

# PARISH NEWSLETTER

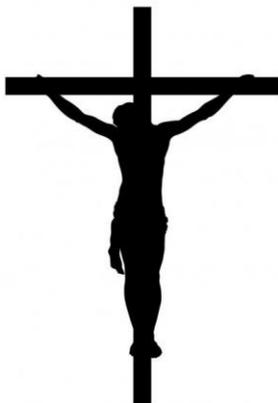
St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden, & Kilgwrrwg

## IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

**St Arvan's Church is now open again for worship at 10 a.m. on Sundays. Places must be booked and social distancing maintained in the building and following services. Again we stress there is no absolutely no obligation to attend in person, and that your own safety and health & those of others must remain paramount. Our broadcast services will continue as follows: Sunday Eucharist at 10 a.m. and celebration of Night Prayer on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. are live-streamed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/vicaragecello/> 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;  
Mobile 07867803479

**7<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
The Third Sunday  
of Lent**



## The Collect

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; 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 Exodus

Then God spoke all these words: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour. [20. 1 - 17]

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

## Psalm 19 7 - 14

**R/You, Lord, have the words of eternal life.**

The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the innocent. The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to the eyes.

**R/You, Lord, have the words of eternal life.**

The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.

**R/You, Lord, have the words of eternal life.**

By them also is your servant enlightened, and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can tell how often he offends? Cleanse me from my secret faults. Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion over me; then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a great offence.

**R/You, Lord, have the words of eternal life.**

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

**R/You, Lord, have the words of eternal life.**

**A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians** [1; 18 - 25]

The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

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

**Gradual Hymn**

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
King of endless glory.  
God loved the world so much  
that he gave his only Son;  
Everyone who believes in him  
has eternal life.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
King of endless glory.**

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 Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for

your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' They then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken

[St John 2. 13 - 22]

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



**For Your Prayers**

That we may live our lives in the light of the cross and resurrection of Christ our Lord.

For those of us unable to worship in person that our spiritual communions will give us the grace to serve Christ more fully.

Those throughout the world suffering from the Coronavirus - for 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; Carol

**For the Departed:**

The recently departed: Francois Richli; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time; Robert Dare; John Cann

**Thought for the Week**

"Let me love you, my Lord and my God, and see myself as I really am -- a pilgrim in this world, a Christian called to respect and love all whose lives I touch, those in authority over me or those under my authority, my friends and my enemies. Help me to conquer anger with gentleness, greed by generosity, apathy by fervour. Help me to forget myself and reach out towards others."

*(A Prayer attributed to Pope Clement XI)*

**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'*

**Merari**

**Jereboam:** I think I remember Jesus telling his followers about how to pray: on their own, in secret and with the door shut.

**Merari:** Yes, that's right.

**Jereboam:** I've been thinking though: what about praying together with

other members of the Church? That happens regularly. Aren't you contradicting Jesus?

**Merari:** I don't think so, no. His point was that the important aspect of prayer is one's relationship with God. You are not demonstrating anything to anybody.

**Jereboam:** I think we'd all agree with that.

**Merari:** On the other hand, though, we believe that the Church is the Body of Christ. Through the Church we receive his body and blood; through Jesus, and therefore through the Church, "we are saved and made free", as the saying goes. It follows naturally that we should pray together -- as a family, if you like. Of course we still pray individually, and I like to think that our gatherings grow out of our private prayers. Our worship together is a sort of culmination of everything that we do individually.

**Jereboam:** That must have implications for how the gatherings are conducted.

**Merari:** Certainly, yes. There shouldn't be a contradiction between what we do in private and what we do as a community. The sense of awe, the frustrations, darkness, exhilaration, emptiness, the silence .. all those are natural parts of prayer, and the community has to allow for them, to accommodate them. Otherwise I think that people might pray better by themselves. To me, the sense of awe is very important. As a young man I once went to the Temple, expecting to find a quiet corner where I could kneel down and pray. It was such a chaos of bustling, worldly nonsense, that I just couldn't do anything.

**Jereboam:** Jesus had a similar reaction too, as I recall, clearing out traders from the Temple.

**Merari:** Yes, I can't imagine that he found dodgy pigeon-sellers any more conducive to private prayer than I do...



## 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 Third Sunday of Lent, and we hear read the Ten Commandments, and in the Gospel witness Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple. He says, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." St John's Gospel tells us "therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken."

In the readings this week at the Eucharist our focus falls on the Gospels: Jesus challenges the people in his hometown of Nazareth to look at him in a new way - "No prophet is accepted in his own native place." In a fury, they drive him out of the temple. Peter asks Jesus the limits of forgiveness. Jesus says that we must forgive again and again. He tells the parable about the servant, who though forgiven himself, does not forgive his fellow servants. Jesus has come to fulfill the law and the words of the prophets, not abolish them. When someone claimed that Jesus must be using Satan's power to heal, Jesus responds "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house." When asked to name the "greatest" commandment, Jesus names two, thus putting together the necessity of loving God with our entire being and loving our neighbour as our very selves. The week ends as Jesus tells the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple. I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who

exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

**Next Sunday**, the Fourth Sunday of Lent we hear Jesus' words to Nicodemus in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus will be lifted up on the cross to heal us from the power of sin and death. This gospel, which is written like a trial, tells us the verdict. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

## A Reflection for the Third Sunday of Lent

+ We live at a time of rapid and often disrupting change. For many people their experience of life has become random and without meaning. And what probably lies behind the increasing incidence of emotional distress in our society – made significantly worse by Covid-19 - is the perceived futility of the age-old human struggle to make sense of things, what seems to be a basic instinct that our lives should have a joined-up narrative and some kind of meaning. Previous generations, because of social stability – even if much of it was cruel, unjust and wasteful of human lives and potential - and a much slower rate of change had a stronger grasp of the meaning of their lives, and despite the personal and collective catastrophes which befell them - often on a scale which makes even our own troubles now pale into insignificance, a greater sense of their own identity and where they belonged, where their lives fitted into the scheme of things.

