

PARISH NEWSLETTER

St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden, & Kilgwrrwg

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

St Arvan's Church is open for worship at 10 a.m. on Sundays. Places must be pre-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 pm are live-streamed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/vicaragecello1/> 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
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21st March 2021 The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Passion Sunday



The Collect

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; 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 prophet Jeremiah [31. 31 - 34]

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

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

Psalm 51 1- 12 *Miserere mei, Deus*

**R/ A clean heart create in me,
O God.**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; in your great compassion blot out my offences. Wash me through and through from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.

**R/ A clean heart create in me,
O God.**

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. And so you are justified when you speak and upright in your judgement.

**R/ A clean heart create in me,
O God.**

Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, a sinner from my mother's womb.

For behold, you look for truth deep within me, and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

**R/ A clean heart create in me,
O God.**

Purge me from my sin and I shall be pure; wash me and I shall be clean indeed.

Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the body you have broken may rejoice.

**R/ A clean heart create in me,
O God.**

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your holy Spirit from me.

**R/ A clean heart create in me,
O God.**

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews [5; 5 - 10]

Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'; as he says also in another place, 'You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek.' In the days of his flesh,

Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

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

Gradual Hymn

The Gospel

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.
If a man serves me, says the Lord,
he must follow me;
Wherever I am, my servant
will be there also.
**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.

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this

reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

(St John 12. 20 - 33)

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



For Your Prayers

For the Church, our mother in the faith, that we may be led to the glory of resurrection
Our own mothers, living or departed
For devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the first Christian and mother of the Church
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 baptized 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: Carol; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time; Alec Davies; Valerie Henderson; Roger Brooks; Elisabeth Davies; Audrey Lines

Thought for the Week

"The purpose of the Incarnation is to establish full communion between God and humanity so that in Christ humanity may find adoption and immortality, often called deification by the Fathers: not by emptying human nature but by fulfilling it in the divine life, since only in God is human nature truly itself."

*Olivier Clement,
"The Roots of Christian Mysticism"*

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'

Eliphaz

Jereboam: I often think that there's something rather beautiful about this whole question of resurrection.

Eliphaz: I see what you mean, but we don't believe in something just because it happens to be beautiful. We believe in resurrection because...well, because we do. Beauty doesn't come into it.

Jereboam: But you have to admit that there's something lovely about the whole idea of death and resurrection -- of regeneration, if you like. It can be relevant to everyday life in all sorts of ways. Someone might fail to achieve something, but might feel reassured that new life can be breathed into their efforts. Conflict can be followed by peace. In many circumstances the idea of resurrection offers valuable encouragement.

Eliphaz: Well, yes: again I see what you mean -- and I don't actually disagree with you. There's one thing, though. We believe that Jesus' death and resurrection transformed the world. Our relationship to God, fundamental questions about good and evil and how we deal with them...all those were changed for ever. I shouldn't want to reduce such a momentous upheaval to the level of "everything will be all right in the end; don't worry." We're talking about the crucifixion of the Son of God, not just about disappointment.

Jereboam: I didn't mean to suggest...

Eliphaz: Oh, don't worry. Let's talk about something that Jesus said: "Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest." Those words remind me that nothing on this earth becomes godly without some element of loss, of death. Sometimes that process is difficult and even painful. Ultimately everything we are and everything we do must be refashioned, to preserve their best features in a purer form. The challenge, I suppose, is to identify those godly aspects which will survive, and strive to develop them.

Jereboam: Now we're thinking along similar lines; that's the sort of thing that I meant.

Eliphaz: But you appreciate that the idea of resurrection -- and of Jesus' resurrection in particular -- is a tougher, more demanding aspect of our faith.

Jereboam: I'm sorry if I trivialised it.

Eliphaz: I ought to thank you really: it probably did me good to articulate my thoughts.

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

in the Gospel for the Fifth Sunday of Lent Jesus says that the "hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." However, he describes this glory in a surprising way, which explains who he is for us and who we are called to be: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be." Traditionally 'Passiontide' begins today -- our liturgies now begin to focus on the cross and its significance.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week prepare us for the gospels. We begin with the long, but well worth reading, story of Susanna, which ends in "blessing God who saves those who hope in him." The bronze serpent on a pole reminds us of Jesus' saving cross. Three young men refuse to commit idolatry and show us how God protects "the servants who trusted in him." God entered a covenant with Abraham. In the midst of his persecution, Jeremiah praises God, "For he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!" God promises to unite the people in an everlasting covenant.

The gospels are again from St John. Presented with a woman caught in adultery, Jesus replies, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Reminding us of the bronze serpent and his death, Jesus says, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM." To the

children of Abraham and to us Jesus declares, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." "Whoever keeps my word will never see death. ... Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM." They heard what they thought was blasphemy and tried to stone him. Jesus simply told the truth, because, "the Father is in me and I am in the Father." After the raising of Lazarus, the plans were set to destroy Jesus. The high priest says the prophetic words, "it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish."

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday as we make our way into Holy Week. We hear in the gospel about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. St Paul's invitation to us is to imitate Jesus who emptied himself, and the whole Passion is read, this year from St Mark.



