

# 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;  
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## 29<sup>th</sup> August 2021 The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

### The Collect

Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN**

### A reading from the book Deuteronomy

Moses spoke to the people; he said: So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!' For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today? But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

[ 4. 1 -2, 6 - 9]

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

### Psalm 15

**R/ Those who do what is right  
will dwell in the presence of the Lord.**

Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle?  
who may abide upon your holy hill?

Whoever leads a blameless life  
and does what is right,  
who speaks the truth from his heart.

**R/ Those who do what is right  
will dwell in the presence of the Lord.**

There is no guile upon his tongue;  
he does no evil to his friend;  
he does not heap contempt  
upon his neighbour.  
In his sight the wicked are rejected,  
but he honours those who fear the Lord.

**R/ Those who do what is right  
will dwell in the presence of the Lord.**

He has sworn to do no wrong  
and does not take back his word.  
He does not give his money  
in hope of gain, nor does he take a bribe  
against the innocent.  
Whoever does these things  
shall never be overthrown.

**R/ Those who do what is right  
will dwell in the presence of the Lord.**

### A reading from the letter of St James

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures. You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

[1; 17 - 27]

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

## For Your Prayers

### Gradual Hymn

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 Mark **Glory to you, O Lord**

**W**hen the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' Jesus said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.' Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

[St Mark 7.1–8, 14–15, 21–23]

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

That we may not only hear the word of God but act upon it in our lives  
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; Betty Davies; Rosaleen Dusing; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Tanya Blanchard; John Meade

## Thought for the Week

“A humble [person] can do great things with an uncommon perfection because he is no longer concerned about incidentals, like his own interests and his own reputation, and therefore he no longer needs to waste his efforts in defending them.”

*From Seeds of Contemplation by Thomas Merton*

## 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'*

## Simeon

**Jereboam:** Excuse me, could you spare us a few moments? I'm Jereboam from the Jerusalem and Galilee Gazette.

**Simeon:** Certainly, yes – pleased to meet you. I'm Simeon.

**Jereboam:** Thank you, Simeon. Tell me, please: when I arrived a few minutes ago, there seemed to be quite a tense atmosphere over where Jesus was talking.

**Simeon:** There certainly was – I feel quite drained now. I could see it was going to happen. There's this group of men who hang around at Jesus' meetings, just waiting to make trouble. They try and pick holes in his arguments with really petty comments. Today I suppose they couldn't object to any of his teaching, so they waited until we had a break, and then they complained about some of us eating our snacks without performing the traditional washing ceremony. Honestly, we were having a snack, not performing a ritual!

**Jereboam:** What did Jesus say?

**Simeon:** Well, he spoke about how the external signs of worship aren't nearly as important as how you lead your lives, what you say and think. In fact the external rituals can become a distraction.

**Jereboam:** Fair enough, but it's not difficult to wash your hands. Couldn't Jesus just go along with the traditional practice, to keep everyone happy?

**Simeon:** That's a good point, but I think he deliberately wants to make the contrast between his attitude and what these other men say. So I suppose he must know he's being controversial.

**Jereboam:** At least these other men help to clarify what Jesus stands for.

**Simeon:** Yes, you're right. They don't make life easy for us, though. It's quite

stressful dealing with all these interruptions. And everything becomes negative.

**Jereboam:** What do you mean?

**Simeon:** Well, take this afternoon, for instance. Jesus was talking about goodness and purity of heart, and how to honour God in everything you do. He was so enthusiastic – I've never met anyone as positive as he is. Then these sticklers start grumbling, and we end up talking about defilement and negative things. Look, if you don't mind, I think I just need to have a bit of time to myself.

**Jereboam:** Of course, Simeon. Thank you very much.

### 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 the Gospel from St Mark sees 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."

Thursday is the feast day of Saint Gregory the Great, Doctor of the Church. St Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians concludes on Tuesday.

Wednesday, we begin a week of readings from the **Letter to the Colossians**, with its gracious salutation and encouragement. The readers are exhorted to see Christ as the "head of the body" noting that all is created "in and through him."

We now move from St Matthew to St Luke's Gospel, which we will read on weekdays from now until Advent begins. We will feel the special way the evangelist

will highlight healing, mercy, the poor, women, prayer, the Spirit and a gospel for a new, all inclusive, Israel.

Jesus teaches in the synagogue and reads from Isaiah: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus heals a man with demons. He heals Simon's mother-in-law, and all the sick they brought him. "I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent." He calls out to three discouraged fishermen to lower their nets, to show them his power. Peter is overwhelmed and protests he is unworthy. "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." At Jesus' persistence, Peter, James and John leave their nets to follow Jesus. The week ends with Jesus' tangling with the Pharisees who challenge the fasting of his disciples. "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" He deflects the criticism by telling them "no one pours new wine into old wineskins." When his critics note that his disciples were "unlawful" by picking heads of grain to eat, he tells them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

**Next Sunday:** The Gospel gives us two healing miracles of Jesus, that of the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman, who Jesus commends for her great faith and a deaf man with a speech impediment. Jesus orders the eye-witnesses to tell no one about what he has done ...

## A Reflection for Trinity 13

+ It's the last weekend of August and, whether we like it or not, Summer is coming to an end. Most schools will return for the autumn term this week and, as they say, the next public holiday in Britain is Christmas Day! So it's back to life – I was going to say as normal – but of course it won't be – life as normal as Covid-19 permits ...

