

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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2nd May 2021
THE FIFTH SUNDAY
OF EASTER B



The Collect

Almighty God,
who through your only-begotten Son
Jesus Christ have overcome death
and opened to us the gate of everlasting
life: grant that, as by your grace going
before us, you put into our minds good
desires, so by your continual help we
may bring them to good effect;
through Jesus Christ our risen 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

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.' So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He replied, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.' The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?' He commanded the chariot to stop, and both

of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. [8; 26-40]

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

Psalm 22, 24 - 30

**R/ All the ends of the earth
shall turn to you, O Lord.**

My praise is of him in the great assembly,
I will perform my vows in the presence of
those who worship him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
and those who seek the Lord shall praise
him: 'May your heart live for ever!'

**R/ All the ends of the earth
shall turn to you, O Lord.**

All the ends of the earth
shall remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
shall bow before him.
For kingship belongs to the Lord;
he rules over the nations.

**R/ All the ends of the earth
shall turn to you, O Lord.**

To him alone all who sleep in the earth
bow down in worship; all who go down
to the dust fall before him.
My soul shall live for him;
my descendants shall serve him;
they shall be known as the Lord's for ever.
They shall come and make known
to a people yet unborn
the saving deeds that he has done.

**R/ All the ends of the earth
shall turn to you, O Lord.**

**A reading from the first letter
of St John** [4; 7-21]

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

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

Alleluia, alleluia,
Jesus said: 'I give you a new
commandment
love one another just as I have loved you.
Alleluia

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

**Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St. John.**

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples [15, 1-8]

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



For Your Prayers

That we may always united to Christ,
the True Vine
The people of India.
Those throughout the world suffering from
the Coronavirus pandemic - 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;
Kim; Elisabeth; Helen Herbert; Dave;;
John, Gareth & Barbara Howells; John
Sherwood.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: John Dare; Audrey
Thomas; our own departed relatives &
friends, & those whose anniversaries of
death fall at this time: Jonathan; Isabelle
Ingledew; Rose Jones; Harvey Banks;
Patrick Semple, priest.

Thought for the Week

"The mystery of the Virgin is the first after-
effect of the Incarnation. The mystery of
the Virgin is like the ripple effect of a stone
thrown in the water: the first wave causes
all the others. This first concentric circle is
the Virgin Mary in relation to the
Incarnation. The waves will continue until
the end of times, and they are the Church"

Charles Journet
Parole et Silence

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'*

Baldad

Jereboam: I must say, those are magnificent vines, Baldad.

Baldad: Thank you. They've done particularly well this year.

Jereboam: I'm sure that's largely down to your skill.

Baldad: Well, I've learnt a bit over the years.

Jereboam: I'm always quite nervous about doing this sort of thing – you know, pruning and so on. Are there any expert tips you might be prepared to divulge?

Baldad: I don't see why not. Really the thing is to regard your vine almost like a person.

Jereboam: Like a person?

Baldad: That's right. You need to guide the vine, but you also need it to respond vigorously. Just imagine how useless it would be if the vine followed every adjustment you made, but in a limp, lifeless way. No: your aim is that the vine should be strong. It should be like a person showing initiative, but still under your guidance.

Jereboam: To be honest, I'm fairly happy about training the branches; it's the idea of cutting that worries me.

Baldad: Just remember that each part of the vine will always try to flourish in its own right. Your job is to control that growth for the good of the plant as a whole. You're a sort of overseer, if you like. Look at these grapes here then: beautiful colour, aren't they? Deep and rich... Now you see that stem there? That's where I cut. The leaves from that stem were coming right over here and stopping the sunlight from reaching the grapes, so for the good of the vine I had to cut them off. I know it seems drastic, but you either cut, and the vine flourishes, or else you leave it, and the vine as a whole suffers. There's no middle ground, I'm afraid. Mind you, you need to cut cleanly. If you tear the stem, there's always the danger of attracting mould or disease.

Jereboam: I understand all you say, but somehow it still seems wrong to discard anything that's growing strongly.

Baldad: All right: let's look at this in a different way. There's often nothing inherently wrong with the bits that we cut off. As I've said, they're just not right for the vine as a whole. Let's use our human

analogy once again. If my daughter pulls a silly face at me, I think it's funny. If she pulls that face at the little girl down the way and makes the girl cry, then she's overstepped the mark. "You do what you like," I might say, "up to a certain point. Beyond that point your actions are unacceptable." It's the same with the branches of the vine. Take that stem, for example. Until I cut it there, it was growing well, and I was happy with it. But that was where it had to stop. So far is good, but no further.

Jereboam: Have you heard of Jesus, by the way?

Baldad: The name sounds familiar.

Jereboam: He was going round as a preacher a few years back. Believe it or not, he used to talk about pruning vines.

Baldad: At least you had the good sense to come and ask me afterwards. You want to know about religion -- go and listen to a rabbi. If you want to know about vines, you'd be better off talking to an expert. I bet Jesus didn't tell you to think of a vine as a person, did he?

Jereboam: Well

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 today's Gospel for the Fifth Sunday of Easter, Jesus describes himself as the true vine. We are the branches that are pruned to produce more fruit. The invitation offered to us is to remain connected with Christ, that we might make our home in him, and bear much fruit.

