

PARISH NEWSLETTER

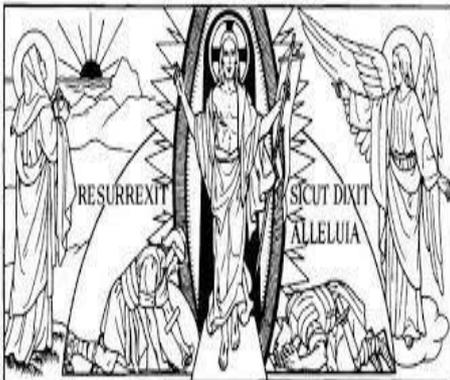
St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden, & Kilgwrrwg

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

St Arvan's Church is open for worship at 10 a.m. on Sundays. Places must be booked and social distancing maintained in the building and following services. Again we stress there is 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 a reflection & 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/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):
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The Vicarage, St Arvans
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11th April 2021 THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER



The Collect

Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ 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 Acts of the Apostles

The whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

[4; 32 - 35]

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

Psalm 133

R/ How good and pleasant it is to live together in unity.

O how good and pleasant it is, when a family lives together in unity!
It is like fine oil upon the head that runs down upon the beard, Upon the beard of Aaron, and runs down upon the collar of his robe.

R/ How good and pleasant it is to live together in unity.

It is like the dew of Hermon that falls upon the hills of Zion. For there the Lord has ordained the blessing: life for evermore.

R/ How good and pleasant it is to live together in unity.

A reading from the first letter of St John [1; 1 - 2. 2]

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

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

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said:

'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

**Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St. John. [20, 19 - 31]**

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

It was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.' A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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



For Your Prayers

That we may rejoice in the glorious resurrection of Christ our Lord
The Queen and members of the Royal Family.

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

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; Hans Kung, priest; Margaret May Argile; our own departed relatives &

friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time; Audrey Sherwood; Roger Colthart; Barzil Jenkins

Thought for the Week

"The Paschal Mystery is above all the mystery of life in which the Church, by celebrating the death and resurrection of Christ, enters into the Kingdom of Life which He has established once for all by his definitive victory over sin and death."

Thomas Merton

"Seasons of Celebration"

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'

Aminadab

Jereboam: Can you bring me up to date, Aminadab?

Aminadab: I'll try. Things are changing all the time, though.

Jereboam: From what I hear, it seems that some of Jesus' followers are annoyed with themselves at the moment...quite apart from their joy at Jesus' return. Peter's terribly upset about his denials, for example. And obviously Judas regretted his actions bitterly.

Aminadab: It's such a shame: I used to like Judas, and he was a good man in many ways. Things just got out of hand.

Jereboam: I'll say they did. What about the others though?

Aminadab: Well, Thomas is furious with himself for doubting that Jesus had risen from the dead. I must say that I sympathise with him: it was such an extraordinary thing to happen, after all. I think he's embarrassed that he didn't trust the people who had seen Jesus. Perhaps he thought they were making it up, or, more likely, he assumed that they were

imagining things – either way he regrets it now.

Jereboam: I can see why, but surely his reaction was sensible enough. You can't go around believing everything just because other people do. I rather admire Thomas' independence of thought, to be honest.

Aminadab: I quite agree. Personally I feel quite encouraged by his experience. Let's face it: many of us haven't seen Jesus yet – since his resurrection, I mean – and it's good to think that someone like Thomas has scrutinised things and accepted them.

Jereboam: So you would say that Thomas shouldn't feel bad about his hesitation.

Aminadab: Absolutely not: he's saved the rest of us from an awful lot of doubts.

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

On the **Second Sunday of Easter**, also known as Low Sunday and Divine Mercy Sunday, the Easter Octave itself ends. In the first reading today from the Acts of the Apostles, we are given a picture of how the early Christian community lived its life

of faith by sharing everything in common. In St John's Gospel, Jesus appears to the Apostles, hiding in fear, and gives them the gift of his Spirit, calling them to forgive sins. We are reminded by the story of St Thomas that the gospel is written so that we might come to believe in our Lord and have life in his name.

