

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):
Fr Michael Gollop,
The Vicarage, St Arvans
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13th June 2021
The Second Sunday
after Trinity

The Collect

Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake, 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 Ezekiel

Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar; I will set it out. I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs; I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it, in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind. All the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD. I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree; I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I the LORD have spoken; I will a complish it.

[17. 22-24]

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

Psalms 92 1-4, 11-14

R/ It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord.

It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
To tell of your loving-kindness early in the morning and of your faithfulness in the night season;

R/ It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord.

On the psaltery and on the lyre and to the melody of the harp.
For you have made me glad by your acts, O Lord; and I shout for joy because of the works of your hands.

R/ It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord.

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.

Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God;

R/ It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord.

They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be green and succulent; That they may show how upright the Lord is, my rock, in whom there is no fault.

R/ It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord.

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

We are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord – for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

[5. 6-10; 14-17]

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

Gradual Hymn

The Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!
God so loved us when he sent his Son
To be the sacrifice
that takes our sins away.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

[Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St Mark](#)

Glory be to you, O Lord

Such a large crowd gathered around Jesus that he got into a boat and began to teach them using many parables. Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.' Jesus also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.' With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

[St Mark 4.26–34]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may follow the teachings of Christ and be led into ever deeper union with God the Holy Trinity.
The natural world and those who seek to preserve and restore it

For world leaders as they attempt to address the climate emergency
Those throughout the world who continue to suffer from the Coronavirus pandemic - for doctors, nurses and all medical staff, all carers, medical scientists and researchers.
All who are 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:
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; Kim; Elisabeth; Helen Herbert; Dave, John; Sue; Elizabeth.

For the Departed:

The recently departed; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Caroline Watkins; Nan Jenkins; George Thomas Gollop; Doreen Dunn; Geoffrey Rowell, bishop

Thought for the Week

"Stillness within one individual can affect society beyond measure."

- Bede Griffiths OSB

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'

Philip

Jereboam: I liked those images of plants...you know, the mustard-seeds and so on.

Philip: So did I. We've heard similar things down the years, but there's something new about what Jesus says. It's a small difference, but it seems significant. Think back to the prophet: "From the top of the cedar I will take a shoot and plant it myself on the high mountain of Israel."

Jereboam: I remember, yes...

Philip: Well, Jesus doesn't mention a mountain. I don't know if this is deliberate, but Jesus implies that God doesn't separate himself from the world to the degree that we've generally thought. The prophet's tree, in other words the house of Israel, was raised up above its surroundings. In Jesus' vision the kingdom of God integrates itself into an everyday environment.

Jereboam: Mind you, he still regards God with a great sense of awe.

Philip: Oh yes...after all, he refers to the "kingdom of God". That implies deference, as towards a king. And everyone knows that Jesus' teachings are demanding.

Jereboam: It's curious that he uses quite so many images. I'm told that he explains things in detail to his closest followers, but with us he often seems to rely on parables.

Philip: Well, his images are certainly striking and easy to remember. No-one's going to forget his sprouting seeds in a hurry. It's also hard to explain anything without fear of being misinterpreted.

Jereboam: You think so?

Philip: Oh, definitely. Take a simple sentence: "explanations can be

misinterpreted”, for example. Every word there is potentially ambiguous. An “explanation” could be purely factual, or else someone could be trying to pass off their opinion as fact. “Explanations CAN be misinterpreted”: does “can” mean that things are deliberately misinterpreted, or that confusion is sometimes unavoidable? Even the word “be” creates assumptions – to me it implies permanence, whereas a statement might become ambiguous only with changing fashions or within different traditions. The word “misinterpreted” can be subjective too. When some people say that something is “misinterpreted”, sometimes they really mean that the interpretation is valid, but that they disagree with it. Meanings are so complicated -- at every stage we risk misunderstanding. On the other hand, a nice little picture of a mustard-seed is harder to misconstrue.

Jereboam: Hmmm...interesting.

