

# 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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**24<sup>th</sup> January 2021**  
**The Third Sunday**  
**of Epiphany**  
*Year B*



## The Collect

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; 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 book of Genesis

After Abram's return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!' And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything. [14. 17-20]

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

## Psalm 28

**R/ Whoever fears the Lord shall indeed be blessed.**

Happy are they all who fear the Lord, and who follow in his ways!  
You shall eat the fruit of your labour; happiness and prosperity shall be yours.

**R/ Whoever fears the Lord shall indeed be blessed.**

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive shoots round about your table.  
Whoever fears the Lord shall thus indeed be blessed

**R/ Whoever fears the Lord shall indeed be blessed.**

The Lord bless you from Zion, and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of our life. May you live to see your children's children; may peace be upon Israel.

**R/ Whoever fears the Lord shall indeed be blessed.**

## A reading from the book of Revelation

I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure' – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are true words of God.' Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

[19.6-10]

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

## Gradual Hymn

### The Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and cured all kinds of sickness among the people.  
**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**here was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

[St John 2. 1 - 11]

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



**AND HE MANIFESTED HIS GLORY**

## For Your Prayers

That we may be transformed by the Lord who makes all things new.  
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,; Gareth & Barbara Howells

### For the Departed:

The recently departed:; Iris Ayes; Daphne Porter; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Grace Hodgkinson;

### Thought for the Week

"Start by doing what is necessary; then what's possible; and suddenly you're doing the impossible."

— St. Francis of Assisi —

## 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'

## Cleopas

**Jereboam:** Well, Cleopas, it doesn't seem as much as ten years since we attended your wedding over in Cana.

**Cleopas:** No: it feels almost like yesterday, doesn't it?

**Jereboam:** We still talk about that wonderful wine you served.

**Cleopas:** You know, everyone says the same. The funny thing is that we spent the absolute minimum on that feast. No-one could explain how we got hold of such lovely wine – even the supplier was honest enough to say that he couldn't understand it either.

**Jereboam:** And of course Jesus was there.

**Cleopas:** Yes: it was only in retrospect that we realised what an honour it was to have him at our wedding. The main reason we invited him and his friends, and his mother of course, was because they were so far away from home: we were trying to be hospitable. Actually we weren't sure whether he'd accept. We didn't know whether someone as holy as that would attend a wedding-feast.

**Jereboam:** But he really made an impact, didn't he?

**Cleopas:** Certainly: we saw quite a lot of Jesus after that, and it was always the same. You'd hardly realise he was there, unless he was addressing the crowds, obviously, but somehow he always made everyone feel comfortable. You could never prove that he was the one who made the difference, but whenever he was there, everything flowed – and I don't mean the wine. Everyone could be themselves.

**Jereboam:** Anyway, you seem to have done well for yourselves in the last ten years.

**Cleopas:** Well, even in our everyday lives we feel we owe a lot to Jesus. It's as if his presence at our wedding set us on the right path.

**Jereboam:** But you're not going to claim that it's always been easy...

**Cleopas:** No, of course not, but the memory of Jesus has always been a stabilising influence for us...except that it's not just the memory of him. He remains constantly present in our lives.

**Jereboam:** How's that possible?

**Cleopas:** In various ways: for a start he's always present in the Church. Don't forget that we believe the Church is the Body of Christ.

**Jereboam:** I'm sure many of our readers will envy your certainty.

**Cleopas:** Certainty? I don't know...I don't really think of it in those terms...Certainly without Jesus' presence we'd sense a gaping hole in our lives.

**Jereboam:** Many of us will find gaping holes easier to appreciate.

**Cleopas:** That's an excellent start: I can't imagine you can allow a hole to be filled unless you realise it's there.

**Jereboam:** That's a thought. Thank you, Cleopas.

## This Week

Today's Gospel is the first of Jesus' signs in St John's Gospel. Water is turned into wine to announce the coming among us of the Word made Flesh. All will be transformed and made new in the eternal banquet of the Kingdom of God.

Monday sees the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Tuesday is the feast day of Paul's companions, Timothy and Titus. Thursday is the feast day of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the great theologian of the Middle Ages whose writings remain so relevant for us today..

The first readings at the Eucharist this week continue with the Letter to the Hebrews which teaches that Jesus is mediator of a new covenant and a priest who "offered one sacrifice for sins. He took his seat forever at the right hand of God."

In St Mark's Gospel this week, the ever-critical scribes accuse Jesus of being possessed by demons. Jesus responds clearly, "If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."

When told his family has arrived to see him, he replies that "whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." He tells the story of the sower and the seed, and after the crowd dispersed, Jesus explains to his disciples that the seed is the word of God, accepted at various levels. He encourages his disciples to show their light: "Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand?" Jesus compares the Kingdom with the tiniest of mustard seeds which grow to "the largest of plants." He calms the seas during a storm. His disciples wonder, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

**Next Sunday** we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation. We recall Jesus' presentation by his parents in the Temple at Jerusalem and the prophecy of Simeon and Anna. Christ is the light of the nations but also a sign of contradiction. In a prediction of his death, Blessed Mary is warned that a sword will pierce her soul also.



### A Reflection for the Third Sunday of Epiphany

+ Because of what I do, I've probably seen more weddings than most, and it seems to me that it's often the wedding reception, rather than the marriage ceremony itself which takes the most planning and organisation and, potentially at least, causes the most anxiety. There is a reason why, prior to a wedding, those most directly involved tend to run around in decreasing circles looking rather haggard. The advent of bridal style magazines hasn't helped much to alleviate the stress.