A Reflection for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

+ "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Did the group of Greeks in the Gospel this morning *know* what they meant by asking this question? Perhaps they had heard of Jesus and what he had said and done and realised that this man was someone it was important for them to meet. Perhaps they were motivated by curiosity, perhaps most likely a mixture of the two. But like us, they have heard something of him and they want to find out more.

The response Our Lord makes is very surprising. He doesn't simply go and talk to them, but instead he meets them - and everyone who asks the same question, including ourselves - at their greatest point of need. What do we mean when we say we wish to see Jesus? And what is the point of any encounter with him?

Hence the startling response; because Jesus doesn't just go and have a chat with them, he starts talking about *his death*. And what Our Lord is saying to all of us is that if we really want to "see" him - that is, *to see him for who he really is* - we have to be confronted with the reality and

necessity of the cross, and that is how we come to see him and know him.

The question of who Jesus is is absolutely central here - literally crucial. In Jesus we see our God sharing our life and death to free us from sin - our own (the things we should take direct personal responsibility for) and those we can't help but be part of through the process of history and the general messiness of human life – I don't mean the St Augustine's frankly disastrous idea of inherited guilt - to bring us back into relationship with him. This is God's great act of solidarity with the human race, but not as a gesture or merely a symbol. God doesn't make empty gestures. This is the ultimate act of love which saves us and leads us to the new life of resurrection. The cross answers our question: "Sir, we want to see Jesus."

In the crucified Lord, lifted up from the earth, we see what the strange and mysterious love of God is all about, a love which holds nothing back, which has no limits placed upon it. In Jesus, crucified and risen, we are able to see God in a way we can relate to. And when we come to the cross, this is what we see. We are drawn to it not by the grotesque and barbaric spectacle of crucifixion, but by the love and mercy we see displayed there.

This may be a strange thing to say, but in the cross we don't only see Jesus, we also see ourselves. As followers of Jesus, as those he calls his friends, we are all called to meet and in some way embrace the cross in our own lives.

And this is what this morning's Gospel says to us. When in response to the enquiry of the little group of Greeks, Jesus alludes to the mystery of His death, he is saying to us all that his passion and death are somehow the key to a more profound understanding of the purpose of our lives. To see Jesus is to begin to be united with him in his sacrifice and in his dying to himself in order to live for us. At the heart of his message is the need to let go our selfishness and egoism so we might experience the life of God.

In today's Gospel, as he does so often, Jesus uses an example from the natural world to explain his meaning. "Unless a grain of wheat falls onto the earth and dies, it remains alone." The grain of wheat left by itself produces nothing; it's only when it seems to have died and has been

buried in the ground that it is able to bring forth fruit - in far greater abundance than a single grain. This is true of Jesus himself; we see this most clearly in the events of Holy Week and Easter, but it is true for us, too, in so far as we deepen our relationship, our true encounter with Christ in the light of the cross, the focus of our lives, the paradoxical source of all our freedom and the reason for our hope and joy.

Here, now, as we celebrate the unfolding story of our redemption of the Church's year, as we spend time in prayer, the events of the Gospel come alive for us. We too say 'we wish to see Jesus', and we do see him lifted up before us, at every celebration of the Eucharist. We see Christ, and he draws us to himself, in all the sacraments, especially when we come together at the Eucharist to offer his death to the Father and to receive his life in Holy Communion.

We will see and encounter Jesus in a particularly intense way through the celebration of the liturgies of next week - Holy Week - which is why we should try to experience as much of it as we possibly can, in whatever way we can. We miss the point *completely, absolutely and altogether* if we allow ourselves to be put off by the angst, the suffering and the pain of Holy Week and simply try to experience Easter Day in isolation from the events leading up to it. After the events of the last year, they speak to us directly and clearly. The secular symbols of Easter chicks and chocolate eggs are all very nice, and their origins and what they are trying to say to us, have largely been forgotten, but they won't change us and transform us. They won't alter our way of looking at the world or how we treat one another. And, of course they're not intended to.

Our society's rejection of Christian faith, if you take it at face value, anyway, is supposed to be partly about the desire to reject fantasy and the need to face up to harsh realities – yet our public discourse has never been more filled with fantasy, wild conspiracy theories and abject wishful thinking.

In stark contrast, we believe that we find salvation and freedom and hope - as the Greeks did in the Gospel today - in the reality of the divine / human encounter in Christ, in the Gospel message of love and compassion, and in our participation in the mystery of Jesus' ultimate and victorious

confrontation with death and the interior and external darkness of a world fallen away from the reality of God. This is what we now begin to focus upon at this most sacred period of the Christian year.

The Annunciation

25th March

This solemn feast marks the conception of Christ in the womb of Mary and has been celebrated in the Church at least since the late fourth century. More perhaps even than Christmas, this is the great feast of the Incarnation. The story of the announcement of the coming of God made flesh in the person of his Son, Jesus the Christ, the Anointed One, is heard in the Gospel according to St Luke. The perfect humanity and the complete divinity of Jesus is affirmed, following the controversies around those orthodox assertions, which themselves led to the acknowledgement of Blessed Mary as 'Theotokos', in Greek - literally, 'God-bearer,' which in the West is translated as 'Mother of God.'

The celebration took on strong associations with the person of Mary, and became known in English as Lady Day. In more recent years, the Church has re-affirmed the day as a Feast of our Lord, but, of course, it remains a day on which his Blessed Mother has a unique place of honour and veneration.

