

# PARISH NEWSLETTER

St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden & Kilgwrrwg

**IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE**  
Having taken into account the latest advice from the Church in Wales & the Welsh Government, we are again, for the time being, closed for public worship with a physical congregation. Our broadcast services will continue as follows: 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):  
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The Vicarage, St Arvans  
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**17<sup>th</sup> January 2021**  
**The Second Sunday**  
**of Epiphany**  
Year B



## The Collect

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; 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 first book of Samuel

The boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

[3. 3-10]

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

**Psalm 139** 1-5; 12-17

**R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.**

Lord, you have searched me out and known me; you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You trace my journeys and my resting-places and are acquainted with all my ways.

**R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.**

Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O Lord, know it altogether. You press upon me behind and before and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain to it.

**R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.**

For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will thank you because I am marvellously made; your works are wonderful and I know it well.

**R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.**

My body was not hidden from you, while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; they were fashioned day by day, when as yet there was none of them.

**R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.**

How deep I find your thoughts, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand; to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.

**R/ I will thank you because I am marvellously made.**

## A reading from the book of Revelation

I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.'

[5. 1-10]

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

## **Gradual Hymn**

### The Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Speak, Lord, your servant is listening  
you have the words of eternal life.  
**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:  
**And also with you**

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

**T**he next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him,

'Follow me.'

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.'

Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'

Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!'

Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?'

Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.'

Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'

Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.'

And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

[St John 1.43-51]

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



## **For Your Prayers**

That we may always hear and respond to the call of Christ to follow him.

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, John, Iris Ayres; Gareth & Barbara Howells

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed:; Jenny Beach; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Bill Blakey

### **Thought for the Week**

"If you want a spiritual life, you must unify your life. A life is either all spiritual or not at all. No man can serve two masters. Your life is shaped by the end you live for. You are made in the image of what you desire."

*Thomas Merton OCSO  
From 'Thoughts in Solitude'*

## The Jereboam Interview

We continue our series of extracts from the *Jerusalem and Galilee Gazette*, an imaginary first-century newspaper. Week by week the correspondent Jereboam interviews various people whose lives have been affected in some way by Jesus Christ and his teaching.

Thanks to the Parish of St Catharine's Chipping Campden & to the author for permission to reproduce 'Jereboam'

### Esther

**Jereboam:** Esther, it must be a good twenty years since you and I first discussed Jesus' baptism. So much has happened since then...

**Esther:** Yes: I still see that event as a real turning-point. In a way everything was set in motion that afternoon.

**Jereboam:** But do you really feel that the motion has been maintained? It seems as if the Church has settled into a sort of routine now.

**Esther:** Things are certainly much less dramatic than they were in the early days – but that doesn't mean that the Church has ground to a halt: far from it.

**Jereboam:** The reason I mention it is that people talk nowadays about the Second Coming of Jesus.

**Esther:** Yes...

**Jereboam:** Well, I couldn't help wondering whether there was really all that much difference between you awaiting the Second Coming of Jesus, and us ordinary Jews looking forward to the...well, the First Coming. Of course we were all caught up in the drama of Jesus' life and death, and I realise that his attitudes and teaching were quite distinctive, but, at the end of it all, did he really make all that much difference?

**Esther:** Most definitely. Remember the impact his baptism had: that was the moment, for many of us at least, when Jesus was revealed as the Son of God. A son of God doesn't exactly appear every day, but just as striking was the fact that this Son of God emerged from amongst us. He was an ordinary person too. God was approaching us both from our level and from beyond it, all at the same time. So our contact with him became all the more direct and tangible.

And that's even before his death and resurrection!

**Jereboam:** I suppose you're right.

**Esther:** And there's another thing: He also reached out to everyone, in a way that certainly I had never encountered before. Jesus addressed -- and still addresses -- the whole of humanity, not just the Jewish race. I'll admit that we can easily lose sight of that. It's all too easy to limit our awareness of God to our own little world.

**Jereboam:** How can we prevent that?

**Esther:** I can only tell you what I do. To me it's essentially a matter of how you pray. When someone prays, they presumably have in their mind some image or concept of God. At the same time they'll perhaps consider some text of scripture or aspect of faith – in our case it could be an incident in the life of our Lord. Maybe, together with all that, they might have particular concerns which they want to include. Already it's a complex picture. Personally I add something extra too. I often bring to mind someone I know who lives far away – or else I might try to visualise a very distant place. Images like that remind me of the universal nature of God and His Church.

**Jereboam:** It sounds very difficult, following all those thoughts at the same time.

**Esther:** Oh, it's not that awkward: more like a drawing that depicts various things. Your attention shifts to different parts of the picture from time to time.

**Jereboam:** I'll give that a try. Thank you, Esther.

### 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 Second Sunday of Epiphany. St John's Gospel offers us the story of the calling of the first two recorded disciples, Philip and Nathaniel. Jesus asks them what they are looking for and when they ask where he lives, he invites them to "Come, and see."

