

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
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26th September 2021 The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; 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 book of Numbers

The rabble among the people had a strong craving; and the Israelites also wept again, and said, 'If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.' Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, all at the entrances of their tents. Then the LORD became very angry, and Moses was displeased. So Moses said to the LORD, 'Why have you treated your servant so badly? Why have I not found favour in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, "Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child," to the land that you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they come weeping to me and say, "Give us meat to eat!" I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once – if I have found favour in your sight – and do not let me see my misery.' So the LORD said to Moses, 'Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their place there with you.' So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again. Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the

camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.' And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, 'My lord Moses, stop them!' But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!' [11. 4-6, 10-16, 24-29]

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

Psalm 19 7 - 14

R/ The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul.

The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the innocent.
The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to the eyes.

R/ The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul.

The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever;
the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold,
sweeter far than honey,
than honey in the comb.

R/ The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul.

By them also is your servant enlightened, and in keeping them there is great reward.
Who can tell how often he offends?
Cleanse me from my secret faults.
Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;
let them not get dominion over me;
then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a great offence.

R/ The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul.

Let the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight, O Lord,
my strength and my redeemer.

**R/ The law of the Lord is perfect and
revives the soul.**

A reading from the letter of St James

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest. My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

[5; 13- 20]

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Thy word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

The Gospel

**Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Mark**

Glory to you, O Lord

After Jesus had finished teaching the disciples, John said to him, 'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward. If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched. For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.'

[St Mark 9.38-50]

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

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)

For Your Prayers

That we may proclaim the Gospel in all
that we do
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, 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; Martyn Righton-
Jones; Nancy Bull; our own departed
relatives & friends, & those whose
anniversaries of death fall at this time:

Thought for the Week

"God is the brightest of lights which
can never be extinguished, and the
choirs of angels radiate light from the
divinity. Angels are pure praise without
any trace of a bodily deed."
--St. Hildegard of Bingen

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'

Amos & Benjamin

Jereboam: Excuse me, gentlemen. May I ask what you're celebrating?

Benjamin: Well, Amos here has just been received into the Church. He's been teaching in the name of Jesus for years, but now he's joined us in the official group, as it were.

Jereboam: So it's a welcoming party – congratulations, Amos! I hope that you don't mind me asking, but what prevented you from joining the Church before?

Amos: It 's complicated... When I went to hear Jesus about twenty years ago, I went by myself. His teaching affected me in a very personal way, and I always imagined that I'd lose my individuality if I joined the Church. Now I realise that every member of the Church has their own unique and vital part to play. Nothing can be more individual than that.

Jereboam: But for many years you didn't join...

Benjamin: If I may butt in here, I think that we in the Church may have been partly to blame. We tend to be rather suspicious of people like Amos, who follow Jesus in an independent way. It's hardly surprising if they regard us with some suspicion too. It's a shame: Jesus warned against this and asked us to accept everyone who teaches in his name. Or, to be more precise, he told us not to stop anyone who works a miracle in his name. "Anyone who is not against us is for us," he said. Personally, I think that the Church should be like a funnel, catching liquid from all over the place and directing it towards a common goal – Jesus Christ.

Jereboam: Here's another question for you, Amos: has the process of joining

the Church led you to change your opinions in any other way?

Amos: I have changed my mind in several respects, yes. Somehow your beliefs take on a different shape when you share them with a community. For example, sharing in the body and blood of Jesus didn't seem so relevant, when I wasn't part of that sharing. Now it seems fundamental.

Jereboam: So people tell me... Look, I've held you up enough: you'd better get back to your celebrations. Congratulations again, Amos.

Amos: Thank you.

Benjamin: Come along and join in, if you have time.

Jereboam: Well, if you're sure...

This Week

In today's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about someone driving out evil in his name.

The week has a number of celebrations of the Saints and holy angels.

