

# PARISH NEWSLETTER

St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden & Kilgwrrwg

## IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

**There is no pressure whatsoever upon anyone to attend services in person - everyone's priority must be to stay as safe as possible and decide what to do according to their assessment of the risks involved to them. We'll continue to live-stream for those who can't come and, of course, in the possible event of churches being closed for public worship again. 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  
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10<sup>th</sup> January 2021

*The Baptism of the Lord*

*Year B*



## The Collect

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit, grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; 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 book of Genesis [1. 1 - 5]

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

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

## Psalm 29

**R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters**

Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

**R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon the mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendour.

**R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

**R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare.

And in the temple of the Lord all are crying, 'Glory!'

**R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters**

The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore. The Lord shall give strength to his people; the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

**R/ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters**

## A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied – altogether there were about twelve of them. [19. 1-7]

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

## Gradual Hymn

### The Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!

John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said:

This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world

**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:

**And also with you**

### Hear the Holy Gospel according to St Mark *Glory to you, O Lord.*

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

[St Mark 1. 4-11]

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

## For Your Prayers

That Christians may always live in accordance with the dignity of their baptism

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; Jenny Beach; Gareth & Barbara Howells

### For the Departed:

The recently departed; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Angela Dye; Phyllis Meade; Hartley Brooks, Margot Brooks; Connie Cook

### Thought for the Week

"We're all in winter's grip, but even more caught is the person who loves because they're held by Love's power."

*Hadewijch, (13<sup>th</sup> Century mystic) "Poems in Stanzas"*



## 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:** Is this right, Esther? You saw something extraordinary at the river Jordan the other day?

**Esther:** It wasn't so much a question of what I actually saw, but yes, I did experience something quite extraordinary.

**Jereboam:** What had led you to the Jordan in the first place?

**Esther:** Well, I'd heard that this man John was conducting his cleansing ceremonies in the river. That reminded me of the story of Naaman: you know, he was healed when Elisha told him to wash seven times in the Jordan. So I told myself that there was nothing to lose, and I went along to see whether my pains could be cured. I've been suffering for years, you see.

**Jereboam:** And did it work?

**Esther:** I think it must have done: I wasn't aware of any immediate change, but by the end of the afternoon I felt better than I've done for years.

**Jereboam:** Marvellous! Was that the extraordinary experience you mentioned?

**Esther:** Not exactly, although the two things were probably connected. Just after my cleansing – or baptism, they call it -- a man called Jesus stepped forward. He and John seemed to know each other pretty well already. They had a curious discussion about which one of them was going to baptise the other. In the end it was John who baptised Jesus, and as he did so I felt something shift inside me. I think we all sensed it – it was as if the whole place somehow changed. We realised that there was something remarkable about Jesus. I don't think that he himself had changed particularly; it's just that we all suddenly realised how

special he was. I know this sounds rather strange, but I had a strong sense that Jesus was connected to God.

**Jereboam:** Actually I was speaking to someone else who reckoned that Jesus is God.

**Esther:** Oh, I couldn't...well, I was about to say that I shouldn't describe anyone like that, but I'll admit that Jesus does rather give that impression. There's something very special about him.

### 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 Baptism of the Lord. In St Mark's Gospel, after Jesus' baptism: "On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'"

This feast marks the end of the Christmas season. Monday begins the Epiphany Season, the winter ordinary time of the Church's year which will continue until Ash Candelmas and the Sundays before Lent leading up to Ash Wednesday on 17<sup>th</sup> February.

This week we begin a four week cycle of weekday readings from the Letter to the Hebrews, the longest letter to any community in the New Testament. For the next six weeks, until the beginning of Lent, the weekday gospels are taken from St Mark's Gospel.