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 we begin the long sequence of Sundays after Trinity. The liturgical colour is green. Today’s Gospel sees Jesus compares our faith to the mustard seed. Our faith, like that tiny seed, can grow large and put forth large branches touching all those around us.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week continue from 1 & 2 Kings and other Old Testament books. It follows Elijah and Elisha - powerful prophets and agents of God’s word for the people.

The gospels this week continue from the Sermon on the Mount, in St Matthew’s Gospel. In revealing his new and deeper way, Jesus shares a most counter-cultural law, “offer no resistance to one who is evil.” And, he tells us to “Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.” He proclaims, “I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. ... For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?” And, just when we think he is asking the impossible of us, he goes even further, “So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” He warns his disciples against hypocrisy, “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them.” Praying and fasting have their own reward from the Lord. Jesus tells us to keep our prayer simple, “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him,” and he teaches us the Our Father. Jesus tells us that “The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light.” The week ends with his invitation to us to trust in God. “Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?”

Next Sunday we hear the story from St Mark’s Gospel about the storm at sea. Jesus calms the sea and asks, “Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?”

A Reflection for the Second Sunday after Trinity

+ + Sometimes we make ridiculously hard work of our practice of faith. We have a tendency either to approach it with a fixed grin of forced cheerfulness – otherwise we think we are letting the side down - or else so solemnly that we forget to be fully human. We have a regrettable tendency these days to want to take everything literally – and extends to the ways in which we look at Jesus in the Gospels. Honestly, the way he is viewed sometimes really should make us wonder why anyone followed him, or was drawn to him in the first place. We forget that, being fully human, he had a fully human sense of humour, and as part of the Jewish, rabbinical tradition of the first century, used in his preaching and teaching about

the nature of God and the kingdom of heaven, a great deal of laughter, satire, exaggeration and deliberate paradox. I don’t think his disciples would have found him hard going

But when come across the parables in the Gospels, we listen to them very solemnly and then try to draw straightforward and rather earnest, moral lessons from what he has said. We sometimes find it difficult to see the humour – we think, it’s in the Bible - *how can it be funny?* We all too often fail to appreciate the ironic, and even the fantastic, almost surreal elements of Jesus’ teaching - criticising the speck in our brother’s eye while not noticing the log in our own, the image of the camel trying to squeeze through the eye of a needle and so on. We feel we can’t laugh at what he says, even when his words are really crying out for that kind of reaction.

In today’s Gospel, we hear about the mustard seed that grows into a massive shrub, and puts out branches large enough for the birds to nest in. I think we are meant to find it just a bit funny; mustard plants can be pretty big - but not *that* big - even sparrows would have trouble finding a reliable and comfortable perch. We tend to think that we are meant to be serious and rather grim-faced in the presence of Christ. It’s instructive that in Umberto Eco’s book, *The Name of the Rose*, the monk who so aggressively denies that Christ had a sense of humour turns out to be a serial killer.

Now no one - I hope - still thinks that Christian liturgy should just be an imitation of popular mass entertainment with the clergy behaving like game-show hosts or stand-up comedians; the novelist, Alice Thomas Ellis’ comment in the 1980s about modern priests behaving like singing waiters still has a sting to it. We should take worship seriously - because it is meant to be a mirror, a reflection, of the life of heaven itself where the Saints rejoice in the presence of God. While we should avoid the flippant and the embarrassingly banal - the opposite of that doesn’t mean miserable and gloomy. There’s a well-documented story about the conversion of Russia to Orthodox. The emissaries of the Russian Prince Vladimir came to Constantinople to the great Church of Hagia Sophia and reported “We knew not whether we were in Heaven or on Earth... We only know that God dwells there among the people, and their service

is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations." Today we are in danger of having to update this and report that some aspects of modern worship make us feel just as if we were at a television panel show. So much for human progress. But true worship is meant to bring us to our knees, literally or metaphorically in adoration - as we know, that can happen in the smallest country church as much as in the most splendid of cathedrals. But undoubtedly in the life of the Church we do tend to take ourselves far too seriously (pomposity and a kind of *forced* solemnity - seriousness in the wrong sense - have always been the besetting sins of ecclesiastical life particularly - even Chaucer mentions it ...) and perhaps we don't take Our Lord himself and what he has to say to us in Word and Sacrament not even half seriously enough.