At the Eucharist this week the Acts of the Apostles offers us the challenges the apostles faced both from within the earliest Church communities and from the Jewish religious authorities.

For the remaining five weeks of the Easter season, weekday readings will be from the Acts of the Apostles and from St John's Gospel, which offers stories of Jesus' ministry not heard during the Ordinary Time of the liturgical year.

The weekday readings begin with the frightened Pharisee, Nicodemus, coming at night to speak to Jesus, asking how anyone can be "born again." Jesus says we must be born of water and Spirit. The gospel offers a poetic look at light and darkness, good and evil: "the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light...But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God. John writes, "For the one whom God sent speaks the words of God." Jesus feeds the 5,000 people. Alone in a storm, the disciples are afraid -- but more fearful when Jesus walks across the water toward them. "It is I. Do not be afraid," Jesus tells them.

Next Sunday, the Third Sunday of Easter, St Luke's Gospel has the very human story of Jesus' appearing to the disciples after the Resurrection, inviting them to touch his hands and feet to see that he is real. He ate with them and "he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."



A Reflection for Easter Sunday

We probably don't need to be reminded - slap bang in the middle of a global pandemic and all that goes with that - that society is suffering from a culture of suspicion and mistrust. Yet for society to function at all, there are many things that we simply have to take on trust – to survive at all, even if it's just to get in the car or walk down the street to do the shopping.

In familiar everyday experiences we are led to accept the trustworthiness of others because there is usually some sort of basis upon which to base our trust – people are usually civil and helpful, the car usually starts, other road users for the most part obey the highway code, the food shops more or less stock what we might need to survive at the price advertised, and that scientists tell us the truth about scientific data.

What I'm getting at here, of course, is that religious faith also involves us in a similar social dimension - it's not all about inner feelings and what makes us feel good.

The truth of God comes to us through the words, actions and witness of others, through our own sharing in their knowledge and expertise. That is why it's true when we say that our relationship with God – our lives of faith and belief – asks of us at the same time a relationship with one other.

What is particularly striking in today's Gospel - the story of the apostle Thomas – isn't just his reluctance to believe.

Perhaps we should re-evaluate the bad press he receives as "Doubting Thomas" after all, the words addressed to him by the Risen Lord in St John's Gospel - '*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe*' are intended more for us than they are for him.

In many ways Thomas by wanting to see for himself wasn't making an unreasonable demand; he is asking no more than what had already been given to the other disciples. What leaps out at us is his refusal to accept the word of his friends and companions at face value without personal experience. In this he is a strikingly modern figure. And yet in his scepticism and his doubt there's something constructive and truthful and essentially honest. Thomas wasn't a man who was lacking in courage or

commitment to his Lord. But when he didn't understand, he questioned. He questioned not to express dissent or in a spirit of corrosive distrust, but so that he might understand better and then believe. We shouldn't be afraid of our doubts or of the questions which spring to our minds: the truth can stand the strain of being explained; that's how we come to a better understanding of it. And if it can't stand rigorous questioning, then it can't be the truth and, in humility, we have to dig deeper.

But once Thomas did understand, his acceptance of the truth was total: 'My Lord and my God', he says, becoming in fact the first to recognise out loud the true identity of the Risen Jesus.

After that Thomas could begin to share in the Church's apostolic mission to make known the truth about Jesus and the Resurrection. The witness of Thomas and his brother apostles through their missionary activity would become in turn for those who couldn't share their first-hand physical experience of the Risen Christ the means by which they could, in trust and hope, enter upon their own discoveries of the truth, their own pilgrimages of faith and love; and the truth of that faith could then be verified in their own lived out experience of prayer and service.