Monday is the feast day of St Vincent de Paul, known for his care for the poor and disadvantaged and his reform and education of the clergy. Wednesday is the Feast of the Holy Archangels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. On Thursday we remember Saint Jerome, priest and Doctor of the Church, Friday is the feast day of St Therese of Lisieux and Saturday, that of the Holy Guardian Angels.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week continue with the prophet Zechariah from the period after the exile.

"They shall be my people, and I will be their God, with faithfulness and justice."

The book of Nehemiah, like Ezra, chronicles this history. The

prophet Baruch gives us a prayer of the people in captivity and God's reply, "Fear not, my children; call out to God!"

We continue with St Luke's Gospel, as the disciples argue about who is the greatest. Jesus points out a young child and asks them to strive to be the "least" not the greatest. Jesus stops his disciples from preventing people, not of their group, from healing, because they are with Jesus, too. When Nathanael believes because Jesus could say where he had been, Jesus tells him that as a follower, "You will see greater things than this." People come up,

offering to follow Jesus, but have excuses for why they can't do it now. Jesus calls them to not "look back" once they have said, "yes." He sends his disciples to other towns: "The harvest is rich but the workers are few." Jesus tells us to humble ourselves like a defenceless child. He prays, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike."

Next Sunday's Gospel ends with Jesus urging us to be like children were in that society - unimportant and with no status. "The kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Then he embraced and blessed the children.

A Reflection for Trinity 17

+ There's a story about a postman who approaches a house where there is a really ferocious looking dog in the garden. The dog begins to bark really wildly and his owner shouts to the postman: "Come on in! Don't be afraid of the dog. You know the old saying, his bark is worse than his bite." "Yes," replied the man, "I know it, and you know it, but does your dog know it?" We could say that before we have any agreement on when a dog can bite and when it can't, we must first make sure the dog is party to the agreement.

Without stretching the analogy too far, God is a little bit like the dog in the story. We are often very certain about when and where and in what circumstances God can reveal himself to us - the only problem is that I'm not sure God is always in on the agreement.

In today's Gospel, Jesus warns us against judging that those outside his group of disciples are against him. Someone who isn't an official disciple has been performing miracles in Jesus's name, and when the disciples complain about it Jesus admonishes *them* rather than the lone operator. No one, Jesus says, can do something like that in his name and then afterwards speak evil of him. And it isn't even that the man operating outside the group of disciples has something against them; the only complaint the disciples had was - he's not one of us! He doesn't belong!

And it's here that Jesus calms things down with a few wise words. Essentially

what he is saying is that everyone belongs - that there is no one outside the circle of God's love.

Even his disciples are tempted to play the game that all human organisations and groups tend to play. Are you one of us? Are you one of the "in crowd?"

But the Church, the community of the disciples of Christ, isn't intended by the Lord to be like that. There isn't a certain "kind of person" God prefers any more than anyone else. And if we think there is, then we are doing exactly what the disciples in this morning's Gospel are doing and trying to place limits on what He can and cannot do.

And there's a clue here to the meaning of those words we recite Sunday by Sunday in the Nicene Creed: *I believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church*, words which long pre-date the scandalous divisions forced on us by history.

Now, of course, this credal statement has much to do with the authentic content of our faith - that it is what has been believed always, everywhere and by everyone, without additions or subtractions, but it also says to us that our holy faith comes from God and is for all times and for all people - intended to be proclaimed to the whole world Christ has come to save. Yet - he that is not against us is for us, Jesus says.

When Jesus became one of us and offered himself up on the cross, he didn't do so just for a certain group of like-minded people, but for everyone. His call went out, and continues to go out, for everyone, and the salvation he offers reaches the ends of the earth. The life he offers is for people of every nation, race, tribe and language: everyone is invited into the kingdom of heaven.

