

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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11th July 2021
The Sixth Sunday
after Trinity B

The Collect

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding: pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; 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 Amos

This is what the Lord God showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the LORD said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb line.' Then the Lord said, 'See, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass them by; the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.' Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, 'Amos has conspired against you in the very centre of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.'" And Amaziah said to Amos, 'O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.' Then Amos answered Amaziah, 'I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'" [7. 7-15]

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

Psalm 85. 8-13

R/ Show us your mercy, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

I will listen to what the Lord God is saying, for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him.

Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

R/ Show us your mercy, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring up from the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

R/ Show us your mercy, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

The Lord will indeed grant prosperity, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before him, and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

R/ Show us your mercy, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians [1. 3-14]

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as

God's own people, to the praise of his glory

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
Enlighten the eyes of our mind,
So that we can see what hope
his call holds for us .

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.**

King Herod heard of the healings and other miracles, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, 'John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him.' But others said, 'It is Elijah.' And others said, 'It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.' But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.' And he solemnly swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.' She went out and said to her mother, 'What should I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the Baptist.' Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, 'I want you to give me at

once the head of John the Baptizer on a platter.' The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

[St Mark 6.14–29]

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

For Your Prayers

The Church's prophetic ministry: that we and our leaders may witness to God's love and justice in the world.

All seafarers, and the Church's ministry to them. The Mission to Seafarers and its chaplains throughout the world.

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: Freddy Cooper; Jane Zorab.

Thought for the Week

“The only right way: to love and serve the person of the modern world, but not simply to succumb, with him, to all his illusions about the world.”

Thomas Merton: A Search for Solitude

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'

Zare

Jereboam: That text Jesus read out this afternoon sounded very familiar, but I can't remember which prophet said it. You know: "The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me." Was it Amos?

Zare: I have a feeling it was Isaiah.

Jereboam: Maybe you're right. That was one of the striking things about what John the Baptist said the other week.

Zare: Sorry – I don't quite follow. What was so striking?

Jereboam: Well, a lot of what he said wasn't new at all. Much of the time he was quoting from the Scriptures. All that about making a straight way for the Lord and so on... As John himself pointed out, that's taken from our friend Isaiah again.

Zare: I'd be inclined to say that ultimately it doesn't really matter who says these things. If God inspires the words in the first place, he can surely choose whom he wishes to utter them on his behalf. And if, like John, I felt I'd been chosen to serve as God's messenger, I should probably be wary of adding too

many original ideas of my own. I'd feel I was on safer ground if I followed the prophets of old very closely.

Jereboam: Do you think anyone could be a prophet then? Just quote what they say in the Scriptures...

Zare: In a small way, maybe anyone could be. Look, let me try to put something into words; see whether it makes sense to you.

Jereboam: All right.

Zare: Well, we all aspire to the ways of God.

Jereboam: I'm with you so far.

Zare: At those moments when we are closest to achieving that aspiration, when we come within touching-distance of the ways of God, then we might find ourselves really able to speak on his behalf in a whole-hearted, committed way. The difference, as I imagine it, is that real prophets spend much of their lives in that exalted state.

Jereboam: And if that's correct...well, you remember when that priest asked John whether he was Elijah, and he answered "no"?

Zare: Perfectly truthfully, I'm sure.

Jereboam: Of course, but when he said that, he could perhaps have added something like: "It shouldn't make any difference whether I'm Elijah or not. The message should be the same."

Zare: Yes, I'd agree with that.

This Week

In today's Gospel St Mark's Gospel we hear of the martyrdom of John the Baptist at the hands of King Herod and his wife. In the first reading Amos the prophet defends his mission from God to the King of Israel. St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians sets things in a cosmic context. Thursday is the feast day of Saint Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church.

We begin three weeks of readings from the book of Exodus continuing the story of God's faithful deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt. This week we read of their plight in Egypt, Moses' birth and how he became a part of Pharaoh's inner circle, Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush, God's summons to Moses and the people, and the story of the Passover up to the time they left Egypt. The psalm responses this week are particularly appropriate entries into prayer: *Our help is in the name of the Lord. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live. The Lord is kind and merciful. The Lord remembers his covenant forever.*

I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord. His mercy endures forever.

All week we follow a powerful part of St Matthew's Gospel, with passages about Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God. Jesus does not come to bring simple peace, but to call us to find our lives by surrendering them to him and his mission. Then Jesus goes to teach and to preach, beginning with strong words for the towns in which he worked great cures and where the people have not repented. Rather than being discouraged, Jesus prays to his Father and we have the privilege of overhearing him say that, although these things are hidden from those who seemed educated and clever, "you have revealed them to the childlike." Jesus invites us to come to him – when we are burdened – and he will give us rest. When the Pharisees go after his disciples because in their hunger they picked grain on the Sabbath, Jesus challenges them to learn what God meant by these words from the prophet Hosea, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." From that point on, those who rejected him conspired to kill him.

Next Sunday we hear from the prophet Jeremiah that God himself will shepherd his people and that a descendant of David will rule with wisdom and justice. St Mark's Gospel paints a picture of Jesus trying to gather his disciples for a rest together, but the people kept coming to them: "his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things."