And this is where we become aware of the great charge placed upon each and every professing Christian. The truth of our faith will only be glimpsed by those with whom we wish to share it if our lives in some way, even if falteringly and partially (which is probably the most we can hope for much of the time) reflect and support what it is we believe. These days – for all kinds of good historical reasons, we have a sharp eye for religious hypocrisy, although we might regret that that wariness doesn't also extend to politics and economics, or what's presented to us on social media. But we each have to follow Christ in our own way: we are all distinct personalities, with different gifts and attributes; there is no 'one size fits all' pattern and model of Christian discipleship. We have to follow Christ as people who are true to ourselves, not by pretending to be someone else – there's no set template apart from Christ himself. To put it another way, we are given Christian role models in the lives of the Saints, but we can only ever follow Christ as ourselves

not as them. And these gifts that Christ gives to each of us are meant to be used for the benefit of others, supporting and confirming them in their own journeys to encounter the reality of the Risen Christ. I suppose what I am saying is that in the end is that it's down to us, at least in the sense that we have in the first place to be receptive to what the Risen Lord is asking of us. There's a really great book - called '*H is for Hawk*,' by the author Helen Macdonald, which is on the surface about the art of training a goshawk, but really about the effects of grief and loss, about the tragically flawed life of the author TH White, and all kinds of other things. In it the author says, "*Looking for goshawks is like looking for grace: it comes, but not often, and you don't get to say when or how*"

But in order for God to communicate his grace, like the birdwatcher in the early morning we have to hang around with our eyes open, if I can put it that way, to be prayerfully receptive and alert, in order for him to give anything to us at all. Where the example of Thomas is helpful to us is that we can recognise his search for an authentic faith in and not to forsake honesty, even honest doubt, but to allow the risen Lord himself to reach out to us and draw us into the life of his resurrection – into the life of God.

Christ offers us life without limit or end, if we have the courage to accept his invitation. We are called to recognise him and the new life he offers us even in the midst in our own failings, our woundedness and vulnerability, even through our doubts and hesitations and our slowness to believe. Because it is by his wounds that our wounds are healed, by his risen life that our lives are renewed. +

Finding Joy & Hope in the Easter Season

More than just a day, or even a week, the Church gives us a seven-week Easter season to celebrate. Yet sometimes – particularly at present, maybe - our everyday lives feel so heavy that celebration is not a part of them. Illness in the family, loss of employment, the fear of what may come next and all the burdens of everyday life can make it a challenge to feel particularly joyful – even in the Easter

season.

But the joy we are being invited into this season is beyond what we see on the surface of our everyday lives. It's true that Jesus tells us to come to him with our burdens, but we usually can't believe it. Maybe we don't want to believe it. If I really allow Jesus to come into my heart the way he wants to, will he ask me to change my life in ways that are too hard? How do I share the chaos of my life with Jesus? If I keep him at arm's length, my life might be difficult, but at least my problems are familiar. What would it cost me to let go and change my life? We know our own faults and failings so well. Too well. We begin to believe that Jesus loves the way we love – with all of our human limits. How could Jesus love us and accept us the way we are right now? Maybe when we fix a few things about our lives, when we show more love and generosity to our spouse or to our closest friends, stop being so critical of family or acquaintances, to love a little more... because when we are perfect, then Jesus will love us.....?

If we can overcome our fears, and hear the voice of Christ speak to our hearts then will we become free. Suddenly, we are not afraid, not burdened, and simply ready to serve.

Christ loves us - now. At this moment, he holds each one of us in his embrace and loves us so freely at a depth that our human minds can't take in. Whether we comprehend this or not, the Lord loves us endlessly and waits for us with his arms open, ready to hold and support us. As we receive his welcome and feel the peace and joy of Easter wash over us, we can look over his shoulder, and see beyond to those in need who now wait for us. That's when we realise that the real joy in our lives is putting aside our own faults, challenges and difficulties for a while and entering into the lives of others. We leave ourselves behind and encounter others by being close to those crushed by life's troubles, sharing with those in needy, standing at the side of the sick, the elderly and those society rejects. We are being sent out as Easter People. We find peace in Jesus' love for us and now we share it with others. We find ourselves standing side by side with the Risen Lord, looking together at those we are put here love. That's where the real joy of Easter waits for us.