This week St Mark offers us a look at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Monday he calls his first disciples: Simon and Andrew, John and James. He drives out evil spirits and heals Peter's mother-

in-law. When he slips away to pray and the crowd follows, he returns to preaching: "For this purpose have I come." Moved with pity, he heals a leper who told so many people about his healing that "it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly." When a paralytic was lowered down through a roof for healing, Jesus forgives sins to the scepticism of the scribes. The week ends as Jesus extends an invitation to the despised tax collector, Levi or Matthew. He says to him, "Follow me."

**Next Sunday** 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."



## A Reflection for The Baptism of the Lord

+ The baptism of Jesus was, of course, in all kinds of ways very different from our own. Our baptisms were probably in comparison fairly uneventful. Very probably when we were baptised - unless we were surrounded by the dramatic liturgy of the Easter Vigil - then, either as infants or as adults, a little water was gently and carefully poured on our heads by a priest speaking quietly standing next to a font in a church building. Just a couple of weeks ago - & I know it already seems longer ago than that - we celebrated the beginning of Christmas, and images of the stable at Bethlehem are probably still uppermost in our minds, so much so that today's feast of the Baptism of our Lord right coming here right at the end of the Christmas season finds us a bit unprepared to feel the impact of what really happened. From all the Gospel accounts, John the Baptist wasn't exactly a cosy figure and he offered little in the way of comfort and reassurance. Despite his background - he comes from a family of the Jewish

priesthood, he was fierce, outspoken, direct, even outlandish looking, and he lived an unconventional kind of life. He would soon be executed for his refusal to tread the tightrope of a religious politician. And for anyone to come to John for baptism was to ask to be cut down to size and jolted into repentance. And in today's Gospel - we see Jesus, who the Christmas message declares to be God, receiving the baptism of repentance at the hands of John. So what is going on in this strange episode we celebrate today? This isn't, on the face of it an appropriate thing for Jesus to do. He is the promised Saviour, the anointed Messiah, he doesn't need this at all, and yet he submits to something which symbolises repentance and humility.

What was the Lord doing there? It even struck John the Baptist as odd. This is a total role-reversal. Jesus, God come among us, is behaving like a repentant sinner and submerging himself in the messiness of human reality.

And that's the point. Today we are really not so very far from the Bethlehem stable at all, in that here by the banks of the river Jordan we see God coming among us to share our human condition and declaring his solidarity and one-ness with his people. Jesus doesn't do this because he has to: he does this as a continuation of the event begun when the angel appeared to Mary - this is God acting out of love and compassion and declaring he will not be separated from us.

And in the weeks and months ahead - as this year's long Epiphany season gives way to Lent & Easter - we see that the Lord's birth, life and death and rising again are not isolated incidents but part of the same process of salvation, of God's sharing our life and what that inevitably entails in order to share his eternal, divine life with us. Here at the baptism of the Lord we look back to Bethlehem and we also look forward to Good Friday and Easter morning. From the very beginning we see Jesus sharing our material nature, taking on the sins of humanity. We are not saved from a distance by a Saviour who keeps himself invulnerable and above the human struggle against alienation and those things which lead to death, physical or spiritual, moral and ethical. The one who will die for us also lives for us and takes on our human condition and we see

this dramatically acted out before us in his baptism.

In comparison, our own celebrations of baptism may seem to be very tame ceremonies. There doesn't seem to be much going on, some prayers, a pouring of water, an anointing with oil, but its true effects are matters of life and death, and by it we too are involved in mysteries which change the world.

Today's feast celebrates not just Christ's baptism, but ours. Through our baptism we have been born from above -- from God -- and have become the children of God. Just as Jesus shared our human life through his birth at Bethlehem, so we share his divine life through our birth at baptism. We become God's beloved sons or daughters, with whom he is well pleased.

At the end of the Christmas season our decorations, if they are still up, start to look a little faded and worn. But today, just as we think the Christmas glory is departing and leaving us at the start of another uncertain year - we have a Gospel of new beginnings and a reminder of our own vocation as part of Christ's Body. As we begin the New Year, the message is the same; God is with us and shares our triumphs and disasters, our joy and our pain, and sometimes the sheer attrition and tension, the stress and daily grind of everyday life.

