

PARISH NEWSLETTER

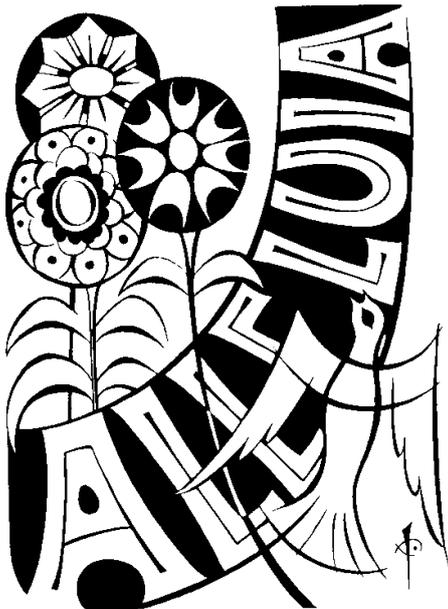
St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden & Kilgwrrwg

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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10th May 2020
The Fifth Sunday
of Easter



The Collect

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen 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 [7; 55 - 60]

Standing before the high priest and the council, Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

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

Psalm 31 1 - 5; 15 - 16

R/ Let your face shine on your servants

In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.
Incline your ear to me;
make haste to deliver me.

R/ Let your face shine on your servants

Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,
for you are my crag and my stronghold;
for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me.

R/ Let your face shine on your servants

Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me,
for you are my tower of strength.
Into your hands I commend my spirit,
for you have redeemed me,
O Lord, O God of truth.

R/ Let your face shine on your servants

My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies,
and from those who persecute me.
Make your face to shine upon your servant,
and in your loving-kindness save me.

R/ Let your face shine on your servants

A reading from the first letter of St Peter [2; 2 - 10]

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation – if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight. Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.' To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,' and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock

that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

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

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said:

'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.'

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.

Jesus said to his disciples:

Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.'

Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I

am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'

[14, 1 - 14]

This is the Gospel of the Lord

R/ Praise to you, O Christ.

Thought for the Week

"Therefore the theme of the Gospel, Life-through-Death, does not come as wholly strange to the world. Rather it is like a pattern already woven into nature and into the life of man"

*Michael Ramsey (1904-88)
Archbishop of Canterbury 1961-74
from 'The Resurrection of Christ.'*

For Your Prayers

That we follow Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life

That our spiritual communions this Eastertide will give us the grace to serve Christ more fully.

Those throughout the world suffering from the Coronavirus

Doctors, nurses and all medical staff, all carers, 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 continuing life of our own communities, and those who live and work in them

We give thanks on this weekend which has seen the 75th anniversary of V.E. Day for freedom from tyranny and oppression, and for the

international cooperation and peace which arose out of the victory..

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; Dave; John Gillard

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Phillip Neal; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Chris Hogben; Douglas Cummings

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)

This Week

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us not to let our hearts be troubled, because he goes only to prepare a place for us and that "No one comes to the Father except through me."

Thursday is the Feast of St Matthias, the Apostle

In the weekday readings from the Acts of the Apostles, we see Paul and Barnabas preaching to the Gentiles. They encounter some who want to make them gods; others who want to stone them. A major discussion is held about whether a Gentile had to become a Jew before becoming a Christian. Peter declared that God granted Gentiles "the Holy Spirit just as he did us" and urged them not to burden Gentiles with the difficult Jewish laws. The group turned to the Holy Spirit and prayed for guidance and decided that Gentiles did not have to adhere to Jewish laws. Paul followed the Spirit to expand his travels, ending with his decision to go to Macedonia.

St John's Gospel continues the "Last Discourse" of Jesus "in chapters 14 & 15 of the Fourth Gospel. These weekday gospels offer a layered and poetic look at the kind of inseparable love we share with God. "Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." He promises the Holy Spirit who "will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you." He offers us peace and encourages us "not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." "Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me." "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." He tells his followers, "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain." On Saturday, Jesus reminds us that if the world did not like his announcing and living of this good news, then it will not like our announcing and living it either.

Next Sunday's readings: In the Gospel for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, we hear the consoling words from Jesus in St John's Gospel: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" as he promised to send the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth to us.

