

# PARISH NEWSLETTER

St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden & Kilgwrrwg

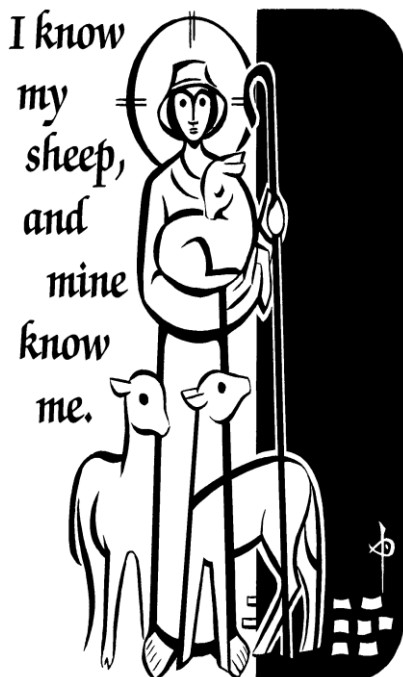
Welcome to the Newsletter for our group of parishes during the period when, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our churches are closed.

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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3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020

The Fourth Sunday  
of Easter



## The Collect

Almighty God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ is the  
resurrection and the life: raise us, who  
trust in him, from the death of sin to  
the life of righteousness, that we may  
seek those things which are above,  
where he 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]

Many were baptized and were added  
to the community. 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**

## Psalms 23

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not be in want.**

The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not be in want.  
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 revives my soul and guides me  
along right pathways for his name's  
sake.

Though I walk through the valley of  
the shadow of death, I shall 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 is running over.  
Surely your goodness and 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 first letter of St Peter [2; 19 - 25 ]

It is a credit to you if, being aware of  
God, you endure pain while suffering  
unjustly. If you endure when you are  
beaten for doing wrong, what credit is  
that? But if you endure when you do  
right and suffer for it, you have God's  
approval. For to this you have been  
called, because Christ also suffered  
for you, leaving you an example, so  
that you should follow in his steps.  
'He committed no sin, and no deceit  
was found in his mouth.'

When he was abused, he did not  
return abuse; when he suffered, he did  
not threaten; but he entrusted himself  
to the one who judges justly.  
He himself bore our sins in his body  
on the cross, so that, free from sins,  
we might live for righteousness;  
by his wounds you have been healed.  
For you were going astray like sheep,  
but now you have returned to the  
shepherd and guardian of your souls.

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

Alleluia, alleluia!  
I am the good shepherd,  
says the Lord;  
I know my own  
and my own know 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 the Pharisees:*

‘**V**ery truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.’ [10, 1 - 10]

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

## Thought for the Week

"Christ is the Lord of a history that moves. He not only holds the beginning and the end in his hands, but he is in history with us, walking ahead of us"

*Thomas Merton (1915 – 68)  
from 'He is Risen'*

## For Your Prayers

That we may always follow Christ the Good Shepherd to the green pastures of God's kingdom.

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 Friday's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of V.E. Day for freedom from tyranny and oppression.

### 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: Lynn Harrell; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Jonathan; Isabelle Ingledew; Rose Jones; Harvey Banks; Patrick Semple, priest.

## 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

On the Fourth Sunday of Easter we reflect on the Paschal Mystery more deeply. In John's Gospel, Jesus tells us, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate.

Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly'

Wednesday is the Feast of Saint Matthias, Apostle.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week continue the story of the growth of the early Christian community, through the Acts of the Apostles.

The gospels this week are taken from St John's Gospel, chapters 10, 12, 13 and 14 - all of which emphasise who Jesus is - from the Father and one with the Father. He has come to bring us light and life. He promises us that he is the gate, the way to life. And, he assures us that if we make our home in him, he will be in us, and we will thereby be one with Jesus and the Father. He says, "I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved." "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me."

“From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM.” “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” “If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.”

**Next Sunday’s readings:** In the gospel, we hear Jesus console us, asking us to not 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.”



## A Meditation for the Fourth Sunday of Easter

+ It seems that in Biblical times, society didn't quite know how to regard shepherds.

On the one hand, it was a fairly commonly used piece of imagery in the Old Testament to liken the Kings to shepherds. Of course, King David, the youngest son of Jesse, who was taken from looking after the flock to be anointed king over Israel, was the prototype. Even earlier we have the image of Moses looking after the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, in the wilderness when God reveals himself in the vision of the burning bush.

So, there is a definite link between those God gives responsibility for looking after his people and the image of the Shepherd. And it's one which derives from God himself: the psalms are full of incidences of God being called the shepherd of his flock, the people of Israel.

