

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, because of limited space, attendance has to be by prior booking only** You are now asked to wear face masks in church unless you have a valid medical reason for not doing so.

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

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The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity (A) *Harvest Thanksgiving*

The Collect

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; 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

Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watch-tower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting: he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry! [5. 1-7]

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

Psalm 80 7 - 14

R/ For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.

Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance and we shall be saved. You have brought a vine out of

Egypt; you cast out the nations and planted it. You prepared the ground for it; it took root and filled the land.

R/ For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.

The mountains were covered by its shadow and the towering cedar trees by its boughs. You stretched out its tendrils to the Sea and its branches to the River.

R/ For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel

Why have you broken down its wall, so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes? The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it, and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it. Turn now, O God of hosts, look down from heaven; behold and tend this vine; preserve what your right hand has planted.

R/ For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians [3; 4b - 14]

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ



and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

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

The Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth
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.**

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:

Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They said to him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease

the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes"?' Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.' When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

[St Matthew 21.33–46]

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

For Your Prayers

For a successful harvest of land and sea.
That human beings may become wise and responsible stewards of God's creation
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; Dave

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Edwin Bridge; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Doris Williams; Serge Biso; Francis (*Buster*) Neal



Thought for the Week

"This world is not just a gift from God; it is a challenge for humanity. We have at last come to learn the truth that we have mistreated the natural environment and its resources. The consequences are plain and painful. They are evident in the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, the food that we consume, the emotional and physical problems that we face in our health, but also in our relationships with each other on the local, regional, national and global levels."

Oecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

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

A parable about tenants who were entrusted with their master's fields is at the heart of today's readings as we also celebrate harvest thanksgiving. We hear Jesus again challenge the religious leaders with this story of the tenant farmers who refused to listen to the master's servants (the prophets) and abused and killed his son (Jesus) in an attempt to usurp his inheritance. Jesus tells them, "Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

This week the first readings at the Eucharist are taken from St Paul's Letter to the Galatians. He chides and encourages this early Christian community and writes about his own experience and the challenges he has faced as a disciple of Christ.

The gospel this week comes from St Luke. The Good Samaritan who comes upon the robbery victim "treated him with mercy." Jesus' close friends Mary and Martha welcome him to their home, but Martha resents working while Mary listens to Jesus. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part..." He teaches us to pray with a prayer to the Father. We are encouraged to ask, seek and knock on the door to get what we want from the Father. When doubters watch Jesus drive out demons, he gets discouraged and says,

"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." When a woman calls out that the womb that carried him is blessed, he replies, "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

Next Sunday in the Gospel we hear Jesus tell the story about the King who gave a banquet for his son and invited many guests. It is a powerful story about rejecting Jesus' own invitation and about God's invitation to everyone to become part of a new group of "chosen" people.

A Meditation for Trinity 17 Harvest Thanksgiving

+ The Christian faith is shot through with a concern to see the hand of God even in the tiniest details of life, and in the natural world of which we are a part, however much modern ways of living tend to insulate us from it. The Christian tradition tells us that the natural world reflects much of the beauty and glory and order of the love of God the Holy Trinity. - the same love we see displayed in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the unlimited life of God poured out for the life of the world.

We look upon the world as essentially sacramental - that is, that they speak to us in concrete ways about the eternal things which matter and the sacredness of this world of time and space which we inhabit for a little while.

So, when we celebrate harvest thanksgiving we can't but be reminded that a successful harvest depends not only on human community but on responsible stewardship. Yes, we make use of the accumulated expertise and wisdom developed over the centuries - technology makes that easier and less back-breaking - but it doesn't do away with the need to co-operate with the forces of nature, the sun, the rain, the wind which go into the making of a successful harvest.

We are being told pretty forcibly at harvest time that we are always stewards of the natural world not its absolute owners. When we try to play God - when we ignore the realities of nature - disaster almost always follows as we know only too well from the widespread and uncontrolled use of pesticides in the past and the grubbing

up of hedges and the chopping down or burning of woods and forests, and the erosion and depletion of soils through excessive monoculture. It may be fashionable, but it's an unavoidable fact that Harvest is also about conservation and ecology; it's about sustainability and the endangered future of the planet which has been entrusted to us. Ultimately we preserve our environment in order to survive, to make the harvests of the future a possibility, to keep faith with our forebears and more importantly with our children. The theologian might also say that we do these things to honour the God who made them.