A Meditation for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

+ I Language can be very confusing. Even when we speak what we think is the same language, we very often get things seriously wrong. There's a rather funny list of expressions British speakers of English use and how they are misunderstood by most Americans. We won't go into them all, but one of the best is "How are you?" which Americans apparently understand as 'please give me an exhaustive rundown of your recent medical history.' There are much worse examples ... But we know how frustrating it is when we are talking to someone who speaks to us in hints and riddles. We long to say to them, "look, just say what you mean, stop expecting me to read between the lines all the time! Say clearly what you mean!" Perhaps sometimes the apostles felt the same way about the words of Jesus. Very often he seems to be hinting at things which lay just outside their understanding and their experience. Today's Gospel is an example of this; one can almost feel the impatience of the apostle Thomas when he says to Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Philip's failure to grasp what he is saying also comes through loud and clear when he says, "Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied." When Jesus was with them, his disciples had to learn to take hints about who he was, and what was the true nature of his mission among them. From the words the Gospels record, he often spoke to his followers in parables, which they more often than not ended up misunderstanding. And here in today's Gospel, preparing his disciples for his death and resurrection and his going from them to the Father, he continues this habit of allusions and hints without any clear explanation. Of course, he doesn't do this to irritate them, or to mislead them or to weave around himself a web of mystery. Like the parables themselves, these words are

meant to draw from them a response of faith and belief. But he wants it to be a clear response which comes from deep within them. It's another way of saying, as he does to St Peter elsewhere: "who do you think I am?"

And of course, these are all questions which are only answered after the Resurrection. As we saw a few weeks ago, Thomas' response of faith - his realisation of the meaning of those words "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" comes only after he has seen the wounds in the hands and side of the Risen Christ. Here, and remember that the previous chapter of St John's Gospel was full of predictions of betrayal and denial, and ends with Judas going out into the dark, here Jesus tries to allay their fears with an assurance that God can be trusted and will always be faithful, and he begins with the words, "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me." and then continues to demand that response with the words we've already referred to: "I am the way, and the truth and the life"

These are positive and reassuring statements, but still the apostles are not let off the hook of a personal response of faith. And it is precisely the same thing that we Christians must appreciate if we are to have an authentic experience of the Risen Lord. Who do we say that he is? What is our response of faith to the person of Christ and the claims he makes? We meet the Risen Christ through faith and not sight; all our intelligence and understanding and knowledge can lead us and take us up to that point, but after that we live by grace and by faith. We believe in order to understand. Just as with his first followers, we live out a relationship of faith in the absolutely unknowable and infinitely mysterious God, whom Jesus refers to as "Father." We are invited to that life-long relationship by believing in Jesus as the "way" to the "Father." Jesus is the "truth" about God. Jesus is the beginning of true "life" which is offered through that same relationship.

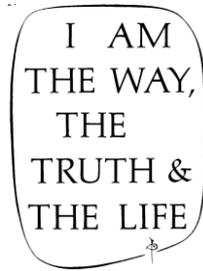
After that, like the very first disciples of Jesus, we have to learn to take hints in our lives as we receive them on a daily basis through the Holy Spirit. God sends us hints through various people, through various situations, through various problems, through various struggles.

We can always expect a hint, some we will understand and act upon them, others we might fail to understand. But the life of faith is just like that. It is always up to us, though, to take the hint before it's too late. So often, we are like Philip; our own prayer is, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied" Show us that God is with us in the church today. Show us that God is alive and actively involved in the events of our world. Give us irrefutable proof to take away our doubts and fears and insecurities. And the answer from Christ is the same: "How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

The Incarnation (God taking human flesh and blood, becoming one of us) ties us in to a belief in a God who is involved. As Christians we simply don't have the option of belief in a God who is out there somewhere beyond us, uninvolved in the life of his creation. God and the history of humanity have become inextricably intertwined by the sharing of our flesh by the second person of the Trinity. We are also committed to the frightening proposition that we, as the Church, form the Body of Christ on earth - that the Risen Christ acts through us! So we have to believe that God is deeply involved in the events and crises of the Church and of the world. The story of the kingdom of God, which Jesus came to inaugurate, cannot be told apart from the story of the Church in the world.

When we see things happening in the world in a way we believe they shouldn't, it isn't the time to blame God for abandoning us. No, the Risen Lord is always with us. He never abandons us. It is rather a time for serious soul searching, a time for us as individuals and as part of the Church to ask ourselves: Where did we go wrong, where did we miss him? There's an interesting line in a poem of David Jones which says - talking to Christ: "It is easy to miss you in the turn of a civilisation." It's not an particularly optimistic poem about the possibilities of faith in a world of concrete, glass and steel, in a culture which largely turns its back on things which are beautiful for their own sake, the things in human life which don't have a monetary value or an obvious utilitarian purpose. Yet, of course, it has to be said that there is a sense that every time we consider the world to be turning its back on the things of God, it could be as a result of our own failure to love

enough, to believe enough and to take enough risks for the sake of Christ and the Gospel - a failure in ourselves to communicate the divine mercy which is without limit, the divine love and compassion which is poured out for us in this Eucharist, in the holy sacrifice of the altar. +



Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a way as gives us breath;
Such a truth as ends all strife,
Such a life as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
Such a light as shows a feast,
Such a feast as mends in length,
Such a strength as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
Such a joy as none can move,
Such a love as none can part,
Such a heart as joys in love.

George Herbert (1592 – 1633)
Anglican priest & poet
from 'The Call'