

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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31st October 2021
ALL SAINTS DAY
4th Sunday before Advent

The Collect

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those inexpressible joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; 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 Revelation

I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying, "Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel. After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[7. 2- 4, 9 - 14]

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

Psalms 34: 1- 10

R/ Those who trust in him will understand truth and the faithful will abide with him in love.

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
I will glory in the Lord;
let the humble hear and rejoice.

Proclaim with me the greatness of the Lord; let us exalt his name together.

R/ Those who trust in him will understand truth and the faithful will abide with him in love.

I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me out of all my terror. Look upon him and be radiant, and let not your faces be ashamed. I called in my affliction and the Lord heard me and saved me from all my troubles.

R/ Those who trust in him will understand truth and the faithful will abide with him in love.

The angel of the Lord encompasses those who fear him, and he will deliver them. Taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are they who trust in him!

R/ Those who trust in him will understand truth and the faithful will abide with him in love.

Fear the Lord, you that are his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack nothing that is good.

R/ Those who trust in him will understand truth and the faithful will abide with him in love.

A reading from the first letter of St John [3. 1 - 3]

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!

Come to me, all you who labour
and are overburdened,
and I will give you rest, says the Lord.

Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:

And also with you

**Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St. Matthew** [5. 1 - 12]

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up
the mountain; and after he sat down, his
disciples came to him. Then he began to
speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the
kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people revile you
and persecute you and utter all kinds of
evil against you falsely on my account.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is
great in heaven, for in the same way they
persecuted the prophets who were before
you.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

R/ 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, aided by the prayers of the saints,
we may come to share the life of Christ's
Resurrection,

World leaders meeting at COP26 in
Glasgow.

Those who care for the environment and
the natural world

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; Marion Webster; Mali

For the Departed:

The recently departed; Cynthia Harris;
Mady Gerrard; Shirley Capp; Josef
Chatham; Dini Hardy; Sue Grisswell;
John Morris; Stuart Moles; our own
departed relatives & friends, & those
whose anniversaries of death fall at this
time: Sylvia Gravelle

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'*

Malahon

Jereboam: So what's new in the life
of the Church?

Malahon: Well, we've been
hearing a lot recently about what a
wonderful gift faith is. Several of the elders
have been praising the faith of Abraham,
for example.

Jereboam: You know...forgive my
rudeness...I never quite see the point of
commending faith like that. Presumably
the idea is to encourage you to believe
more fervently, but that doesn't really
make sense. Teach people about your
faith, by all means. Encourage them to
express their faith through good works:
fine...but telling them to believe more
strongly – well, surely they can't achieve
that just by trying harder, can they?

Malahon: It's not quite like that.
We reassure one another about the value
of our faith, encouraging ourselves to
have the confidence to believe. That's
important. If you're surrounded by enough
people who regard your faith as
unnecessary or inadequate in some way,
their opinions can easily start to affect
you. Listen to this: one of our friends was
recently advised that she ought to give up
her belief in Jesus and her membership of
the Church. Apparently she'd become
healthier!

Jereboam: What? I don't like the
sound of that attitude...

Malahon: No: it is an extreme
example. But even in everyday life you
encounter little criticisms or jokes made at
your expense. Sometimes they're
genuinely meant in a friendly way, and
you like to think that you can laugh them
off, but eventually this all starts to have an
impact, wearing you down. Then your faith
begins to become cautious, wary...it's
blunted, if you like. That's one reason why

the fellowship of faith within the Church is so important, and why we need to remember the glorious faith of our forefathers. Their resolve reminds us what is possible, encourages us to trust our convictions, and – how can I put this – it urges us to let our faith trickle into every last corner of our being.

Jereboam: I see.

Mahalon: ...and by the way I didn't think you were being rude at all.

Jereboam: Thank you.