Monday is the feast of the Apostles,

Saints Philip and James, Wednesday that of St Asaph, bishop.

Weekday readings continue from the Acts of the Apostles; we see Paul and Barnabas preaching to the Gentiles. They encounter some who want to make them gods; others who want to stone them. A major discussion is held about whether a Gentile had to become a Jew before becoming a Christian. Peter declared that God granted Gentiles "the Holy Spirit just as he did us" and urged them not to burden Gentiles with the difficult Jewish laws. The group turned to the Holy Spirit and prayed for guidance and decided that Gentiles did not have to adhere to all Jewish laws. Paul followed the Spirit to expand his travels, ending with his decision to go to Macedonia.

St John's Gospel continues the "Last Discourse" of Jesus, taking chapters 14 and 15 this week. The gospels reflect upon the inseparable love we share with God. "Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." He promises the Holy Spirit who "will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you." He offers us peace and encourages us "not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." He tells his followers, "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain." Saturday, Jesus reminds us that if the world didn't like his announcing and living of the good news, then it won't like our announcing and living it either.

Next Sunday is the Sixth Sunday of Easter: we hear the words Jesus uses to send us into the world: "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain."



A Reflection for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

+ In the Gospels Jesus takes all sorts of images taken from the natural world to illustrate our understanding of God and how we relate to him. These kind of illustrations are particularly powerful when they don't need very much by way of explanation because they speak to us in terms of what we think, feel and do. They are immediately recognisable. That would have been the case for all those who heard him.

Our modern lives are different - the way we live and work and, to an extent, relate to one another, in the way society is ordered, has altered dramatically over the course of two thousand years. Even in places like this so many people have lost their connection with nature – and even the names of trees, plants and animals from their everyday vocabulary. It impoverishes us not only in our appreciation of the past but of the everyday present. If we don't know what things are called, do we really see them at all, much less recognise a kind of kinship with them?

If we are familiar with the Gospels and the Church's liturgy, we're very used to images of Christ as king and lord, as judge and saviour, - last Sunday he himself in the Gospel described himself as the Good Shepherd - and all these descriptions have their own importance enriching our perspective on how Christ relates to us and to the whole creation. This morning we are given something a bit different - an altogether more down to earth image - one for gardeners and the owners of vineyards and the makers of wine. And before we think that's a bit Mediterranean, there are working vineyards just over the hill from us. In the Gospel passage today, St John gives us the illustration of the vine and its branches to express the relationship between Christ and us – his followers. The branches of a vine draw their life from the main stem of the vine and they come to produce grapes only if they remain attached to the vine. The branches of a vine don't only have an intimate relationship with the vine - they are one with it – part of it - and depend on it at all times, and form one living organism with it.

We may not be all that familiar with vines

as such - at least not on a commercial scale - we may have one in a sheltered spot in the garden, but we still encounter growing things and we don't need to have explained to us how parts of a living organism depend on other parts. The image of the vine can thus have a powerful effect on our imaginations and hearts, bringing us to an immediate awareness of how Christ is present and active within us. The sense of the intimate and sustaining presence in all things of the creating, redeeming, saving Christ should be the overarching message of the faith for all of us.

One of few beneficial side effects of the pandemic – at least in places like this – is we've had the space for silence and prayer, in time spent alone, walking or just watching to rising and the setting of the sun. The footpaths are being walked again, I like to think by people who are able to see the miracle of the world around them and the miracle which is themselves; and this image Jesus uses of the vine and its branches calls us to take seriously the cultivation of awareness of the presence of the Risen Christ among us and within us.

Yet it also calls us to see how the cultivation of this presence is not just a kind of mystical self-indulgence. The image of the vine enables us to realise that, just as the indwelling presence of Christ is the source of a genuine Christian life for the benefit both of ourselves and of others, so awareness of that presence impels us to be active both in growing in our own love one's own love of God and communion with Christ and in manifesting that love towards others and towards the world he created and holds in being. Jesus' commandment to us to love one another - which we hear echoed in the reading from the first letter of St John today is a call to share in his work - his mission of salvation to bring everything back into relationship, into *friendship* with God. I know that sounds more than a little it as if we are being asked to do the impossible. For the Lord tells us that the love with which we are meant to love one another is precisely the same love with which he has loved us and the whole world.

But as we know, we who are still celebrating, with the Church throughout the world, the Easter message of Resurrection, that this is a love which is

stronger than death itself.

We are dependent upon the presence of Christ for the renewal and transformation of our lives in the direction of faith, hope and love. We can only be effective in terms of the renewal of the life of the world if we ourselves are channels of that life-giving presence of Christ.

[So when we say 'Yes' to God here at the altar, when we take his life into our life, reinforcing what we said ourselves or what was said on our behalf at our baptism, committing ourselves and the detail our lives to his service, we are not being expected to rely on our own strength, our own inner resources, but on the same power which raised Christ from the tomb and brings him to sit at the right hand of God.]

The victory has already been won, the message of the Resurrection is that we are being asked to unite ourselves to new life in the communion of love which is God himself. +

