

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, some of our churches remain closed. The Sunday Eucharist is now able to be celebrated with a congregation at St Arvans, although – please note - for the time being attendance has to be by prior booking only.

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
Parish Priest (Vicar / Rector):
Fr Michael Gollop,
The Vicarage, St Arvans
01291 622064;
mobile 07867803479

23rd August 2020
The Eleventh Sunday
after Trinity (A)



The Collect

O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace, that we, running the way of your commandments, may receive your gracious promises, and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure; 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 Isaiah

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be for ever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

[51. 1-6]

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

Psalm 138

R/ O Lord, your love endures for ever;

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise. I will bow down towards your

holy temple and praise your name, because of your love and faithfulness; For you have glorified your name and your word above all things.

R/ O Lord, your love endures for ever;

When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me. All the kings of the earth will praise you, O Lord, when they have heard the words of your mouth. They will sing of the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord. Though the Lord be high, he cares for the lowly; he perceives the haughty from afar.

R/ O Lord, your love endures for ever;

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me. The Lord will make good his purpose for me; O Lord, your love endures for ever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

R/ O Lord, your love endures for ever;

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans [12. 1-8]

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation;

the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

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

Alleluia, alleluia!
You are Peter
and on this rock I will build my Church.
And the gates of the underworld
can never hold out against it
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St Matthew **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

[St Matthew 16. 13–20]

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

Thought for the Week

"Out of compassion for us He descended from heaven, and although He ascended alone, we also ascend, because we are in Him by grace"
St Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)

For Your Prayers

That we may act consistently on our belief in Christ

That our spiritual communions 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

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; Helen Herbert; Cliff Edwards; Kate Lewis; Dave

For the Departed:

The recently departed;; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Margaret Mitchell; Tanya Blanchard



A Prayer of Spiritual Communion
for these times when we are unable physically to receive Holy 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 from St Matthew, Jesus asks his followers what people are saying about him. Then he asks the real question, "Who do you say I am?" Peter's direct answer, "You are the Christ" prompts Jesus' reply that Peter would be given the keys to the kingdom of heaven and would be the rock upon which his church would be built.

Monday is the Feast of St. Bartholomew, the Apostle. Thursday is the feast day of Saint Monica, and on Friday that of Monica's son, Saint Augustine, bishop and doctor (that is, *an official teacher*) of the Church. Saturday is the commemoration of the Martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist, with its own readings.

For the first readings this week, we begin with a few selections from the Second Letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians and then we move to readings from his First Letter to the Corinthians for the next few weeks.

In the Gospel readings, we continue to reflect on Jesus' words from St Matthew: Jesus condemns the ways of the Pharisees, calling them hypocrites, "blind guides" and "whitened tombs:" "*On the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.*" In contrast to the ways of the hypocrites, Jesus tells his disciples to "Stay awake!" We are called to be faithful and prudent servants, stewards of what

our Master has entrusted to us. If we are this kind of disciples, we will be blessed. Then he tells them the Parable of the talents. A master goes off on a journey, entrusting his wealth to three servants. Two invest the money and earn twice as much for their master. The third, out of fear and laziness, won't take any risks and buries his master's wealth, which was entrusted to him.

Next Sunday: In the first reading we catch a glimpse of the Prophet Jeremiah who understands the pain of following the Lord and decides not to speak the Lord's name again, "but then it becomes like fire burning in my heart." St Paul's letter to the Romans reflects on the practical meaning of genuine love and authentic discipleship. In St Matthew's Gospel, Jesus corrects his disciples' resistance to his warnings about his own passion and death, telling them that if they try to save their lives, they'll lose them. *"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."*



St Augustine of Hippo
(feast day 28th August)

Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus) was one of the greatest theologians of Western Christianity. He was born in North Africa and was of Berber origin. His mother, Monica, was a Christian, and undertook to bring him up in the Faith, and on one level he always found something attractive about Christ, but in the short run he was more interested in the attractions of sex, fame, and pride in his own cleverness. After a moderate amount of running around as a teenager, he took a mistress, who bore him a son when he was about eighteen. Theirs was a long-term

relationship, apparently with faithfulness on both sides, and the modern reader is left wondering why he did not simply marry the girl. He never tells us this (and in fact never tells us her name), so that we can only guess that the relationship ran counter to the laws which forbade marriage between a free-born Roman citizen and a slave, or an ex-slave. Augustine went on to study philosophy, and was from the beginning a brilliant student, with an eager intellectual curiosity, but he never mastered Greek -- he tells us that his first Greek teacher was a brutal man who constantly beat his students, and Augustine rebelled and vowed never to learn Greek. By the time he realized that he really needed to know Greek, it was too late; and although he acquired a smattering of the language, he was never really at home in it. However, he became an expert both in the eloquent use of the Latin language and became a teacher of rhetoric in Carthage, but remained dissatisfied with his life. In his late twenties, Augustine decided to leave Africa and seek his fortune in Rome. For a long time Augustine was an adherent of Manichaeism, which was a dualistic in two gods of equal power and eternity, and that the universe is the scene of an unending battle between light and darkness, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, soul and body. Augustine prospered in Rome, and was eventually appointed chief professor of rhetoric for the city of Milan, at that time the capital city of the Empire in the West. In Milan Augustine met the bishop of the city, St Ambrose, and was startled to find in him a reasonableness of mind and belief, a keenness of thought, and an integrity of character far in excess of what he had found elsewhere. For the first time, Augustine saw Christianity as a religion fit for a philosopher. And finally, partly because Ambrose had answers for his questions, partly because he admired Ambrose personally, and chiefly, he believed, because God touched his heart, he was converted to Christianity in 386 and was baptized by St Ambrose at Easter of 387. About 12 years later he wrote an account of his life up to a time shortly after his conversion, a book called the *Confessions*, still a highly readable work available widely in English translation. Ostensibly an autobiography, it is more an outpouring of penitence and thanksgiving and an examination of his