Later on the prophets used the image to telling effect as in the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Christ, the Messiah:

“He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.” (Isaiah 40:11)

They could also use the description negatively when they spoke of some leaders as being faithless shepherds who live off the fat of the land and desert the flock.

But on the whole, the view of the shepherd at least when it was used

metaphorically was a positive one - their care being seen as a kind of mirror of the love of God for his people.

However, socially it was a different matter, and certainly by the first century - New Testament times - shepherds had joined sailors, camel drivers, butchers and others as members of a despised and almost outcast occupational group.

Most societies have regarded shepherds in this way, people who live apart from everyone else, up in the hills or on the plains, living a nomadic existence apart from the mainstream of human activity - something perhaps we can identify with more fully this year than previously.

This seems to be why St Luke emphasises the fact that shepherds were the first to visit the infant Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem: not only is this child God - the Shepherd of Israel - but by his Incarnation he is reaching out to the outcasts and those on the margins of society, those most in need of compassion and redemption.

Even if we live in the country, life is fairly technological and pretty urbanised, so unless we actually keep sheep, one sheep looks much any other, especially when we see from a distance a flock of them being coaxed around by a sheepdog with possibly the shepherds, as we see these days, following on quad bikes or Land Rovers. But for us as onlookers, any individuality the sheep may have is merged into the collective identity of the flock.

In contrast, the first century Jewish shepherd of Palestine and Judea had a much closer relationship with his animals. He lived with the flock, he wouldn't have had dogs, except as guard dogs to protect the sheep from predators; there were obviously no quad bikes or any kind of technology. He also didn't drive them, but led them, and went ahead of them in search of what sparse pasture would be available in an largely arid landscape, and he called them to follow him. This is the point of Our Lord's comment that a sheep won't follow a stranger -- that is, someone who does not know its identity or share its life. So the shepherd's care for his small flock and for every sheep within it is personal and particular. We see it mirrored in the love of Jesus for his disciples. And what he is saying is that God's care towards human beings is

equally personal and particular: we - each of us - have his whole attention and love. And this image of the shepherd - the guardian and protector of his small flock - was so much part of the culture of the time that it's perhaps surprising that Jesus' audience doesn't understand what he is saying to them.

So he goes on to use another metaphor: this time there can be no mistaking his meaning and he doesn't mince his words: only he is the gate of the sheepfold -- a clear claim to be God - the Good Shepherd himself. He also verbally attacks those who make claim to be the spiritual leaders of their people - the scribes and Pharisees and the priestly establishment for the most part - but who are acting more like thieves and robbers - a deliberate echo of the language used by the prophets against those who pretended to be shepherds but were really predators in disguise, or who employed false teaching, who misrepresented the true tradition, or who deserted their people in the face of spiritual or physical danger. It was a theme taken up to great effect by St Augustine in the early days of the Church in a long series of homilies 'On the Shepherds.'

This morning the first letter of St Peter ties our themes together. The term 'Shepherd' Jesus uses about himself not only identifies him with the divine authority of the Father, and with the earthly glory of the kings of Israel, but also with the idea of the suffering servant, the one who is despised and rejected, the one who is wounded on our behalf, the one who will reign from the cross and draw all people to himself, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

“...He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls...”

## “May is Mary’s Month”

The month of May is traditionally a special time for us to give honour to the Blessed Virgin Mary :

May is Mary’s month, and I  
Muse at that and wonder why :  
Her feasts follow reason,  
Dated due to season—

Candlemas, Lady Day ;  
But the Lady Month, May,  
Why fasten that upon her,  
With a feasting in her honour ?

Is it only its being brighter  
Than the most are must delight her ?  
Is it opportunist  
And flowers finds soonest ?

Ask of her, the mighty mother :  
Her reply puts this other  
Question : What is Spring?—  
Growth in every thing—

Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,  
Grass and greenworld all together ;  
Star-eyed strawberry-breasted  
Throstle above her nested  
Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin  
Forms and warms the life within ;  
And bird and blossom swell  
In sod or sheath or shell.

All things rising, all things sizing  
Mary sees, sympathizing  
With that world of good  
Nature’s motherhood.

Their magnifying of each its kind  
With delight calls to mind  
How she did in her stored  
Magnify the Lord.

Well but there was more than this :  
Spring’s universal bliss  
Much, had much to say  
To offering Mary May.

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple  
Bloom lights the orchard-apple  
And thicket and thorp are merry  
With silver-surfèd cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes  
Wood banks and brakes wash wet like  
lakes  
And magic cuckoocall  
Caps, clears, and clinches all—

This ecstasy all through mothering earth  
Tells Mary her mirth till Christ’s birth  
To remember and exultation  
In God who was her salvation.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89)*

