

# 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  
Fr Michael Gollop,  
The Vicarage, St Arvans  
01291 622064;  
Mobile 07867803479  
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

## 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026 THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

### The Collect

Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ 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 Acts of the Apostles

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their

possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

[2; 42 - 47]

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

### Psalm 16

**R/ O Lord, you are my portion  
and my cup.**

Protect me, O God,  
for I take refuge in you;  
I have said to the Lord,  
You are my Lord,  
my good above all other.'  
All my delight is upon the godly  
that are in the land,  
upon those who are noble  
among the people.

**R/ O Lord, you are my portion  
and my cup.**

But those who run after other gods  
shall have their troubles multiplied.  
Their libations of blood I will not offer,  
nor take the names of their gods  
upon my lips.

**R/ O Lord, you are my portion  
and my cup.**

O Lord, you are my portion and my cup;  
it is you who uphold my lot.  
My boundaries enclose a pleasant land;  
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.

**R/ O Lord, you are my portion  
and my cup.**

I will bless the Lord  
who gives me counsel;  
my heart teaches me, night after night.  
I have set the Lord always before me;  
because he is at my right hand I  
shall not fall.

**R/ O Lord, you are my portion  
and my cup.**

My heart, therefore, is glad  
and my spirit rejoices;  
my body also shall rest in hope.  
For you will not abandon me to the grave,  
nor let your holy one see the Pit.  
You will show me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy,  
and in your right hand are pleasures  
for evermore.

**R/ O Lord, you are my portion  
and my cup.**

**A reading from the first letter  
of St Peter** [1; 3 - 9]

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith – being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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

### **Gradual Hymn**

Alleluia, alleluia! Jesus said: ' You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'  
**Alleluia!**

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

**Listen to the Gospel of Christ  
according to St John**

**R/ Glory to you, O Lord.**

**I**t was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.' A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.' Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

[20, 19 - 31]

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

## For Your Prayers

That we may have confidence in God's love and mercy and show it in our lives. The peoples of Middle East and 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. 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; Peter Jones; Graham Jeremy; our own departed loved ones, and those whose anniversaries of death fall this week: Roger Colthart

## 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*

### Aminadab

*Jereboam:* Can you bring me up to date, Aminadab?

*Aminadab:* I'll try. Things are changing all the time, though.

*Jereboam:* From what I hear, it seems that some of Jesus' followers are annoyed with themselves at the moment...quite apart from their joy at Jesus' return. Peter's terribly upset about his denials, for example. And obviously Judas regretted his actions bitterly.

*Aminadab:* It's such a shame: I used to like Judas, and he was a good man in many ways. Things just got out of hand.

*Jereboam:* I'll say they did. What about the others though?

*Aminadab:* Well, Thomas is furious with himself for doubting that Jesus had risen from the dead. I must say that I sympathise with him: it was such an extraordinary thing to happen, after all. I think he's embarrassed that he didn't trust the people who had seen Jesus. Perhaps he thought they were making it up, or, more likely, he assumed that they were imagining things – either way he regrets it now.

*Jereboam:* I can see why, but surely his reaction was sensible enough.

You can't go around believing everything just because other people do. I rather admire Thomas' independence of thought, to be honest.

*Aminadab:* I quite agree. Personally I feel quite encouraged by his experience. Let's face it: many of us haven't seen Jesus yet – since his resurrection, I mean – and it's good to think that someone like Thomas has scrutinised things and accepted them.

*Jereboam:* So you would say that Thomas shouldn't feel bad about his hesitation.

*Aminadab:* Absolutely not: he's saved the rest of us from an awful lot of doubts.

## THIS WEEK

On the Second Sunday of Easter we are given a glimpse into the life of the early community of the Church, gathered together as "many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles." John's Gospel gives us two post-resurrection stories that featuring the Apostle Thomas. He is reluctant to accept the word of the others that they had seen the risen Lord. Jesus says to him: "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." The Acts of the Apostles all this week offers us the challenges the apostles faced from the earliest communities and from the Jewish authorities.

For most of the remaining five weeks of the Easter season, our readings will be from the Acts of the Apostles and from John's Gospel, with stories of Jesus' ministry not heard during the Ordinary Time of the liturgical year.

