

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 March 2026

The Fifth Sunday of Lent
Passion Sunday

The Collect

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; 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 prophet Ezekiel

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these

bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.' So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.'

[37. 1 - 14]

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

Psalm 130

R/ With the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption

Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

R/ With the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption

If you, Lord, were to note what is done amiss, O Lord, who could stand? For there is forgiveness with you; therefore you shall be feared.

R/ With the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption

I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; in his word is my hope. My soul waits for the Lord, more than the night-watch for the morning, more than the night-watch for the morning.

R/ With the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption

O Israel, wait for the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy; With him there is plenteous redemption, and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

R/ With the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans [8; 6 - 11]

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law – indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in 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
If anyone serves me, says the Lord,
he must follow me;
Wherever I am, my servant
will be there also.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory**

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St John

Glory to you, O Lord.

A certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.' When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany

was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.' When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear

me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.' Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him

(11.1–45)

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

For Your Prayers

That we may have confidence in the new life that the passion and death of Christ has won for us

The peoples of Iran, Lebanon and of the Persian Gulf.

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: Alec Davies, Margaret Argile, Valerie Henderson, Roger Brooks, Elisabeth Davies, Audrey Lines, Keith Duffield, Dorothy Kneebone.

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

Salathiel

Jereboam: Sorry, what did you say your name is? Sala...

Salathiel: Salathiel. He was one of the descendants of King David.

Jereboam: Ah, I see. And what do you do, Salathiel?

Salathiel: I help people bury their dead. I know it doesn't sound a very appealing occupation.

Jereboam: Well, it's very necessary and needs to be done sensitively and skilfully, I'm sure. What does it entail?

Salathiel: First of all I have to wash the body and wrap it in cloths. The other really time-consuming job is to

prepare the burial site; that often means a fair amount of digging. Then normally I sort out the various spices that we leave with the body. As you probably know, there's also a particular ceremony involved when we transfer the body to its resting-place. Sometimes I lead that ceremony too, although it's often done by a family-member, or a friend or a rabbi.

Jereboam: And what's the hardest part of the job?

Salathiel: The things that involve the body are certainly quite unpleasant – the washing and the wrapping. It's a bit like dealing with a baby, really, but rather messier...and usually rather bigger, obviously. The worst is when they've already been dead for a while, and the body can really smell. That's why we use so many spices, of course, and it's why you have to close up the entrance of the tomb so carefully.

Jereboam: I suppose there's sometimes a physician around too.

Salathiel: Yes: a physician might have been there to look after the person in their last illness. To some extent he and I can help each other. The most crucial thing is obviously that we're absolutely sure that the person is really dead. Otherwise...well, it doesn't bear thinking about!

Jereboam: I suppose it must have been you who dealt with a man called Lazarus the other day.

Salathiel: Lazarus...yes, he was my first body this week.

Jereboam: And you'll have heard the news about Jesus, I imagine.

Salathiel: Jesus – he's the travelling rabbi, isn't he?

Jereboam: That's the one. Maybe you haven't heard: he went into the grave and brought Lazarus out.

Salathiel: Why do people have to do that? It's so disrespectful!

Jereboam: No, you don't understand. He came out with Lazarus alive.

Salathiel: What? That's impossible! I examined the body and did everything correctly. He was well and truly dead. I remember expressing my sympathies to the family and explaining to them how that sort of fever often leads to a quick death. But, honestly, he was as dead as can be. There's no doubt about it. Someone's made a big mistake! But it's

not going to do much for my reputation, is it?

Jereboam: Don't worry about that. The family is sure that this Jesus has supernatural powers and has raised Lazarus from the dead. There's no question of doubting your expertise.

Salathiel: And no question of someone pretending to be Lazarus?

Jereboam: Oh no – it's Lazarus all right. I've met him a few times over the years.

Salathiel: Well, that is astonishing. I can tell you categorically that he was dead.

Jereboam: Don't worry: I believe you. This Jesus seems to have extraordinary abilities.

Salathiel: Apparently so...

THIS WEEK

The Fifth Sunday of Lent brings us closer toward the Passion and death of Jesus. In St 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."

