

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
01291 622064;
Mobile 07867803479

22nd August 2021
The Twelfth Sunday
after Trinity

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray and to give more than either we desire or deserve: pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of 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 book of Joshua

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, 'Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.' Then the people answered, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.'

[24. 1 - 2a, 14 - 18]

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

Psalm 34 15 - 22

**R/ I sought the Lord,
and he answered me**

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.

**R/ I sought the Lord,
and he answered me**

The righteous cry and the Lord hears them and delivers them from all their

troubles. The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and will save those whose spirits are crushed.

**R/ I sought the Lord,
and he answered me**

Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord will deliver him out of them all. He will keep safe all his bones; not one of them shall be broken.

**R/ I sought the Lord,
and he answered me**

Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be punished. The Lord ransoms the life of his servants, and none will be punished who trust in him.

**R/ I sought the Lord,
and he answered me**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians [6; 10 - 20]

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that

when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

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

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your words are spirit, Lord,
and they are life:
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St John **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus said to the crowd: 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.' Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

[St John 6.56–69]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may see in Christ, the one who has the words of eternal life
For devotion to Christ in his real Eucharistic presence
The people of Afghanistan
Those who are suffering the effects of climate change 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 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. Alan; Marion Webster.

For the Departed:

The recently departed; Rose Pugh; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Margaret Mitchell

Thought for the Week

"Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration"

*St (Mother)Theresa of Calcutta
(1910 – 1997)*

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'

Amon & Azor

Jereboam: Good evening, gentlemen. May I ask you for a few words about Jesus? I imagine you were at his gathering this afternoon.

Amon: Yes, we were. Well, I'm Amon and this is my brother Azor. We've been to a few of Jesus' sessions now, and this one was just as inspiring as the others. We were discussing it as you walked up, actually. Jesus referred to himself as the bread of life, and he compared himself with that manna from heaven which God provided for our ancestors in the desert. Jesus claims to offer eternal life, in a way that the manna never did.

Azor: Presumably, when he describes himself as bread, he doesn't actually mean that we're supposed to start chewing his arm or anything. I think he's saying that he nourishes us in another way -- sustains us, if you like. Amon here made an interesting point...

Amon: Well, yes: bread's a really essential, basic food that we all eat. If Jesus had said something like: "I am the mashed olive of life," it wouldn't have sounded so important somehow.

Jereboam: I'm going to put a question to you. There's a girl who lives down the road from us, and she's almost stopped eating – she just refuses food. I think she's trying to make herself look attractive. It has the opposite effect, if you ask me. Anyway, her parents are really worried about her. Now, if Jesus is telling people that they can be fed without eating real food, don't you think he's encouraging this sort of problem?

Amon: That's a tricky one. What do you reckon, Azor?

Azor: Well, we all had a snack halfway through the afternoon.

Amon: And I noticed that Jesus was eating too. Another thing is that...look, has this girl been to any of Jesus' sessions?

Jereboam: I don't think so.

Amon: Well, a lot of what he says boils down to respecting everyone else. In the same way, he makes you respect food and other things too.

Azor: Without worshipping them or anything.

Amon: No, of course not. It's a question of respecting everything for what it is.

Azor: He also makes you better at receiving. What I mean is: Jesus reminds us that good things come from God and not just from ourselves, and so you end up appreciating them more. It's difficult to explain. Look, why not bring this girl along? Jesus can sort her out, I'm sure.

Jereboam: I might well do that. Thank you.

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 continue with St John's Gospel and his meditation on Christ as the Bread of Life. Many of the disciples find Jesus' call to be nourished on his body and blood hard to accept. And they leave him. Peter speaks for the others: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Tuesday is the Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle. Friday we remember St. Monica and Saturday, her son, St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church.

Most of the first readings this week are from St Paul's first letter to the

Thessalonians, probably the oldest book in the New Testament. The letters are affectionate and frank reminders of the humiliation and challenges that Paul met in preaching to this community he loved so much. These readings are a wonderful reminder that the letters of Paul were just that - letters to teach, encourage and support early communities of Christians. St Matthew's Gospel this week includes stories of Jesus strongly challenging the Pharisees. He saw how they made people's lives so difficult by their insistence on the rules and appearances while neglecting mercy and good faith. He chides them for paying attention to the extraneous and not the message: "Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!" His criticism grows stronger: "On the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evil-doing." Jesus teaches about preparation: Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come." In the parable of the ten maidens who go out to meet the bridegroom, many of the women did not prepare for the meeting and do not have enough oil for their lamps and Jesus says again, "Stay awake." Saturday's gospel is the dramatic story of the three servants who are given resources by their master and rewarded or punished for what they did with the resources they had.

Next Sunday the Gospel from St Mark see Jesus challenged as his disciples do not follow the ritual washings of the Law. He defends them, quoting Isaiah: "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

A Reflection for Trinity 12

+ "Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast," the Queen says to Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. It's an accusation Christians, particularly from a tradition which stresses the Incarnation and the Sacraments, are used to being accused of. "*How on earth can you believe that?*" is a question we've all being asked from time to time. Although, of course, these days believing six impossible things before breakfast is also a fairly accurate description an early morning trawl through social media.