But we have to be honest and say that the Gospel very often says things which are profoundly uncomfortable contrary in a culture in which most people live quite comfortably as practical atheists - in other words, as if this world is all that there is. The pressure to conform to voices which say things contrary to the Gospel is nothing new. We can all think of times of crisis and upheaval in history when that happened, particularly I suppose in the *last century* under the various totalitarian ideologies of right and left which cast such a blight over human life for so many people throughout the world. But we don't only have to look to such times of obvious

political and social upheaval because countless people in all sorts of situations at all points in history have refused to go along with what they believed to be wrong at great personal cost to themselves. The early Christians, who would have first heard this Sunday's Gospel, were very much a community which was forced to take a stand against very strong pressure to give up their faith in Christ to conform. They had to worry not about being regarded as odd, either soft-hearted, or out of touch and irrelevant, but about real threats and possibilities of violence, imprisonment and death. Like many of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world, they were persecuted and - despite the silly comments of those who should know better, here in the West we are not. And we have to remember the words of today's Gospel - that the message of Jesus is intended for everyone and the Lord wants everyone to be included; no doors must be closed against those who were genuinely seeking life and truth.

We know it has never been easy to follow Christ, which is - of course - why many of us do so it badly. Yet Christ is clear that the way to true and authentic life is love of God and our neighbour - you cannot separate the two. Other voices out there may impress more, they may flatter our egos, our sense of importance and superiority, or encourage any feelings we may have of being hard done by, they may be more superficially attractive in the vision of life they hold out, but what they offer will not be capable of leading us to lasting happiness.

The voice of Christ doesn't try to dazzle us, it doesn't try to flatter, manipulate us, or to control us - it doesn't ask us to do or believe anything which is contrary to the law of love. It is a voice that is meant to be heard by those who are prepared to take the risk - the adventure - of faith, those who recognise both where they themselves really belong, and the Good Shepherd himself who leads them; it is for those who are prepared sometimes not to 'go with the flow,' who have the courage, when it matters, not to be afraid to be different and to hold to what is right, just, merciful, and true.

Christ's call is never addressed only to a self-appointed elect, certainly not just to religious insiders of any kind, but to everyone of goodwill without exception who longs for life in all its fullness, and to

those who are not so aware of that deep longing within them. That's where the Church comes in and that's where we all have to try to do better, and not ever be embarrassed by our faith, but boldly - and sensitively and compassionately at the same time - to try to proclaim *by our lives* the Good News we share. And that's the crucial point always - it has to be Good News, and never a message which makes life smaller and narrower, but of boundless possibilities and unlimited horizons.

The Lord - the Risen Christ - isn't someone who ever tries to keep people out, but who calls everyone without exception to come in +

Saints of the Week 29th September **Ss Michael, Gabriel and Raphael** **Archangels**

Angels are messengers from God, and today we celebrate the feast of the three 'archangels', Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. Angels are found throughout scripture, but only the three we celebrate today are named.

Michael appears in Daniel's vision in the Old Testament and defends Israel against its enemies. We also read about Michael in the Book of Revelation, as he leads God's armies into the final battle over the forces of evil.

Gabriel also appears in Daniel's vision, and announces Michael's role in God's plan. Gabriel is also very familiar to us in St Luke's Gospel as he visits Mary and gives her the news that she is going to bear a son, Jesus.

We read about Raphael in the book of Tobit, and Raphael guides Tobit's son through a series of adventures.

So traditionally: Michael - protects
Gabriel - announces Raphael - guides

Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted the ministries of angels and mortals in a wonderful order: grant that as your holy angels always serve you in heaven, so, at your command, they may help and defend us on earth; 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**

The St Deiniol Lectures Monday October 4th at 7pm

Professor John Clarke,
Professor Emeritus in the
History of Ideas, Kingston
University, London,
on:

“Mysticism: its Relevance Today”

followed by open discussion

**Itton Village Hall, NP16 6BP
Itton Road, Chepstow (B4293)**

*To allow for Covid safety
measures, please pre-book
with Anne Octon (01291
641918; anneocton@gmail.com)*

NB: Please wear masks on
entry to the hall - you can
remove them once seated.