own psychological development. After his conversion, Augustine went back to his native Africa in 387, where he was ordained a priest in 391 and consecrated bishop of Hippo in 396. It was not his intention to become a priest but, visiting the town of Hippo, he was dragged forward, and the bishop and his priests ordained him there and then to the priesthood. A few years later, when the Bishop of Hippo died, Augustine was chosen to succeed him. He was a diligent shepherd of his flock, but he also found time to write extensively. His works have had a huge and lasting influence down the centuries on the theology of the western Christian Church particularly. Near the end of his life, the Vandals, a barbarian people with a reputation for wanton destructiveness, became involved in a civil war in Northern Africa, and their troops invaded Africa in huge numbers. The leader of the losing side took refuge in the town of Hippo, and the Vandals were besieging the town when Augustine, the bishop of the city, died on the 28 August 430, at the age of 75.

A Meditation for Trinity 11

+ Every age - every historical era - perhaps even every generation - has had its own view of what we might call the "who, what and why" of God. Human culture changes, evolves, uses the kinds of imagery and story-telling which is relevant to its needs and its situation. That's inevitable, of course - the message is one which we need to be able to understand, even if the reality remains the same.

In today's Gospel Jesus asks his disciples: *'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'*

And it's an important question, perhaps the most important of all. Jesus doesn't ask it in a casual way - just throwing out a request for gossip, but - because who he is so central to his mission, he wants to know what people are saying about him. And his disciples respond by saying, *'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'* - that is, someone in a long line of those who had witnessed to the reality of God and have proclaimed it to the people of Israel, and who in popular religious feeling of the time were somehow expected to return and herald

the liberation of the people of God at the end of the world.

But Jesus doesn't leave it at that: he says to his disciples - and I suppose this means those closest to him, the Apostles: *'But who do you say that I am?'* That is, it's all very well to repeat what other people are saying about me, but you - who are closest to me, who know me best - who do you say that I am?

And Peter's response is very clear: *'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'*

Peter recognises that Jesus isn't simply one of the long line of prophets, but is the Christ - literally 'the anointed one' who stands in a completely unique relationship with the Father - essentially the confession of faith which we ourselves will repeat (in a more developed form put together by the Church Fathers) when we stand and say the Nicene Creed in a few minutes' time.

Peter's declaration of faith has the ringing quality of truth - as Jesus himself says of an insight, not just acquired naturally by living in close proximity with him, but by a divine revelation which brings human understanding, a knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures and sheer gut instinct together. It stands with that other statement of belief made by Peter's fellow Apostle, Thomas in St John's Gospel when he is confronted with the reality of Christ's resurrection: "My Lord and my God."

And the *timing* of Peter's statement here is also important, because it happens just before the Transfiguration, when he and the other apostles, James and John, see Christ in his glory as an anticipation of the Resurrection and seen in the company of Moses and Elijah. In other words Christ is not only the latest in the line of God's messengers - or the reincarnation of one of them - but is himself the fulfilment of everything that had been promised by God from the beginning. And, allied with the Transfiguration, is Jesus' prediction of the necessity of his own death in order to fulfil his divine mission. And he follows it up with his call for all his followers to unite themselves to him in his death and resurrection: to die to ourselves in order to live for him and with him.

So - back to the beginning - that question of Jesus: *'But who do you say that I am?'* has an importance far beyond its immediate context - in other words it's addressed to us as well as to his first

disciples - it's *the* existential question which is addressed to every individual in every generation: 'Who do you say that I am.'

That's not an invitation to have our own subjective or esoteric opinion of who Jesus might be. It's quite clear from the Lord's reply to Peter's response, 'You are the Christ, the son of the living God' that not every opinion of him is equally valid: *'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.'*

But it is an invitation to reflect upon what our own relationship with Christ is. How do we encounter him in our lives? Who is Jesus for us? It's an invitation to reflect on a tradition of faith which says quite clearly that he is God's own answer to the deepest questions and longings of the human heart. It's an invitation through prayer and service to explore and deepen that relationship

'Who do you say that I am' is a crucial question for each one of us. And we can only answer it both by what we say and - *crucially* - what we do. +