Wednesday is the Annunciation of the Lord.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week prepare us for the gospels. We begin with the long, but well worth reading, story of Susanna, who trusted in God. The bronze serpent on a pole reminds us of Jesus's saving cross. Three young men refuse to commit idolatry and show us how God protects "the servants who trusted in him." God entered a covenant with Abraham. In the midst of his persecution, Jeremiah praises God, "For he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!"

This week's gospels are again from the Fourth Gospel. Presented with a woman caught in adultery, Jesus replies, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Reminding us

of the bronze serpent and his death, Jesus says, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM." To the children of Abraham and to us Jesus declares, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." "Whoever keeps my word will never see death. ... Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM." They heard what they thought was blasphemy and tried to stone him. Jesus simply told the truth, because, "the Father is in me and I am in the Father." After the raising of Lazarus, the plans were set to destroy Jesus. The high priest says the prophetic words, "it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish."

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. We hear the gospel about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, St Paul's invitation to us to imitate Jesus who emptied himself, and the whole Passion, this year from St Matthew's Gospel.

A homily for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

+ There's a shift in the atmosphere of Lent today – the mood changes from an emphasis on our own preparation and spiritual renewal to a more focused approach to those events of Jesus' life which lead to his death and resurrection. This Sunday of Lent brings us closer to Holy Week not only in terms of time but in terms of the unfolding drama whose conclusion we see on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Having heard today's readings, the theme is clear already: that death will lead to resurrection. There are many times in our lives when we have had thoughts about our own mortality and that of those close to us - when our hearts and our minds look to the end of life and wonder if there really is anything beyond, even when our faith tells us about the life offered to us by God in Jesus Christ. In the first reading this morning, from the Prophet Ezekiel, almost 600 years before Jesus, the Lord is already speaking to the people of Israel about resurrection. Here the Prophet starts out by speaking about the new spirit that will come upon the exiles when they are able to return to the Holy Land, to their promised Land. But the dramatic, graphic, imagery he uses he

uses goes much further than this and it becomes the language of new life and resurrection: we are being told that nothing is beyond the power of God. Now, we know Christians are not the only ones who believe that there is life after death. But we do have a very clear teaching, however, that life after death is a gift of God and not something that we somehow get by merit by ourselves and it's not something which just naturally happens. And always we have to be very clear that what saves us – in other words what brings us into the presence of God, what brings about the new life of Resurrection for us, is our faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen, expressed, given value and meaning in our love for God and one another. This is one reality shown in two ways: faith in God, and love for God and one another, our neighbour. In the Gospel today we see clearly that Jesus chooses to bring Lazarus back from the dead. And I suppose we really should use the word "resuscitation" for this, rather than resurrection, because after this "coming back to life" Lazarus apparently leads an ordinary life and then dies again. What happens to Lazarus is similar to the other "resuscitation" events in the Gospels where those given up for dead are brought back to life by Jesus, such as the raising of the son of the widow of Nain and the daughter of Jairus. And we see from the Gospels that Jesus brings them back to life in response to the pain and distress of those close to them and to the faith they have in him. But there's more to it than that, of course there is. What Jesus is saying is that resurrection is what God does – that it's a pattern built into the nature of things if we look carefully and not just superficially. Later in John's Gospel – in the next chapter, Jesus takes an example from the natural world as he often does. Unless, he says, a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. The raising of Lazarus is clearly seen as a sign of something greater. If a person can come back to life after being truly dead—and especially someone like Lazarus after four days in the tomb—then we can begin to recognise that there is a power over life and death, and that death is not the final word about life. Lazarus is brought back to life; he isn't given new life – as far as we are told, but the same life as he had before his death,

