

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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4th July 2021
The Fifth Sunday
after Trinity B

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 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

The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. When I saw this, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking. He said to me: O man, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. .And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. He said to me, Man, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them. [2. 1-5]

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

Psalm 123

**R/ Our eyes look to the Lord our God,
until he shows us his mercy.**

To you I lift up my eyes, to you enthroned in the heavens. As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the Lord our God, until he show us his mercy.

**R/ Our eyes look to the Lord our God,
until he shows us his mercy.**

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy, for we have had more than enough of contempt,
Too much of the scorn of the indolent rich, and of the derision of the proud.

**R/ Our eyes look to the Lord our God,
until he shows us his mercy.**

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

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that this man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows – was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

[12. 2-10]

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
The Word was made flesh
and dwelt among us
to all who did accept him
He gave power to become children of God
Alleluia.

The Gospel

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Mark

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?'

And they took offence at him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.'

So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

[St Mark 6.1–13]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may have live out our faith joyful and with perseverance even in the face of rejection and failure.

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: Tony Hall; Alan Price; Nicola Plant; Philip Price; Brian Papps.

Thought for the Week

“It is not necessary to teach others, to cure them or to improve them; it is only necessary to live among them, sharing the human condition and being present to them in love.”

-St Charles de Foucauld (1858 –1916)

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'

Jereboam this week speaks about John the Baptist in the week that sees the feast of his Nativity

Adam & Sem

Jereboam: As part of our coverage of Jesus' return to his home town, I've come to the streets of Nazareth. Let's talk to two members of the public: Adam and Sem. Adam first...you're not convinced, are you?

Adam: Certainly not. Jesus and I grew up in the same neighbourhood here. He was always a pleasant lad, but now he's got carried away with all this God stuff. I'm not much of a synagogue man myself, but he's gone to the other extreme: he's obsessed with the whole thing. As for these supernatural powers we've heard about – rubbish! My mate went up to him today and said: "All right, make an olive tree grow in that field there." What happened? Nothing: it's all a con.

Jereboam: Sem, your views are rather different.

Sem: Definitely, yes. My wife and I have been following Jesus around for the last few weeks. We feel that we learn so much from him. He makes us different somehow – except that in one sense we haven't changed. With Jesus we become more like our real selves. And he doesn't do tricks; it's just that life seems to work differently when he's around. He has an amazing influence over things. The other day there was this huge gathering -- thousands of us there must have been -- and no-one had brought any food...apart from one boy, that is. Well, Jesus took this boy's food, and it somehow expanded, so that everybody had enough to eat. It was remarkable.

Adam: Oh, come on, mate. That's so easy to fake. His guys had brought extra food with them, hadn't they?

Sem: No, honestly, I saw it happen with my own eyes.

Adam: Rubbish!

Sem: Look, I was there.

Adam: You're deluded!

Sem: Excuse me. Let's rephrase that: you **think** that I'm deluded.

Jereboam: Thank you, gentlemen – that seems a good moment to finish. Clearly people have strong views about Jesus. Maybe we should just encourage our readers to keep an open mind.

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 we are told that Jesus was not able to work miracles in his home town. In their eyes of his neighbours, he was just the person they'd seen grow up. This distressed him and he couldn't work many miracles there. We continue with the final week of a three-week cycle of Genesis readings. Jacob stops for the night and has a vivid dream about a stairway to heaven and the Lord telling him that the land on which he rests would be given to Jacob and his descendants. Jacob wrestles with a stranger in the night and is blessed by that stranger before they part. The readings then jump ahead nine chapters to pick up the familiar story of the famine and Joseph, Jacob's son who has been sold into slavery by his brothers. Joseph is now a powerful man in Egypt managing food in a starving world, and his

brothers are sent by their father to Egypt to beg for food. Joseph meets with his brothers finally reveals himself to them and is reunited with his now-elderly father, Jacob, who comes to Egypt. Jacob dies a happy man, asking only that his family take his body back to their homeland for burial. The readings end as Joseph dies in Egypt, also asking to be buried in the land of his birth. It's a great story of God's fidelity.

In St Matthew's gospel this week is filled with healing and invitations. Jesus offers a cure and courage for the woman with haemorrhage, raises an official's daughter from dead and as "his heart was moved with pity" he continues to cure every disease and illness. Along with these stories of healing in Matthew's Gospel, the call from Jesus begins.

The harvest is abundant but the labourers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest Jesus summons the apostles and sends them out to continue his work, but curing illness and driving out unclean spirits. He tells them how to be a laborer in his field and cautions them of the challenges ahead. On Saturday, he offers a tender example of God's love for us in the story God's love for even the lowly sparrow. "Do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows," he concludes.

Next Sunday in St Mark's Gospel we hear of the martyrdom of John the Baptist at the hands of King Herod and his wife.