The weekday gospel readings begin with the frightened Pharisee, Nicodemus, coming at night to speak to Jesus, asking how anyone can be "born again." Jesus says we must be born of water and Spirit. The gospel offers a poetic look at light and darkness, good and evil: "the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light... But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God."

John writes, "For the one whom God sent speaks the words of God." After Jesus' disciples tell him to send 5,000 hungry people away, he shows them how to feed them all. He walks across the sea to meet

his apostles in their boat, saying, "It is I. Do not be afraid."

**Next Sunday :** St John's Gospel brings us the story about the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are prepared to encounter a familiar pattern with his followers: they don't recognize Jesus, but he opens their eyes with the breaking of the bread.

## A Homily for the Second Sunday of Easter

+ Over the years I've changed my mind about St Thomas. That phrase that has passed into the language – 'doubting Thomas' – to mean someone who doubts something unnecessarily – is to a large extent unfair. I'll believe that when I see it!" or 'don't take anything just on trust,' believe only the evidence of your own experience, are pretty good maxims *up to a point*, particularly in response to the snake-oil sellers of today's world who appeal more to our emotions and prejudices rather than to anything verifiable, or the evidence presented by people who actually know what they're talking about. And, as we know, religion isn't exactly free from that either. And we could go a lot further and say that we have to be careful these days even about accepting what we think we can see. With the advent of AI and its ability to make deep fakes and falsehood seem utterly real, video and photographic evidence can be doctored, not only that but even our natural eyesight can sometimes be confused and disorientated by all kinds of natural phenomena and our own psychological state at the time – how else do you account for U.F.O. sightings, not to mention the myth of the Loch Ness Monster and such like? We sometimes see all kinds of things that are just not there as well as those which might be.. The Church herself, of course, despite the common perception, has always believed in giving due weight to the evidence, and has never simply recommended what people call "blind" faith, and theologians will undoubtedly tell you that faith combined with the evidence of our senses and the reasoning of our intellects is what enables us to see more clearly. Not that our practice has always lived up to the ideal – but then anything involving

human beings – and fallen human nature – can often turn out that way

So, having said that, what are we to make of today's Gospel?

St John tells us in the Gospel that in the evening of the day of the resurrection – the first Easter Sunday, the day the apostles and disciples had heard that the Lord had risen and had seen the empty tomb, Jesus himself appeared to them. Thomas, the Twin, hadn't been with them and when he heard what had happened he was deeply sceptical and refused to believe what the others were telling him. He will only believe, he tells them in return, if he can reach out and touch the wounds in Jesus' hands and side, the wounds presumably he himself had seen inflicted. He knew Jesus was dead and not having been with the others, he wasn't going to be so easily convinced that he was now alive. People don't come back from the dead.

So a week later, John says, Jesus appeared to his followers again and this time Thomas was with them and was changed by this encounter from a total sceptic into one of the foremost witnesses of both Jesus' resurrection and his divinity. This was an earth-shattering, life-changing meeting. In popular understanding, then, Thomas is defined as the one who doubts without good cause. But this is hardly fair or accurate. Thomas was an honest man; maybe he had a surer sense of human psychology than to take everything a group of people in deep shock was saying to him purely at face value. He wasn't going to pretend to accept something he wasn't sure about. Those whose minds are naturally somewhat sceptical and cautious can draw a great deal of comfort from his example. He just wasn't so easily convinced by what others were saying to him, particularly when it went against all his experience of life.

And despite the element of reproach in Jesus' words to him when he did appear to Thomas, '*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe,*' it's also clear that Jesus respects Thomas' basic intellectual honesty, because he does submit to Thomas' demand for evidence, and allows him to touch the wounds of his crucifixion: '*Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.*'

And it's also clear that the Lord realises that those sceptical words of Thomas have a hidden yet profound significance in that he has grasped the truth that Jesus can now be recognised more by his wounds, the tangible proof of his unconditional love for us, than by his appearance. And in turn Thomas's reaction to the clearly crucified yet risen Christ is to come out with the most ringing declaration of faith in the entire New Testament: "My Lord and my God!" *The Risen Lord himself* has taken away his doubt and uncertainty.