Meaning gives us both resilience and a greater ability to cope, and if we have an explanation for what happens, it gives us strength. That's what past generations drew comfort from. As someone has written recently "it is the sheer meaninglessness of the chaotic instability of our experiences which exposes us to despair. We have no answer to "why me?" We have no account for the suffering which is the inevitable lot of human beings - death, disease, betrayal, frustration - other than to employ desperate strategies to avoid them.....we've replaced lives that were nasty, brutish and short with lives which are insecure, disorientated and long."

So what is our response in the midst of crisis and disruption as followers of Christ, as people who do have belief and a meaning to their lives, an awareness, even if partial, idea of where our lives fit into the scheme of things, and an idea that the narrative of our lives is part of an on-going stream of belief and practice which will end in hope, not despair, with ultimate meaning, not meaninglessness. Having said that, whether we like it or not, whether we are always aware of it or not, we are inevitably part of and, to an extent, products of the culture which surrounds us. So the surrounding loss of "groundedness" and the lack of a sense of meaning and the bewildering sense of chaotic change affects us, too. The difficulty for us all is that as we try to relate to the shifting culture around us, we can too easily end up incorporating into our common life those very aspects of modern life which lead to instability and lack of meaning. It's probably the most pressing problem the Church - that is, all of us - has today: the vital question of how we witness to the reality of the Gospel in a way people can relate to, without robbing the message of the Gospel of its meaning and its urgency? How do we witness to ultimate meaning in a world which is largely devoid of it and even denies the possibility of it?

Obviously, we are not going to answer questions like these that now, only to make the essential point about the Christian Gospel that it requires conversion, and that conversion doesn't begin with other people, particularly the people who are not like us and who we think are in most need of it, but it has to begin with *me* - *with each one of us*. During Lent particularly, we are encouraged to give ourselves space to respond to Christ's call in order to make us more open to God and more available to each other. It's a time when we can learn to live differently, to breathe with a different rhythm and to immerse ourselves in the atmosphere of the Gospels and in those things which have proved spiritually most valuable in the tradition of the Church. Our attitude to the culture of the society in which we live, isn't a question of fighting to preserve our spiritual exclusivity or our ritual purity - we are not Pharisees after all - but it is a matter of careful discernment and a striving to preserve true human values - what is of God and

what isn't, what leads to life and what doesn't. God wants us to live and to be, in the words of a modern French theologian, a source of present and future life for each other. So when we pray, when we fast, when we carry out acts of generosity and service to others, when we gather here to offer and to receive Christ in the Eucharist, we never act as isolated individuals, but in mutual support of one another as members of Christ's Body. Our belief in the saving power of the cross and resurrection of Christ makes us more fully human - more in tune with the true God-given vocation of humanity - not less. Our Faith says we are more fully human when we acknowledge our dependence on God, when we don't try put ourselves at the centre of the universe. We become more authentically human when we acknowledge both our place in the creation, and our creator. And it is at this point that we need to take on board the meaning of Jesus' words in this morning's Gospel.

In addition to the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, the Temple at Jerusalem was the other great focus of the experience of God for the Jewish people. If we are not careful we can come away from our reading of the Old Testament with a belief that the Jewish faith was entirely a religion of the Book. Not so, before the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 by the Romans, the faith of Israel was intensely liturgical, focusing on the Temple in Jerusalem as the centre of pilgrimage, the great place of worship and ritual and contemplation, a place which evoked a deep reverence and of joy. We shouldn't underestimate the real religious impact of Jerusalem as a place of encounter with God. But again Jesus is saying it's not enough. And it's not enough because it tries to restrict the experience of God to a particular place and to a particular nation and race. "Pull down this temple," he says, "and I will rebuild it in three days." The true Temple he is saying to us isn't something built by human hands. The true place of the encounter between God and the human race is now Christ himself, true man and true God. Christ himself has become the place where we meet God's glory, and because God in Jesus shares our humanity - our human-ness - we can

respond to him in a relationship which is based not only on awe and majesty but also on friendship, kinship and intimate understanding. God becomes a human being to lead us to God.

And there is more: "Destroy this Temple and I will rebuild it in three days," Jesus says and here he is both predicting his own death and resurrection and saying, that his death will lead to the encounter with God in his risen body being a universal encounter - accessible at all times and in all places - even now, here, today. This is what gives meaning to our human lives; the narrative of human life reaches its conclusion in our sharing in the new life of the resurrection. The cross, that ultimate cynical symbol of negation, becomes, as St Paul says, "the power of God and the wisdom of God," it becomes the means which leads to life.

In these weeks of Lent God offers his grace to us in a special way - through our own identification with his Son in his passion and death - through our own contemplation of the cross, through our taking of the cross on to our own shoulders - to bring us to healing and change and to our own true human destiny which is life in all its fullness. Our task is to make the most of the time we are given to hear his call and follow wherever it is leading us. +