A Reflection for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity

+ In the Scriptures the prophets mostly seem to have a bad time. I suppose to an extent this just mirrors the straightforward historical reality that people who tell unpalatable truths to those who are not ready to listen to them often suffer the consequences of their subsequent unpopularity. Rejection is part of a prophet's experience.

Take Amos, in the Old Testament reading this morning, summoned by the Lord from his unlikely occupation as a shepherd and a forester to warn the rulers of Israel that it will incur God's inevitable judgement because of its corruption and pre-occupation with its own pleasure and wealth at the expense of the poor and needy.

There are some obvious modern parallels here, but what I want to talk about this morning is the *unpopularity* of the prophets' message, something which seems to go with the territory, but not only because of the reasons outlined a few moments ago. We tend to think of prophecy as somehow being concerned with the future, but the prophets of the Old Testament, of course, weren't concerned at all with foretelling the future but with proclaiming the message of God to the present. Not fore-telling but forth-telling. The future only enters the equation in the sense that the message they give often ends with "if you keep on doing this, then judgement will overtake you in one form or another." The Old Testament firmly believes in a God who involves himself in human history to uphold justice and truth. In that sense, as in others, the Old Testament prepares the way for the coming of Christ.

In the end, though, the distinctive thing about the prophets is the message they proclaim.

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)

That message never makes for easy listening, it may be a message of judgement, of a call to renewal; if it ever speaks of comfort and consolation, it's a message given to those in adversity because of their faithfulness. It's a message and a kind of witness one would be forgiven for thinking ended with the Old Testament. Is there any need of prophecy when the Messiah, the Christ, has come? That illusion is, of course, destroyed by today's Gospel which makes for sombre listening in any context, the martyrdom of St John the Baptist. John belongs in a sense to both Testaments, he is a pivotal figure, the last of the prophets, the first of the saints, the great forerunner who comes to announce the coming of the Saviour of the world. But even that privilege doesn't protect him; he dies because he isn't prepared to sacrifice the plain speaking of God's truth for political expediency. Ultimately, he dies because of his witness to Christ - he points to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and says, "You are not ready for him. Repent, turn your lives around so that you may truly align your lives with the demands of God." And that's as uncomfortable a message not only for those who govern us, but for each one of us - just as it was for Herod, or Herodias. Or it should be.

The message of the Gospel itself is a prophetic witness, the message of God to the world. The vocation of the Church, the apostolic witness to the reality of the mystery of Christ, is a prophetic witness. It can't be anything else. God has a disconcerting way of evading our attempts to compartmentalise him - oh that's religion, that's just politics, that's personal morality or that's social justice - we can't shove them away in little boxes and pretend they have nothing to do with one another.. And in this morning's Gospel we are very much in this political arena, with palace intrigue, the weakness of political leadership and the dangers inherent in speaking truth to power. The point about faith in Christ is that he demands the whole person and won't be satisfied with whatever little bits of us we are prepared to open up to him. He can't be bought off in that way. It's never either or; it's always 'both and,' much to our discomfort, but also very much in the cause of what we might call saving our souls.

But prophecy, whether it is revealed through the Old Testament prophets or from the teaching of Christ in the Gospels and through the tradition of the Church, always confronts us with the need to change, and that always begins with ourselves, not with others. The assurance of God's love and his grace is always coupled with a call to a deep-rooted conversion of our own hearts and minds. The incredible gift of Christ's life we are given here in the Eucharist carries with it the promise of being made *other* than we are now. Union with Christ, incorporation into the life of Christ, is what we are promised not *consolation*, a kind of spiritual pat on the head. In fact we are promised what the fathers of the Church called "deification," scandalous as that sounds to our modern ears.

The prophetic call of the Old and the New Testament, of the Church herself, is to holiness, to a radically different state to the one we find ourselves in now. There are two dangers which face each and every one of us, and the Church to which we belong, in our contemporary society. The first is to retreat into a kind of fundamentalist bunker in which we have nothing to say to those around us who don't share our faith because they can't even understand what it is we are trying to say. And the second, equally disastrous, is to proclaim a version of the faith which is designed to be attractive and comfortable, challenging to those with whom we don't agree, but not *too challenging to ourselves*.

But that's not what the prophets - whether Amos or John the Baptist - proclaimed. The all-important aspect of the prophets was - and is - that before they *speak*, they listen - not to the conflicting voices around them, they weren't after all trying to find a means of dialogue between two opposing positions - they weren't public broadcasters or party politicians or diplomats, they were prophets. Before they speak in God's name, they listen to him, they attune themselves to his wavelength, if you like. *Conversation* with God leads to *conversion*. The ongoing process of their conversion enables them to speak authentically.

So for all of us, however unlikely this may sound, the prophets' experience is fundamental. Prayer always comes before proclamation, and then always goes hand

in hand with it. And our prayerful conversation with the source of all goodness, leads to our recognising our duty to our neighbour and our call to witness - in whatever ways we can - to the love of Christ in the world. +

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**