with the same conditions and limitations, with death coming inevitably at the end of it. But on the deeper level on which Jesus lives and speaks, the possibility of another kind of life is being shown to us. Death would seem to be an end, final extinction. Many people today believe that. That is what is being challenged, and its usual interpretation put into an entirely new perspective, in the gospel today. In today's Gospel Jesus is speaking about himself, and what he would achieve and give to us by his death and resurrection. He was on his way to Jerusalem, where, in obedience to the will of the Father, and out of love for the Father, he would die and rise again, but in a way quite different from Lazarus. The seeming finality of death disappeared, and something greater and infinitely more powerful was born. Our Lord was promising another kind of life, for which death was only a preparation. Death is not an end, a finality, but the condition of passing into another kind of life, which is unbounded, has no limitations, eternal life with God. But we have to be clear about this, it's not something which is restricted in its meaning to life after death, not only concerned with what we call the next life. Resurrection begins now – it begins in this life. As with Lazarus, resurrection comes from contact with Christ, whose life suffuses all things. In the passage from the letter to the Romans which is our second reading today St Paul is clear that if we have the Spirit of Jesus dwelling in us, we too shall share the life of the resurrection. And here and elsewhere more explicitly Paul dismisses the idea that the resurrection of Christ is a one-off, an anomaly, but that he is what he calls the first fruits – a universal principle of the God-created and God-sustained universe. Today, on this Sunday, which marks the transition to the most solemn – and by that I mean the most significant - time of the Christian year, we are called to live now in the light and spirit of the new life God gives. Just as in the Old Testament period the Prophet Ezekiel, in the first reading today which gives us that incredible vision of the valley of dry bones which come to life, could sense the new spirit that would come upon God's people in their return from exile, so we believe that we have an experience even now of resurrection life. Our lives begin to change here and now -

in this life - when we follow Christ. The signs within us of living and believing in the resurrection are this love of God and love of our neighbour. We also believe in the forgiveness of sins - that Christ died to take them away and that he gives us the capacity to forgive those who have done wrong to us, that where the life of the Resurrection prevails, there is mercy, healing and peace. We pray that the remaining time of Lent this year may renew within each one of us the signs of resurrection: love and forgiveness and hope. Because this is what distinguishes the Christian perspective. We believe that there is a God who will bring about the resurrection of the dead and who has provided for us the model and the means for this in the death and resurrection of Christ. This is the basis for our conviction and hope. What we have to do is allow Christ himself to persuade us that what he has done, can transform our hearts and minds, and transform the world around us, too. +

CLOCKS GO FORWARD NEXT WEEKEND

British Summer Time begins in the early hours of Sunday 29th
Don't be caught out!

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

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

NEXT SUNDAY

PALM SUNDAY 29th March 2026

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

Readings:

Liturgy of the Palms
St Matthew 21.1-11
Liturgy of the Passion
Isaiah 50.4-9a
Psalm 31.9-16, [17, 18]
Philippians 2.5-11
Matthew 26.14 - 27.66 or 27.11-54

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 Saturday

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

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

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 is the last full week of Lent as Thursday of Holy Week sees the beginning of the Easter Triduum. We can feel the conflict and struggle developing in the readings. As we hear the drama that surrounded Jesus' last days on earth and reflect upon its meaning, we experience how the struggle that is going in our own hearts is more intense the closer we get to the end of Lent. The Spirit of the Lord is really trying to help us be more open and more free, to receive the graces our Lord wants to offer us. There is another spirit that is fighting just as hard to distract us, discourage us, and prevent us from being open and attentive to God's gifts. The closer we get to the mystery of our Lord's passion, death and resurrection for us, the more we can experience struggle. If I experience myself somewhat "at war" with myself, then these are very important days to keep deliberately asking our Lord to help me. It is also a great time to begin to prepare to renew the baptismal

promises at Easter. We can reject the unloving choices we've made, all that is unjust, dishonest, disrespectful and violent. We want to refuse to be mastered by an empty promises. Declaring our desire for freedom is a great preparation to receive this great gift. If we are celebrating the Scrutinies with the RCIA candidates and catechumens, this is a wonderful time to pray for them as well, for their protection from the evil one in the last days of their journey.

If we have developed the habit of naming a desire the first thing each morning, and carrying on a conversation with our Lord in the brief background moments of the day, we are already comfortable with letting the Word or the Season interact with the concrete events of the week. This way of finding intimacy with our Lord, through our daily interaction - even in a very busy life - is so appropriate for the Fifth Week of Lent. We can discover areas that are still resistant to God's grace. We can ask for help to practice new ways of being free, or new ways of loving. We can find ways to make financial sacrifices to give to the poor this week.

Each night this week, we can give thanks. The closer we get to celebrating Holy Week and the events that brought us our salvation, each of us can express our gratitude, realizing this was all for me.

*With thanks to Creighton University's
Online Ministries*