However important we think life in the various communities in which we live is - the reality of life is that when people come together for whatever purpose there are inevitably disagreements and conflicts. The Church - here on earth anyway - is as we know well, no exception to the rule. Nevertheless it can come as a shock to many people when they come across it at first hand. The response of most people

these days is to say something along the lines of "I thought religious faith was supposed to be about love, peace, and a search for truth, not about strident language, militancy and violence; above all it's not about getting one's own way at the cost of others." Of course, that's true, and the understandable response of most people when they are confronted with people arguing loudly about religion is to switch off and run for cover. One can't blame them - sometimes I feel like joining them.

But on the other hand, if religion is about anything it's about the truth both about ourselves and our place in the world. The Christian tradition has always maintained that faith isn't primarily about searching for the truth, but it's about God himself searching for us and seeking to reconcile us to himself. The truth we believe is *revealed to us* - and it is revealed most fully in Jesus Christ, God Incarnate - God become a human being - the divine Wisdom, the 'logos' in Greek, the Word made flesh. Our Lord himself, though, doesn't seem to hold to the view that conflict and religious belief are incompatible; in fact, as in the Gospel today with his comments to the scribes and Pharisees, he sometimes seems to go out of his way to *provoke* conflict especially when he sees that people are obscuring the truth about God and replacing it with their own rather dodgy and self-serving interpretations. Jesus doesn't avoid conflict, or the consequences of it; in fact he attracts controversy - and he pays the consequences of that on behalf of us all. The problem with *revealed* religion is that it can so easily be misunderstood as meaning that in some way we possess the truth and that that makes us somehow morally and intellectually superior to those who don't, and it's a short step then to wishing to impose the truth coercively upon others. Of course, that's not a problem unique to religion, as political and social ideologies of all kinds have the ability to suppress the freedom of the human spirit .

The fact is: we do not possess the truth; it possesses us, or rather, God possesses us. It is never our Church; it's God's Church. The truth is Christ, and it is his Spirit who leads us into all truth. Even when we take into account God's revealing of his life to us, all human

understanding is partial. *The Church* - (but remember too that the Church exists here on earth but also in heaven - we are united in the communion of saints) may be said to have been entrusted with the vision of the truth and beauty of God, but we ourselves within the Church are continually being lead to a greater and deeper understanding of that reality. The truth isn't ours, it's always His. The Church doesn't possess the truth it's meant to proclaim it, and above it's meant to live it.

God doesn't use coercion, he seeks to persuade. God comes into the world as a vulnerable baby, goes to the cross without resistance, relies on frail human vessels to spread the Good News of Resurrection and new life to the world he comes to redeem. When in the past Christians have used violence and force to achieve their ends - the later Crusades, the wars of religion and the barbarities on all sides of the Reformation controversies spring to mind here most particularly - always the vast gulf between their actions and the person of Christ in whose name they were claiming to act, becomes scandalously apparent. There is no cause so great and so holy that our alienated human nature can't pervert it and lead it astray. Religious faith, politics - whatever activities we care to think of - you know, the gardening club - can all fall victim to human greed, ambition, and fear. It's the failings of the human condition itself which leads to the misuse of something which should lead to wisdom and understanding and eternal life. And it's that alienation within ourselves and from God which Christ comes to restore. And he invites us to come to him so that our wounds can be healed.

In the letter of St James, the writer talks about 'true religion' and he makes it clear that wisdom is not about theoretical knowledge, but about knowing the right way to live and acting on it. So, if we follow James's lead, we should be trying to think how to break free of the insecurities that push us into contradiction and alienation. James tells us that we need the wisdom which comes from above, that is beyond us and outside, the wisdom which comes from God alone, the wisdom which doesn't come from the world, but which we can only be given through union with Christ.

And Our Lord himself in today's Gospel is very clear that it is our human nature itself which is in need of God's redemption. Those things which cause conflict and alienation - from God and one another - come from within, he says. We cannot achieve salvation by ourselves. We just can't do it. We need that that profound conversion of mind and heart - which comes from him alone. Yesterday the Church celebrated the feast day of St Augustine, one of the greatest of the western Fathers of the Church. And Augustine was very clear in the religious debates and controversies of his own day that, unaided, human nature will always fail and lapse into barbarism, corruption and an all-consuming self-interest. We need God and the grace he gives us. We need the Church and the sacraments of salvation and new life God has given us. On our own we simply can't do it. With him we can.

And we know the ways we've been given: through prayer, through our reflective reading particularly of the Scriptures, through our close and personal contact with Christ in this Sacrament of the Eucharist in particular, we come to know and love the God who comes to us in weakness and vulnerability - the Lord who refuses to play the cynical, political games of power, ambition and acquisitiveness which his followers are sometimes tempted to play. The Word has humbled himself to share in our nature, to become helpless and vulnerable as we are, and we are all weak and needy before the God who doesn't despise our weaknesses or our vulnerability, or our fears and our insecurities, but transforms them and uses them for good, who transforms by his grace the things in our nature which by themselves will lead to death and destruction, and makes them the vehicles of life and hope and love. But we have to allow him to do it. He invites us, he persuades, he cajoles but he never forces. He stands at the door and knocks, but the decision is always ours whether or not to open the door and let him in +

## 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**