The words of implicit rebuke are still there: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe," yet they are meant as much for us (who cannot physically reach out and touch the Risen Lord) as for Thomas himself. This encounter, this apostolic experience of the Resurrection, is important for us in several respects. Firstly, it reassures us that the Lord understands our insecurities and our doubts and our demands for evidence. But let's be clear: we can't have that direct, physical, encounter with Christ that Thomas has. In spiritual matters it's usually a good idea after taking into account all the evidence available, if we trust our experience. Faith is not the opposite of doubt: honest doubt - just not being sure - can lead us from a state of mind which is characterised by a sense of hesitation and uncertainty to a mature and hard won faith even in the midst of the difficulties and doubts and uncertainties which are thrown up in the process of living (or trying to live) as a disciple of Christ.

So, yes, O.K - 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe,' but we're not meant to cling on to those words as an excuse or an evasion of reality. We need to be able to follow Thomas in seeking to see the power of the resurrection in our own lives, and in the lives of other people - not to forsake honesty, but to allow the risen Lord himself to reach out to us and draw us into the life of his resurrection. Can we recognise the Risen Christ and the new life he offers even as we are aware of our own woundedness and vulnerability, even through our natural doubts and hesitations? That's the real question this morning's gospel is putting to us. +

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

### TODAY

**The Second Sunday of Easter**  
Octave Sunday of Easter or Low Sunday  
**12<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist  
at St Arvan's

### NEXT SUNDAY

**The Third Sunday of Easter**  
**19<sup>th</sup> April 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

#### Readings:

Acts 2.14a, 36-41

Psalms 116.1-4, 12-19 or 116.1-8

1 Peter 1.17-23

St Luke 24.13-35

The Eucharist will be celebrated this week at St Arvan's at 10.00 on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, Friday at 09.30. Wednesday's celebration will be at St Mary's Priory, Chepstow at 10.00

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

## St Arvans Tea and Chat 2.30 – 4.00pm

**Saturday April 11<sup>th</sup>**  
*and usually every second  
Saturday of the month*

Children's activity table

For assistance or a lift  
please ring Diane on 628084

## The Ministry Area Prayer Group

Thursdays at 7.45 – 9.00 p.m.  
From 9<sup>th</sup> April until 24<sup>th</sup>

September 2026 we will be meeting in Churches around the Ministry Area:  
16<sup>th</sup> April St Christopher  
23<sup>rd</sup> April Mounton  
30<sup>th</sup> April St Arvans

Please join us, everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary!

Please contact David  
on 07887 853479

([david-carne@outlook.com](mailto:david-carne@outlook.com))  
for any prayers that you would like us to include or for any questions that you have.

## Daily Prayer

As Eastertide continues, this is a wonderful week to pray in joy at God's merciful love for us, and for the unending forgiveness we are offered. We know we have done nothing to deserve that forgiveness and that we cannot earn it, and yet it is ours, if only we can accept it. Over and over this week, we are invited to place our trust in God. The ever-human disciples didn't always put aside their fears, and neither do we. We can imagine the terrified followers of Jesus hiding behind locked doors until he appears in their midst, inviting them not to be afraid. This might be a good week to spend time with Jesus looking at the fears in our own lives which keep us locked up away from others. We can ask Jesus for the courage to trust in him. What would it cost us to let go of the fears that smother our lives? What would it mean for our lives and for the relationships in our lives if we were willing to let go of "the way we have always done things" and to beg Jesus for help? Our lives can change. We have a standing offer from our Lord to fall into his forgiving embrace. Dear Lord, it feels impossible to believe that my life can change, that I can move

out of this rut I am in. I know I don't always live my life feeling your love and being my best self. Help me to trust in you, to drop my defenses and to feel how deeply I am loved and forgiven by you. Give me the courage to feel it in my heart when you say, "Don't be afraid" and "Peace be with you." I so long for that peace in my life but it feels so far away sometimes. Help me to believe in you, to drive away the doubts and unbelief that harden my heart. I know my life can change, if only I can say with all my heart, "I trust in you, Lord. I believe in your mercy and I know that with your help, my life can be healed."

*With thanks to Creighton University's  
Online Ministries*