A Reflection for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity

+ Following on from last Sunday's Gospel we are back in the area of communication and a failure of understanding. Despite what they know of what Jesus has said and done, in his home town none of that fits with what people know of his background as the child of the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. They are so distracted both by what they think they know about who and what Jesus is, and the sort of person they assume God speaks through, that they can't allow themselves to listen carefully enough to what he says, and look hard enough at what he does. They are not attentive enough to be able truly to

see, and through seeing, be truly receptive to faith and belief. And we might think that this rejection of Jesus by those who would have been family friends and neighbours – coupled with his failure to work many miracles – is hardly a great advert for the Christian message. It's an odd, potentially embarrassing story of a failure to convince even those he had grown up with and been surrounded by. St Mark, though, defies convention and seems to want to confront the reality of this straight on rather than ignore it altogether or to try to put a positive spin on it. Look at the words he records Jesus as saying "Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house." Again, Mark is hammering home to us the note of rejection which runs right through the Gospel story.

So, what's going on? As so often, Jesus is looking back to the experience of the prophets of the Old Testament who had come before him. – hence the relevance of that first reading from Ezekiel this morning. God's messengers meet opposition – the light encounters the darkness. But of course we are also looking forward to the rejection Jesus will face at Jerusalem – a rejection by the religious establishment and the worldly powers which will end on the cross of Calvary. What's happening here is a foretaste of that.

Mark also records Jesus' sadness at their lack of faith – again saying to us that this is not only a normal human reaction to being rejected and misunderstood but also an incidence of the divine sadness at a world gone astray. We are meant, I think, to look forward to his mental agony in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest and trial, and also his cry of desolation from the cross.

This stress on failure right from the beginning prepares us from the reality of the cross in our own lives of faith. It also prepares for the fact that the Gospel and its values are never going to receive universal acclamation. We are challenged by it – and even the challenge posed by a message of love, hope and forgiveness – can be threatening to way things are and provoke anger and offence in people's hearts and minds.

We are also being told by this episode not to be slaves of a gospel of success. If

Christ himself is rejected can the Church in any generation expect to be treated differently if it fulfils its mission faithfully? What matters aren't measurable results, but being given the strength to continue and persevere in faith.

St Charles de Foucauld was a French military officer who, after various false starts, was called to a life of a solitary missionary in the Sahara desert in Morocco.. In a dozen years of a life of faithful prayer and service he succeeded in baptising only two people. Even his martyrdom at the hands of the Tuareg was probably an unhappy accident. Judged by the standards of success his life and ministry were abject failures, yet his legacy – of living alongside those he was called to serve, and to trust in God even in the face of rejection and apparent failure – is remembered and lives on when the memory of others who were more “successful” in their lifetimes has faded and disappeared. And the reason for that is that he mirrored Christ and reflected the love of Christ in his ministry of friendship, of laughter, of abandonment to God's purposes for him, and in what he called his Nazareth – a hidden place of encounter with God in the lowliest of everyday details of life and living. Nazareth is not only a place of misunderstanding, but it's the place where, in the household of Mary and Joseph, we are told that Jesus grew in stature, wisdom and favour with God. The Gospel is there to be lived out faithfully regardless of what we can measure. And that matters for us – perhaps particularly where we find ourselves today. What Charles de Foucauld recognised is that we can't expect to do better than Christ, and that Christ never fits perfectly into the pictures we have of him. He's found in the most unexpected places and situations and people. Perhaps that's where we should expect him most, even if that challenges us profoundly in overturning all our expectations and preconceptions of who he is. Yet ... at the heart of the gospel message is hope – and there's hope at the heart of this morning's Gospel reading, too. Our own personal failures and experiences of rejection are real enough. The failures of the Church to communicate its message in a changing world are real enough. But that's not the end of the story. The essential message of the Christian faith is

that God in Christ has entered our messy human reality and shared it. We can be honest about failure, live through it and even maybe learn from it because Christ has been there too. He has become one of us to rescue us, and having shared our human life, to share with us his risen life and the reality of the life that begins now but has no end.

A Prayer of St Charles de Foucauld

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me, and
in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you
with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.

Ministry Area Prayer

Dear Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to work together as a Ministry Area.

May we engage with each other with faith and encouragement.

May we manage each situation with wisdom and mutual respect.

May we serve with integrity, creativity and purpose.

May we speak with openness and gentleness.

May we offer our gifts, time and finances with generosity.

May we face each challenge with courage and the desire to grow through it.

May we all be drawn deeper into our relationship with You and be known as your disciples.

Help us to show your love, proclaim your Good News

and grow your Kingdom in this place.

We ask this in the name of Jesus

Christ, our Lord and Saviour. **AMEN**