But while we should of course do all that we can to try to understand our faith to the utmost of our ability, (God gave us minds as well as hearts, after all) it's clear from the Gospel this morning that we shouldn't get too worked up about any possible contradiction between what we believe, and what seems to be acceptable to the world at large. By that I don't mean by that a flat contradiction of scientific evidence like denying evolution or the physical shape of the earth and its place in the universe.

Perhaps "six impossible things before breakfast" is an unfair exaggeration, but there will always be some aspects of our faith which not only those outside the faith will find hard to accept, but even that we ourselves, from time to time, will struggle to understand and explain.

In this morning's Gospel, the crowds who are listening to Jesus' teaching are put off by his words: they can't accept what he is saying to them about giving them his flesh to eat and his blood to drink so that they might have eternal life. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, his language could not be more calculated to disconcert his first century Jewish audience, with the traditional prohibition in the Law on consuming the life-blood of any creature. What he says is almost designed to test their understanding and their growing faith to breaking point. He could, of course, have calmed their fears by making it clear that his language was highly metaphorical and symbolic - it doesn't necessarily mean what it appears to mean on the surface. But he doesn't: and there's a reason for that: Christ offers his life on the cross for the life of the world and gives us his Body and Blood, his life, in the Eucharist to continue his presence with us and to lead us to eternal life. Those who cannot accept these difficult words, this hard saying, which involves, of course, the death of Jesus himself, then walk away from him.

It's clear from what St John tells us that it's not only the crowds who find Jesus' words hard to accept, even some of his disciples can't take what he is saying, and this provokes a profound crisis among even his closest followers.

While the language Our Lord uses clearly implies the Eucharist, on another level he is also talking about faith itself. To eat the bread of life and to believe in the crucified Christ are presented as the way to receive

eternal life. Faith in the crucified Christ is central to what he is saying. Some of those who follow him, perhaps even the majority of them, we are not told, cannot believe and they go away. To have the gift of faith is to be able to commit oneself completely to Christ. But they are not willing to do that.

Jesus' language clearly suggests his death - for in order to drink blood, it must first be shed. It is here that John tells us that 'many of the disciples left him and stopped going with him'. This is not what they had expected; this is not what they wanted.

St John tells us that when the crowds and his would-be followers have gone, only a few remain behind with Jesus. At the cross there will be even fewer. But here we are left with Jesus immediate, closest disciples, the Twelve, the Apostles. They are the ones who will later preach to the world the Lord's crucifixion and Resurrection. They will preach Christ as he is, not as we might want him to be. And here John tells us that Jesus turns to them and asks, "Do you also wish to go away?" Peter answers for the group, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God"

What is the essential difference between Peter and the Twelve who stick with Jesus and the other followers who give up and turn back? Peter and his fellow apostles probably didn't understand what Jesus was saying any more than the others did. They probably had as much a problem with the whole idea of eating his flesh and drinking his blood as those who left. The crucial difference was in Peter's ability to understand that having difficulty with a particular teaching of Jesus isn't a good enough reason to give up following him altogether. The other followers probably thought of Jesus as one teacher among many,; to put it in modern way, if you couldn't agree with what he was saying you could shop around for someone else whose teachings you agree with. Peter, on the contrary, saw Jesus as the Way, the Messiah, the Christ, ultimately as God himself. There simply is no one else to go to. We may not fully understand, but we believe in order to understand more fully, we don't have to understand fully before we can believe.

So in some sense, maybe we do have to begin by believing a few impossible things before breakfast! But we are not left in that position. Yes, there will always be some aspects of the faith that we will have difficulty accepting or believing without any hesitation or doubts or questions whatsoever. But if we think we have to wait until every unanswered question, every possible difficulty is resolved we will end up waiting forever and, to put it bluntly, we don't have forever to make a decision! Some things we have to accept on the authority of Jesus alone who will lead us to a fuller understanding of what it is that is troubling us. "His words cannot deceive us", as one of the Fathers of the Church, St John Chrysostom, said. There is only one programme for us and that is for us to seek to know Jesus more fully, to look for him in everything and pray for a authentic faith that will inform and direct our whole lives. That isn't always easy, it would be wrong to say that it is, and understanding can come to us in many different ways, very often not the way we expect it to. But He alone has the words of eternal life.

SAINT OF THE WEEK **24th August** **St Bartholomew, Apostle**

Bartholomew is listed as one of the 12 apostles in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, but apart from his name, we know very little else about him. Some scholars identify him with Nathaniel who is mentioned in John's Gospel and was summoned to Jesus. We know almost nothing about most of the apostles. Yet the unknown ones were also foundation stones, the 12 pillars of the new Israel whose 12 tribes now encompass the whole earth. Their personalities were secondary—without thereby being demeaned—to their great office of bearing tradition from their first hand experience, speaking in the name of Jesus, putting the Word Made Flesh into human words for the enlightenment of the world. Their holiness was a gift that they had to share with others. The Good News was that all are called to the holiness of being Christ's members, by the gracious gift of God. The simple fact is that humanity is totally meaningless unless God is its total concern. Then humanity, made holy with

God's own holiness, becomes the most precious creation of God.

Almighty and everlasting God, who gave to your apostle St Bartholomew grace truly to believe and to preach your word: grant that your Church may love that word which he believed and may faithfully preach and receive the same; 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**

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**