Here at the beginning of a New Year - the strangest and most anxious beginning of a New Year we can remember - we are calling to mind the Lord's baptism and our own. And it raises questions as to the meaning of purpose of our own baptismal vocation - our own dying with Christ in order to rise with him.

We are not called to a private, exclusive, individual relationship between each one of us and God; rather our baptism commissions us - in whatever way we are able, through whatever means God's grace gives us - to share the faith we have received. Living the faith is inescapably to share it, as those probably apocryphal words sometimes attributed to St Francis tell us - "preach the faith: if necessary, use words." But whoever actually said it, it's another illustration of that old saying that most often *'the faith is caught, not taught.'* And when God calls us to any task he always gives us the strength to carry it out.

After his baptism Jesus prepared for his mission by spending forty days praying in the desert. And this should remind us that we can't be faithful to our own baptismal calling without God's help, which we can only find in a pattern of regular prayer and worship - in whatever way we can do that now - whether it's in person or at the other end of a screen. The greatest mistake anyone could make - and any Church body could make - would be to try to do God's work without first seeking the sustaining and empowering reality of his presence. +



### Saint of the Week Saint Hilary of Poitiers Feast day 13<sup>th</sup> January

Hilary was born in the year 315, in Poitiers, a town in what is now modern France. His family was prosperous and well-known, but probably still adhered to pre-Christian paganism. .

Hilary himself received a good education, being instructed in all the branches of classical learning, including Greek philosophy. Having also taken up the study of Holy Scripture and finding there the meaning and truth he sought and it's compatibility with classical philosophy, he was baptised into the Church. He married and brought up a family.

We know nothing of the bishops who governed this society in the beginning. Hilary is the first concerning whom we have authentic information, and this is due to the important part he played in opposing unorthodox, heretical, ideas about God.

Hilary lived the faith in such an exemplary way that he was appointed bishop of his home city of Poitiers from 353 to 368. Due to the involvement of the Roman emperors in Church matters, Hilary was exiled for his defence of orthodoxy. He accepted exile calmly using the time to write books explaining the faith to unbelievers.

His teaching and writings, influenced greatly by the theology of the Greek Fathers of the Church, had converted many. He was returned to his bishopric in Poitiers in 361, where his writings and

preaching continued to convert people to faith in Christ..

Hilary in his writings and teaching was a defender of the divinity of Christ, true God and true man. We are told he was a gentle and courteous man, devoted to writing some of the greatest theology on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and was like his master in being labelled by those in authority as a "disturber of the peace." In a very troubled period in the life of the Church, his holiness was lived out in both scholarship and controversy. He is regarded as a Doctor (or official teacher) of the Church.

### Between the Epiphany and Lent

Easter Sunday this year is early - falling on April 4<sup>th</sup> - with Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent now only just over a month away (February 17<sup>th</sup>.)

The sequence of Sundays after the Epiphany and before Lent is therefore a little shorter than usual.

This period of the weeks of Epiphany, sometimes referred to as 'winter ordinary time' is a season when the focus of the liturgy and its readings is directed to the proclamation and recognition of Jesus as Saviour of the world. The Gospels stress who Jesus is - Israel's Messiah, the long awaited Christ, the anointed one..

Jesus calls together his first apostles and disciples and declares his glory in signs such as the miracle at the marriage feast at Cana.

This period of what we might call an extended Christmas season, comes to an end at Candlemas, the Feast of the Presentation, when we celebrate Jesus' recognition as 'the light to lighten the gentiles' by Simeon and Anna.

After Candlemas, recollecting Simeon's words to blessed Mary that a sword will pierce her heart at the death of her Son, our focus turns towards the coming season of Lent as we get ready spiritually for the beginning of this season of joyful renewal and penitential preparation for Easter.