A few weeks ago we celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, Whitsunday, recalling how the Holy Spirit made the Church universal, Catholic - in the true, non-sectarian sense, able to take root in every culture, able to purify and bring home all valid human insights and aspirations, able to utter the truth about God in each and every language.

But in today's Gospel, we see another side of things as Jesus gives us another picture of what his Church should be at the same time, a self-consciously different image of a place where laughter can reveal the truth. If we are to be the Kingdom, the place where God reigns, then we cannot take ourselves too seriously. There's a description of the Church in another place and in another era - this time in the parishes in the slums of nineteenth century London, where the Anglo-Catholic ritualists again sought God in the beauty of holiness - but also as a place where God's word was spoken with laughter.

Two of the readings today mention trees and shrubs. In the first reading, the prophet Ezekiel paints a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel, all that remained of those who remained true to David's vision, like a tender twig plucked from the top of one of the tallest trees of the forest and becoming a noble cedar tree providing shelter for the whole earth. As Christians we such images as both prophecies of the Church that Jesus founded on the Rock of the Apostles' faith, and of the Kingdom of heaven itself which

the Church was founded to proclaim and help bring about.

Someone has said that sometimes, we have to recognise that we are like the 'crazy sparrows' who try to make their home among the mustard shrubs, shaken by the wind of the Holy Spirit rather than at ease in the secure tops of the cedar trees.

But at the heart of the Christian proclamation is another Tree, the tree of the Cross. One of the hymns we sing during Passiontide speaks of "God reigning from the tree" - if we want, not to see what the kingdom is like, but to become part of it, then the cross has to become part of our lives along with him who reigns from it. This is the kingdom of God - a kingdom of love and sacrifice - ironically a renunciation of everything in the human heart that leads to death - this is the reign God himself exercises in our midst, even as we struggle towards the capability of even a small expression of it in our own lives. But the Gospel tells us that Jesus came to save sinners; as the great St Augustine said, the Church the Lord founded is a school for sinners not a club for the pious - I've also heard the same view expressed as a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints. When we confess our sins, we become aware of our littleness and our frailty and fallibility and sometimes of our complete foolishness. When it's appropriate we shouldn't be afraid of taking a cue from Our Lord himself in the Gospels and laugh at the muddles we get ourselves into. It's an antidote to the pomposity and insufferable pride that sometimes goes with the practice of religion, and it may help us view other peoples' messes with more compassion and less censoriousness. It is Christ who by his assuming our human nature and by dying on the cross and rising to new life who takes away our sins. We can unite ourselves to him even if our faith is no bigger than a mustard seed - and he will do the rest +

Saint of the Week

16th June

St Richard of Chichester

Born near Droitwich in Worcestershire, in 1197, Richard was orphaned in early life. He was educated in Oxford and he taught there before spending time teaching and studying in Paris and Bologna.

He returned to England in 1235 and was appointed Chancellor of Oxford. Following on from this he became chancellor of Canterbury, and he shared the Archbishop's (his former tutor) ideals for clerical reform and supported the rights of the Church - even against the King. This led to the Archbishop being exiled and Richard went with him.

Richard was ordained in 1243 and became Bishop of Chichester in 1244, but his election hit problems with King Henry III of England and there followed a period of dispute between King and Bishop. As Bishop he expected discipline amongst his clergy, and this was a discipline that he lived by himself.

He ate a very simple diet and has been a vegetarian since his days at Oxford. He also wore a hair shirt and refused to eat off silver plates..

This prayer is ascribed to Richard of Chichester:

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits thou hast given me, for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, day by day. **Amen.**

