes them by. At this point in St John's Gospel, despite the hopeful theme of light shining in the midst of darkness, we seem almost to feel that darkness and isolation closing in on Jesus, the darkness of an unredeemed human nature which opposes him and which will condemn him and lead him along the way of the cross to his death. So, despite its somewhat less penitential feel, today is really the turning point of Lent, as from this week we pivot decisively towards the contemplation of Christ's passion and crucifixion.

And as the spiritual journey of Lent continues, we ask that the Lord will continue to nurture us in faith and love and holiness, and lead us to experience through our reflection on his cross, and in some way our carrying it in our own lives, the resurrection and the new life only he can give us. And we pray that we may be given the grace to see and to proclaim (by what we are, and what we do - as much as by what we say - words can only go so far....) how we ourselves experience Christ in the detail of our own lives, and that we grow more and more aware of the reality of God which surrounds us, which sustains us and which leads us on to resurrection and eternal life. +

St Arvans Tea and Chat

Saturday April 11th
and usually every second Saturday of the month
Childrens activity table
For assistance or a lift please ring Diane on 628084

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

The Fourth Sunday of Lent *Mothering Sunday* **15th March 2026**

- 9 a.m. Family Service
at St James, Devauden
- 10 a.m. Sung Eucharist
at St Arvan's
- 11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg

NEXT SUNDAY

The Fifth Sunday of Lent **22nd March 2026**

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

Readings:
Ezekiel 37.1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 8.6-11
St John 11.1-45

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 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and at 9.30 a.m. on Friday

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

The Ministry Area Prayer Group

Thursdays at 7.45 – 9.00 p.m.
During the colder months we meet at The Cedars, Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric, NP16 6LE
From 9th April until 24th September 2026 we will be meeting in Churches around the Ministry Area.

Daily Prayer

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

The readings this week make it very clear that Jesus faced opposition that couldn't accept who he is. We see that Jesus comes to lay down his life that we might live. So, this week of Lent is an important time for us to ask ourselves if there are any parts of our hearts, any of our patterns, that are in some way in opposition to Jesus and his desire to give us life. This kind of honesty can transform our lives. It can allow the grace of God to bring reconciliation and healing we might not have imagined.

Even if it hasn't been easy to get really engaged with Lent so far, we can still make a beginning, even now. The key is openness and desire. If we can feel any attraction, any sign that the Lord is possibly drawing us, then the Lord can work with us - no matter what resistance or fear we might also be experiencing. All we have to do is act out of these desires and simply ask the Lord for the grace to help us be more honest and more open to what he is offering us. For example, we can ask for the grace to examine our consciences more thoroughly. We could try a different approach to facing any resistance we might have to the Lord's working in us. We might not commit the big sins, but we may not have examined what we fail to do. Who am I failing to love, to forgive, to be generous to? With whom am I withholding affection, care, reconciliation? Where can I live more honestly, with more integrity? How might I proactively change patterns of escape with patterns of care for others? It is a time of grace when we can experience moments of "recognition," or self-understanding. It isn't grace to "beat up on" ourselves. It is grace to feel grateful to the Lord for showing us obstacles to the life he is offering us. It is grace to feel our spirits lighten as we feel drawn to greater freedom and peace. It is incredible grace when we are drawn to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This week, let us give thanks to the Lord who deeply desires our greater freedom and joy. As we go to bed each night, let us thank the Lord for what we saw that day and renew our desires for the next day of grace.

*With thanks to Creighton University's
Online Ministries*