In normal times (when will we see them again?) weddings are a public celebration of a publicly made commitment and, whether we like it or not, the major part of the celebration is inevitably (certainly in terms of time and money) the feast which follows the exchange of vows and rings. And there are innumerable traditions associated with it: the photographs, the ritual of welcoming; who gives speeches and in what order; who has the first dance. We can all think of many others.

Wedding feasts, wedding receptions, are about rejoicing. Perhaps in some ways, however high profile or low key it turns out to be, you can't have a wedding without the feasting and the rejoicing. Although, of course, those weddings which have been able to go ahead over the past year, have had to scale that down almost to the point of being unrecognisable.

It's somewhat ironic, but very much the way of the world, that that joyful celebration is often the last thing that we feel like doing under the pressure of

### 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)*

providing such an occasion, or the pressure of being nice to family, or of talking to people we don't know and sometimes those we find difficult or don't even like that much. Wine becomes almost essential in these kind of situations!

It doesn't take too much reading between the lines in today's Gospel to work out that the wedding feast at Cana was a typically stressful occasion. We don't know many of the details about the wedding only that Jesus and his disciples and Mary, his mother, had been invited; it's probably a fair guess it was a family occasion, a marriage of cousins or something similar. And, of course, we know the vital point that at some point when the feast had been in full swing for some time, the wine started to run out. One can only guess at the consternation that much have caused, and the social disgrace and embarrassment to the family which would have followed.

Even after his mother's pleading, Jesus was reluctant to get involved. No, he seems to be saying it's not the right time yet for any kind of demonstration of powers beyond the ordinary, his Divine Sonship should remain hidden for a while longer.

Yet at the end of the story St John says that this was the first of Our Lord's "signs" which was an indication of the nature of his divine mission - this is the Incarnation again made visible, the intervention of God into the material world in order to heal the wounds of humanity. What Our Lord does here at the wedding at Cana isn't an opportunistic bit of conjuring to get everyone out of a tight spot, it's a clear demonstration of something much more. The word "sign" St John uses to describe what has happened doesn't just mean "something miraculous," something which seems to go against nature of scientific understanding, however divinely inspired. He goes on to say that this sign of the changing of the water into wine is the first of the signs Jesus shows forth which in some way "manifests his glory,"

St John's is a Gospel of a certain amount of theological complexity for all its human qualities. Everything he says, he says for a purpose, and symbolism of one kind or another is everywhere.

The first of Our Lord's signs is this miracle at Cana, the last and definitive sign is the

manifestation of his glory upon the cross of Calvary. The Greek original of the passage we have just heard as our Gospel, the opening of chapter two of John's Gospel, begins with the words "three days later there was a wedding feast at Cana." Now, "three days later" can be taken as referring to the calling of Philip at the end of chapter one and as such is left out at the beginning of our reading. Yet coming here at this account of the first sign which culminates in the Cross, I don't see that it is too fanciful to see a reference to the resurrection, the outcome of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for the life of the world - "on the third day."

But there is also here a reference to the creation story of the Book of Genesis: at the wedding feast there are six water jars as there were six days of creation in Genesis. The water of chaos or the unformed, is changed by the Word of God into visible light and the water in the stone jugs is transformed into the new wine of resurrection hope through the action of Jesus, the light who has come into the world.

What we have here is St John's account of day one of the new creation. The wedding feast began with the serving of the first wine, the original creation. For John, Jesus is the later wine which completes the wedding feast begun with the first serving of wine- that is, he completes and makes more glorious the original creation of the universe.

This is the point at which the disciples begin their journey of faith in accepting Jesus as the Son of God. The outcome of the this revelation of Jesus is their acceptance that they themselves are water changed into wine. This sign also takes place in our own lives. God continues breathing over our own chaos, our own darkness and brings us into the light who is Christ.

In these signs of new life and resurrection God comes out of hiding in order to show us his glory and promise us the hope of a new creation. Jesus changes our old water, our old selves, into the new wine of his own life which we are called to share. It's difficult, the 24 hour international news cycle being what it is, to erase from our minds the problems of the world outside these four walls, its implacable divisions, bigotries and hatreds, the terrible scenes of devastation and human need in the

aftermath of war and natural disaster. We might well be tempted to ask, where is this new wine of God's presence? Yet we find God - with difficulty perhaps, but we *can* find him, not in the mistaken, even blasphemous, notion of a vengeful, vindictive God somewhere above everything pulling the strings, but in acts of love and service - however small, of attempts at kindness and reconciliation and the breaking down of barriers inspired in human beings themselves. Here is also resurrection and new life even in the face of what seems to us to be intractable divisions and meaningless tragedy. For us, the transformation Christ brings about happens here at this feast, this foretaste of the wedding banquet of the Lamb, at this offering of the sacrifice of the Cross, as we eat and drink the transformed elements of bread and wine, become his Body and Blood. Christ gives his own life to us so that we can bring it to others so that the life of the world might be renewed and changed into something infinitely more glorious.

As Jesus constantly reminds his disciples, the new wine of God's kingdom is only reached

through the shedding of blood. We can only get there through our uniting of ourselves in some way with his sacrificial death. But there will be a great deal of rejoicing, and even perhaps the raising of a glass or two at the wedding feast *on the third day +*

