

# PARISH NEWSLETTER

St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden & Kilgwrrwg

**St Arvans ONLINE !**

## Sunday Eucharist 10am

*On Facebook : St Arvan's Parish group - or you can click on this link*

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/vicaragecello1/videos/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/vicaragecello1/videos/?ref=page_internal)

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**Welcome to the Newsletter for our group of parishes during the period when, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our churches are closed.**

**Sunday readings are included so that we may join spiritually in the Church's offering of the Eucharist, which will now take place in private.**

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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19<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## The Second Sunday of Easter

*The Octave Day of Easter  
or Low Sunday*

### **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 [2; 42 - 47]**

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.

*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**

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** [20, 19 - 31]

**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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**R/ Praise to you, O Christ**

## Thought for the Week

" God never promises to remove us from our struggles. He does promise, however, to change the way we look at them."

- Max Lucado -

## For Your Prayers

Those throughout the world suffering from the Coronavirus  
Doctors, nurses and all medical staff, medical scientists and researchers.

All who are isolated and alone, those anxious for their health and well being and those of their loved ones.

For those in government throughout the world, that they may make informed, wise and compassionate decisions for the good of all

The life of our own communities, and those who live and work in them

### **For the Church:**

For the bishops of the Church:

John, Archbishop of Wales;

Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth, Philip, Episcopal Visitor of the Society of the Holy Cross in Wales, Jonathan, Bishop of Ebbsfleet; Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury. & 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 Francis, for Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, & for the leaders of the Reformed traditions

### **For the Sick & those in need:**

Roy Staples, Ralph Hamilton, Patricia Hamilton; Sylvia; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Amanda Morgan; Naomi; Kim; Elisabeth; Kerrie; Trevor; Helen; Cliff Edwards; Kate Lewis;

David; John Gillard

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed: Mavis Farley; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: John Watson; Craig Octon; Matthew Hoskins ; Keith Jones, priest

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## This Week

On the Second Sunday of Easter, also called *Low Sunday*, or sometimes these days, *Divine Mercy Sunday*, the Easter Octave, the most solemn period of our Easter celebrations, comes to an end.

Today, we are given a picture in the Acts of the Apostles of how the early community gathered around as "Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles."

St John's Gospel gives us two post-resurrection stories which feature St Thomas, who is inclined to be sceptical about the stories he was hearing about Jesus' resurrection: "*Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.*"

On Saturday we keep the Feast of Saints Philip and James, the apostles.

The first readings this week from the Acts of the Apostles this week show us the challenges the apostles faced from within the earliest communities and also 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 St John's Gospel, with stories of Jesus' ministry not heard during the period of ordinary time in the liturgical year.

The weekday Gospels 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 five thousand hungry people away, he shows them how to feed them all. Jesus walks across the sea to meet his apostles in their boat, saying, "It is I. Do not be afraid."

#### **Next Sunday's readings:**

St John's Gospel presents us with one of the most familiar resurrection stories: that of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are prepared to encounter a recurring pattern in the Risen Lord's appearances to his followers: they don't immediately recognise Jesus, but he opens their eyes with the breaking of the bread.

## **A Meditation for the Second Sunday of Easter 2020**

+ Today is the end of the Easter Octave, if not the Easter Season, which runs for another six weeks. But, just like Easter Sunday itself, the theme of today's Gospel is that of uncertainty, doubt and faith. And, as you might expect, we are not given a simplistic or glib answer to a complex human struggle. To repeat last Sunday's question, what are we to make of the Resurrection?

St John tells us that in the evening of the day of the Resurrection - the same day the apostles and disciples had heard that the Lord had risen and had seen the empty tomb, the first Easter Day in other words, Jesus himself appeared to them and conferred upon them the authority to forgive sins in his name. 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.

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. As with all the Apostles with the exception of John himself, who tradition says died a natural death, this encounter with the Risen Christ led to Thomas travelling through Syria and Persia preaching the Resurrection until he died a martyr's death in South India, the Church which bears his name still survives. This was an earth-shattering, life-changing meeting.

In popular understanding, Thomas is seen as the one who doubts - the expression "doubting Thomas" has passed into the language. But this is hardly fair or accurate because it recognises only one intermediate stage in his journey of finding true faith. How would we ourselves, now - at this stage on our spiritual pilgrimage - be described?

So Thomas was an honest man; he wasn't going to pretend to accept something he wasn't sure about. Those of us whose minds are naturally somewhat sceptical and cautious can draw a great deal of comfort from his example. He just wasn't that easily convinced.

And despite the element of reproach in Jesus' words to him when he did appear, '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 in some way respects Thomas' basic intellectual honesty, because he actually submits 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 doubting 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 love for us, than by anything else.

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 Jesus has taken away from him all doubt and all uncertainty.

The words of implicit rebuke are still there, of course: "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 conclusive evidence, but secondly it also shows us that doubt itself can lead us, with God's grace to an outcome which is brighter than an indefinite wallowing in uncertainty; and thirdly, that the words addressed to St Thomas by the Risen Christ remind us forcibly of the true meaning of a mature and hard won faith, and encourage us to persevere in trying to acquire it through all the difficulties and doubts and uncertainties which are thrown up in the process of living (or trying to live) the Christian life, So, yes, 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe,' but not as a cop-out, not as an evasion of human reality in the lives we actually live in a hostile and unbelieving culture. We need to follow Thomas in trying to see the power of the resurrection in our own lives, 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. He offers us life without limit or end, do we have the courage to accept his invitation. Do we recognise him and the new life he offers us even in the midst in our own woundedness and vulnerability, even through our doubts and hesitations and our slowness to believe? Because it is by his wounds - that in worship, prayer and devotion we reach out and touch - that our own wounds are healed. +

## **Spiritual Communion**

It has always been the Church's understanding that when circumstances prevent us from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion, which is a true source of grace. Spiritual Communion is an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, and in prayer lovingly unite ourselves to him at a time or in circumstances – such as the ones we find ourselves in now - when we cannot attend a celebration of the Eucharist and receive Him in sacramental Communion.

### **A Prayer of Spiritual Communion**

Lord Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you.

Never permit me to be separated from you.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.