

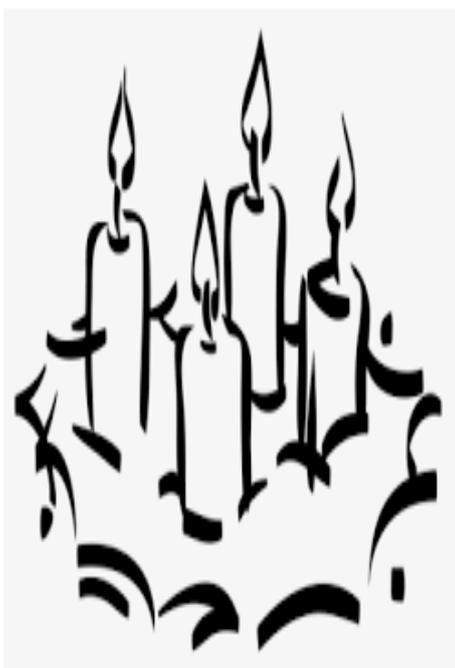
# PARISH NEWSLETTER

St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden & Kilgwrrwg

**Our Sunday Eucharist at 10 a.m. and celebration of Night Prayer on Wednesdays at 20.00 are live-streamed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook and are available to watch at any time**

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;  
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**29<sup>th</sup> November 2020**  
***The First Sunday of Advent***  
*Year B*



## The Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him 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

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil – to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself, we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity for ever. Now consider, we are all your people.

[64. 1 - 9]

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

## Psalm 80 1 - 7, 17 - 19

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your strength and come to help us.

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance and we shall be saved.

O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angered despite the prayers of your people?

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

You have made us the derision of our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

## A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians [1; 3 - 9]

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

### The Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!

Let us see, O Lord, thy mercy  
and give us thy saving help.

**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:

**And also with you**

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

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.' [St Mark 13.24–37]

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



FIG TREE

### **For Your Prayers**

That we may draw closer this Advent to the Lord who comes among us  
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; Philip; Eirion

### For the Departed:

The recently departed: Joyce Hobby; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Elizabeth Jane Gollop; Edward Priddis

### **Thought for the Week**

"Advent is the perfect time to clear and prepare the Way. Advent is a winter training camp for those who desire peace. By reflection and prayer, by reading and meditation, we can make our hearts a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place."

*Edward Hays, 'A Pilgrim's Almanac'*



### **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**

Today is the beginning of a new liturgical year with the First Sunday of Advent. The first reading from the prophet Isaiah as the people repent before God: "Would that you might meet us doing right, that we

were mindful of you in our ways!" St Mark's gospel offers the image of the master who leaves his servants in charge while he is away. Be watchful! Stay alert!

Monday is the Feast of St. Andrew, the Apostle. Thursday is the feast day of St. Francis Xavier.

During the first part of Advent - until December 17 - we focus on the first reading. This week it is from the **Prophet Isaiah**. These readings are about promises. Isaiah is consoling, building up and preparing his people to have hope. "In the days to come," he says over and over. When the day of promise comes, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again." Even though King David's line, and that of his father, Jesse, are almost wiped out, Isaiah proclaims hope: "On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom." Who would believe even a peace in nature - lion lying down with the lamb? "There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea." God's unique ways of favouring the poor, which Mary comes to know and proclaims in her *Magnificat*, are seen when Isaiah says, "He humbles those in high places, and the lofty city he brings down; He tumbles it to the ground, levels it with the dust." Even Jesus' own statement about his mission is seen in the powerful images Isaiah uses to give us courage and hope: "On that day the deaf shall hear ... the eyes of the blind shall see ... the lowly will ever find joy in the LORD ... " "On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people."

The gospels for this first part of Advent are chosen from several gospels. They are meant to match the first readings and to show that the promises are fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus brings healing. He raises up the childlike. And Jesus calls and sends the twelve apostles to continue his ministry.

**Next Sunday**, the Second Sunday of Advent, we hear the prophet Isaiah write of a voice that cries out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God!" These lines from the prophet

are repeated in St Mark's Gospel as we are introduced to John the Baptist who prepares the way for Jesus. John says, "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptised you with water; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

## A Reflection for The First Sunday of Advent

+ Every year Advent seems to creep up on us, and now suddenly we find ourselves at the beginning of December and it's arrived... And this year that seems even more true than ever, given the strange telescoped year we've had because of the pandemic, and the very much scaled-down Christmas to come. We are hearing a lot at the moment about people's unhappiness about the prospect of the lack of a normal traditional Christmas this year, even if a lot of that is being stirred up for political reasons by those who have irresponsible agendas of their own. But there are plus sides to everything, even this cruel, isolated time we are having at the moment. One of them could be the rediscovery of Advent. The Church has always regarded Advent as a season in its own right and not just as a way of marking the few short weeks before the feast of Christ's birth. Yes, of course, Advent is about making preparations and getting ready, but it's only **partly** about preparing ourselves spiritually for the feast of Christmas, and **mainly** about preparing for something else altogether, something not tied to the date of any particular festival at all. What we are given now is a few weeks of reflection to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord. Well, you might say to me, if that's not about Christmas, then what is? But you would be only right **up to a point**.