So at harvest thanksgiving all these things come together in a way those who have gone before us - for all their faults and failings - would have understood very well, even if they wouldn't have put it things in quite the same way as we do.... Harvest raises all kinds of questions including the way in which the Christian tradition speaks about vocation and work as a kind of prayer. It doesn't take a great deal of imagination to look around us and see that, in fact, there is a great deal of work - or ways of working - that doesn't pray, work that severs and disconnects us from our sources of life rather than moves us toward a fuller humanity. St Benedict was very clear that work to pray - to be a form of prayer - it must have a sense of vocation attached to it—we must feel some calling toward that work and the wholeness of which it is a part, that sense that there is something holy in good work. The American writer - and a farmer as well as a poet and an essayist - Wendell Berry, says that "devotion, skill, pride, pleasure, the good stewardship of means and materials, and the natural world itself" should be part and parcel of human work. It's idealistic, but perhaps essential if human life on the planet is to survive the damage we've already done. Berry also says this about our failing stewardship of our environment: "In losing stewardship we lose fellowship; we become outcasts from the great neighbourhood of creation." Today's Gospel about the tenants of the vineyard was originally directed at the religious establishment of the day and their rejection of the kingdom of God come among them in the person of Jesus himself. But I don't think it's too fanciful at a time of ecological emergency to see it as a warning to the whole human race.

Ultimately harvest Thanksgiving is saying to us that we are meant by God to live thankfully, as responsible and wise stewards who will be accountable for the things entrusted to us, as those who travel together on the pilgrimage of life and faith, as companions who share the Bread of Life, as those who receive our good things from God. And, of course, not only are we intended to live in such a way, but that our very survival ultimately depends upon it.

This is from a twentieth century poet, Bobi Jones - the original is in Welsh - but this is the translation - it helps sum up what we've been talking about: a spirit of thanksgiving in the way we live:

"You leave your traces in a child a wood,
a church, a view,
And in every season, Lord, you are good.
Already in December the breeze brings
forth buds in the lowest hour; in every
countryside you manifest
Your coming. Everything is your estate,
And in every place there is food
And how shall I, O King, unlock your
praise?"

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October 4th St Francis of Assisi

St Francis is one of the best loved saints of the Church. He was born in 1181, his father was a prosperous silk merchant. He was given the name Giovanni, but his father changed this to Francesco – in honour of the business that he did with France. As a young man he lived the high life that was typical of a wealthy young man at the time. But despite his brightly coloured clothes and lavish living, he became disillusioned with this way of life. In 1202 he joined a military expedition and was taken prisoner. During his captivity an illness forced him to re-evaluate his life. On a pilgrimage to Rome he stopped to pray in the ruined church of San Damiano where he had a mystical vision of Jesus as he prayed in front of an icon of the crucifixion. Jesus said to him "Francis, go and repair my house which as you can see is falling into ruins". Francis took this to mean the church he was praying in and sold some of his father's cloth to pay for the restoration. This displeased his father and Francis spent several months travelling around the area of Assisi as a beggar. In 1208, whilst at Mass, the

Gospel from Matthew recounting the commissioning of the 12 disciples was read and Francis became inspired to devote himself to a life of prayer and poverty. Within a year he had 11 followers who travelled around preaching the Gospel. He set out to imitate Christ through emptying of himself, and to make poverty a holy way of life.

He was torn between a life devoted entirely to prayer and a life of active preaching. He chose the latter, but had times of retreat to spend time in silence with God. He never intended to found a religious order, but the Franciscan Order grew quickly and is still very recognisable with their brown habits. He was never ordained a priest, but he was ordained a deacon, and he had a great reverence for the priesthood and their role in the celebration of the Eucharist and prayed fervently for priests. On the feast of the Holy Cross in 1224 he received the stigmata, the marks of the wounds of Jesus at his crucifixion and he died two years later.

O God, you ever delight to reveal yourself to the childlike and lowly of heart: grant that, following the example of the blessed Francis, we may count the wisdom of this world as foolishness and know only Jesus Christ and him crucified, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