Thursday is the feast day of Saint Agnes, Virgin and Martyr.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week continue from the Letter to the Hebrews. Written to inspire and encourage the community in its faith, he exhorts them "not become sluggish, but imitators of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises." As we continue St Mark's Gospel, Jesus is asked why his disciples don't fast. He challenges the religious leaders to have a completely open mind and heart to his teaching because "new wine is poured into fresh wineskins." Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, bringing a new freedom. It is only chapter 3 in the gospel, but we already see the tension with religious leaders building. Because Jesus heals a withered hand on the Sabbath, the Pharisees seek to kill him. Jesus withdraws and people from the surrounding regions come to him, and even the demons know who he is. Jesus names twelve Apostles to be with him, to preach and to drive out demons. Jesus' relatives think he's "out of his mind" because so many people are coming to him that he can't even eat.

**Next Sunday**, the Third Sunday of Epiphany, includes a story from Mark's Gospel repeated from last week's weekday readings: Jesus calls Simon, Andrew, James and John. "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."



## A Reflection for the Second Sunday of Epiphany

+ What is it about the start of any year that makes us feel so gloomy? I suppose the dark and cold January weather never helps that much, and with continuing and very necessary pandemic restrictions and a high infection rate we are all feeling fairly low at the moment. We are urgently in need of the message of today's Gospel. All the Gospels present Jesus to us as the Saviour, the Redeemer of the world. In Jewish terms he is the Messiah, and I think it's true to say that Jesus cannot really, truly, be understood apart from the history of Israel - which is the pre-history of the Church, the pre-history of all of us, and that, of course, is one of the Church's communication problems in a culture which doesn't know scripture and can be very dismissive of the past in general, even the recent past - as we are seeing to our huge cost.

But God's covenant relationship with his chosen people -- 'I will be your God and you will be my people' -- is the thread which runs through what we now call the Old Testament. And everything recounted there, whether in the law or in the prophets or in the other writings, records the fluctuating fortunes of that relationship, and looks forward to its fulfilment in the coming of the Messiah.

In the Gospel today we see Jesus as the one who reconciles, the one who brings together, who in himself takes away the sins of the world and gives to those who follow him redemption, freedom from those facets of human nature and human living which alienate us from the source of all goodness. This is what he goes on to do for all of us by his Cross and Resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit to his Church.

In the Gospel today Jesus says to Philip, "Follow me."

For whatever reason, perhaps it was a deep intuition, perhaps it was because he had listened carefully to what Jesus was saying and doing, perhaps he had heard John the Baptist preach and even witnessed our Lord's baptism in the river Jordan, we don't know, we're not told. But when Jesus approaches him and invites him to join him, Philip doesn't need any further explanation. Not so Nathanael his

friend; when Philip tells him in effect that he has discovered the Messiah ("him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote") Nathanael is openly sceptical. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth," he says, referring most likely to the fact that the later Jewish tradition clearly stated that the Messiah, the Christ, was to come from Bethlehem in Judea, not Nazareth in Galilee. Nathanael takes a lot of persuading - ultimately Philip just asks him to come and see and judge for himself. When Jesus sees him and proves that he understands him and knows something about him that no one else knows, Nathanael is convinced - you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel he says.

And Jesus replies that if Nathanael follows him he will see far greater things: essentially the Lord is saying to him that he will come to see the vision of God and share the life of God himself.

So what is St John, and through John Christ himself, saying to us in this passage? There's a great deal here and anything I say can only scratch the surface. But, firstly, that it is Jesus himself who finds us, not the other way around.

The message of Christmas just past is that of God coming in search of the human race and identifying himself completely with us. Here, in today's Gospel, Philip must have studied the law and the prophets and even heard and seen a lot about the Lord, but it is Jesus who comes to him and says 'follow me.' however much we search for truth and meaning, however much we strive to discover something which is worth giving our lives to, ultimately God comes to us and calls us when he is ready, in his time and not in ours.

Secondly, Philip's vocation - his calling - as an apostle and witness to Christ, begins immediately - he persuades Nathanael to overcome his scepticism and to see for himself the truth about Jesus. So often we are brought to faith, or to a deeper experience of the Faith, by those around us who are able to reflect some of the love of God and the urgency and importance to all of us of the person and message of Christ, and to convince us to have a closer look. Like Nathanael, *when we do* we are not disappointed, we are drawn by Jesus himself into the

mystery of his life - the life of God himself, the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And thirdly, as with Philip and Nathanael, Jesus also calls *each one of us*, even though we may be naturally sceptical and hard to convince, even if we are far from perfect, even though we are, flawed, fallible human beings - the traditional word is "sinners" - although that word outside the language used by the church has lost much of its original meaning and become loaded with rather unhelpful, misleading and judgemental associations. But what does this calling mean to us? What does it require of us?

The call of Christ isn't, a one-off experience. The Lord continues to call us not once but constantly throughout our lives, every hour of every day, however hard we sometimes try to hide. Sometimes He calls us in ways that result in major changes and upheavals in our lives. But most of the time Jesus calls in a quietly insistent way that we may try to explain away with all kinds of clever psychological evasions. When we listen we are changed.

In one sense we are already living in the kingdom of God here and now. Christ is as present to us as he was to the people in the today's Gospel - not physically, but through the Holy Spirit. Why else do we come here, but to meet him in the words of the Gospels and in the Reality of the Blessed Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

We hear him speak to us through the words of Scripture and when he gives his life to us in Holy Communion - when once again we are all able to receive it - physically as well as by making a spiritual communion - to draw us ever more deeply into the mystery of his life? Here we are truly given a foretaste of the life of heaven and, if we see with the eyes of faith, here at the altar - we "see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." +