At Christmas we will be celebrating the coming among us of the Lord who is the fulfillment of Old Testament Israel's longing for a Messiah, a word which means literally the Lord's 'anointed one.' But at the first Christmas God came among us in Jesus Christ, in St John's words as the Word made flesh, as God become man - one of us. He came to earth in an unexpected way; the manner of his birth, his life and above all his death

and resurrection were equally shocking and unexpected. God is the one who constantly takes us by surprise and confuses us by his limitless grace and mercy.

God operates in ways that surprise us, in ways that have a tendency to turn our worlds upside down. We know that Christmas is on the way, although this year we don't know precisely when our celebrations will begin or what they will consist of.

In Advent - this essential period of waiting - we are presented with surprises and contradictions wherever we chose to look. But we have to choose to look. It was the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus who, sounding a bit like Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide To the Galaxy*, said that if we don't expect the unexpected, we won't find it - and that's as good a motto for the *spiritual* unpredictability of the Advent Season as any. And of course, that spiritual unpredictability is mirrored at the moment by the profound uncertainties we are all facing due to the effects of Covid-19.

The people of the Old Testament were for the most part expecting a saviour who would rule on earth in God's name and bring about a time of everlasting peace and prosperity. Sometimes it seems we ourselves are only too happy to believe in the kind of religion which will immediately set right both our own lives and that of the world itself. We probably know people who have approached faith in this way and, not surprisingly, have become disappointed and disillusioned when things don't quite work out the way they expect. The prosperity gospel - whether it's money, health, or whatever, is not the Gospel of Christ The Incarnation of the Son of God is the absolute opposite of the false magic wand kind of religion and the false magic wand kind of God that people understandably find so easy to reject. Of course, we **are** promised in the Scriptures that ultimately everything *will* be set right, but only at the end of historical time when Christ will come again to judge and restore the whole creation.

But this side of the Lord's return in glory we are told very clearly that we will share the fullness, the abundance, of God's life only if we unite ourselves to the death and resurrection of Christ, if we unite ourselves to Him through prayer, through the grace given to us in the Sacraments,

through the ordinary, rather mundane, low-key channels in which God comes to us in the hard slog of the pilgrim journey of faith. Perhaps we don't stress this enough. If Advent is about one thing it's this: the asking of the question: "what does that traditional, but neglected and misunderstood phrase "holiness of life" mean for each one of us in the day to day, messy human situations in which we find ourselves. It's Christ in the Gospel who explains what that is, grounds it and gives it humanity and a practical understanding. We are reminded - yet again - in today's Gospel that we don't know when the end of the world is going to take place, and accordingly we are urged to live each day as if it might be our last: that is, in charity and compassion, in our care for others, in making the most we can of every opportunity we have of deepening our relationship with Christ. The Gospels return to the same subject again and again. And Jesus in the Gospel reading today reinforces our view of him as someone who surprises us. His main point again is about the sort of people we should be **here and now**. He tells us to be alert and not distracted from looking for him - he comes to us when we are least expecting it..

God's coming among us, for which we are preparing during these nearly four weeks of Advent, is not just about the end of time because we are told repeatedly, that we have no idea when that will be. It's about his active presence in our lives now, and not only in the past, or in the future. We are being asked to be alert and on the lookout for the signs of his presence with us and in our lives today: life is only too short and sometimes tragically unpredictable - we obviously don't need to be reminded of that today.

This is the advent of the Lord which is taking place now. Our main task this Advent and every Advent, although perhaps particularly *this* Advent, is to ask the Lord to open our hearts and minds to his presence, to see him at work in our lives, to draw us more and more into the circle of his love and life.

St Mark in today's Gospel records Jesus speaking of the signs of the end of the world, and in encouraging his disciples not to be caught off guard, even as he repeats that no one knows when that might be. One of the traditional Advent themes is concerned with the end of life and its

unpredictability - the sheer vulnerability and fragility of human life, something true even today. The message is clear: live each day as your last because it could be - and not in a hedonistic way, but in the sense of cultivating the things of eternity, the human and eternal values of the Gospels themselves, and that one relationship - with Christ himself - which will survive the end of this life and continue into the next.

In Advent we are being encouraged to be aware of those signs both within us and in the world around us which indicate our alienation and despair and our longing for redemption. We ask to be aware of our own inner spiritual poverty which is only made rich by Christ's coming among us. In a sense our Advent task is to prepare not for the end of all things, but for a new beginning for us. And that new beginning is offered constantly to us in the person of the child of Mary, whose birth we celebrate at the end of Advent but whose life surrounds us here and now if we have the eyes to see it and the faith to reach out and grasp it. +