Thought for the Week

"For centuries the church has confronted the human community with role models of greatness. We call them saints when what we really often mean to say is 'icon,' 'star,' 'hero,' ones so possessed by an internal vision of divine goodness that they give us a glimpse of the face of God in the centre of the human. They give us a taste of the possibilities of greatness in ourselves"

Joan D. Chittister,
"A Passion for Life"

This Week

Today we celebrate the great Solemnity of All Saints. In the Book of Revelation we read of "a great multitude" that stood before God. "These are the ones who have come through the great tribulation – the time of great distress and persecution – and stand in white before the throne of God. St Matthew's Gospel sets before us the Beatitudes: simple words but challenging teachings, which lead us to share the holiness of the saints.

Tuesday is the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls), and. During the regular readings this week, we conclude a four-week series of first readings from St Paul's Letter to the Romans. He reminds us, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?"

In the Gospel according to St Luke we see Jesus living out his daily life with challenging honesty. He calls us to extend an invitation out of our hearts, not with an eye on an invitation in return: "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the

blind." Then Jesus tells the parable of the invited guests who made excuses to decline the invitation. He sends his servants to invite everyone. Jesus tells a crowd that they have to renounce their possessions to be his disciple and that to do something really important, we have to prepare and be ready. When the religious leaders complain, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them," Jesus tells parables of the man who finds his lost sheep and the woman with the lost coin, both of whom rejoice in finding what was lost. A steward protects himself by pardoning those who owe his master. We end the week with Jesus asking which is more important, God or money? "No servant can serve two masters."

Next Sunday: St Mark's Gospel has us listen to Jesus contrast a scribe (the professional interpreters of the law in his day) who enjoys honours for himself, with a poor widow who donates to the temple poor box the very little she has. The woman's generous heart must have moved him deeply.

A Reflection for the All Saintside

+ + A lot of people think that the whole idea of Saints is far too good to be true - a collection of holy people who are meant to be examples and inspirations for living the Christian life. The expression 'plaster saint' sums up this view that the way the saints are often portrayed makes them so far above and beyond the real lives most of us lead as to make them quite unrelatable. And there's a great deal of truth in the idea that presented to us *in this way* the Saints can seem less than human, less than useful to our own concerns and difficulties. It's no coincidence that except in the technical, theological sense, when we come across the term '*hagiography*' it's meant in less than a complimentary way - normally used to describe an unrealistic biography of someone whose faults and failings have been airbrushed - even whitewashed - away.

We live in a culture where heroes of all kinds are viewed with a certain suspicion, and I can't subscribe to the view that this is a fault, given the damage that the

human race's heroes - not to mention hero worship - have done over the millennia. Sources of inspiration are much needed, as are good role models as we try to navigate the problems of life - just so long as we recognise the truth of the first part of Alexander Pope's saying that '*to err is human.*' Which simply echoes the Christian insight that even the best us are not wholly admirable. Perfection isn't possible this side of the Kingdom of heaven

But that's not what we're presented with in today's Feast. All Saints is about the great understanding - revelation, if you like - that the life of God's Kingdom isn't for a carefully selected group of the uber holy, for the perfect, but for people like you and me, people who started out without any great claims for holiness or outstanding faith, people who have been wounded and scarred in the battles of life, but whose scars became not a shield to keep others out, but a badge of honour identifying them as open and vulnerable to Christ and his eternal self sacrificial love, those, to paraphrase WH Auden, who wear their tribulation like a rose.. The saints are those who - through grace - have become able to love God and then to see him in their neighbour. The saints are those who have not been afraid to fail, and who know that it's not failure that is important, but the willingness to get up again and continue the pilgrimage of faith towards the vision of God.

St. John sums up what we believe about All Saints. All we know, he says, is that we will be like God, because we shall see God as he really is. The Saints are the Church's embodiment of hope - because people like you and me have limitless possibilities in the eyes of God.

The saints who have gone before us are our elder brothers and sisters in the faith, they are our memory and our conscience, they are the reminder of the infinite possibilities of holiness and life which are open to us all.

That's what we are talking about with added emphasis at this time of year - at All Saints tide, the great and mysterious Christian belief in the Communion of Saints where we all, living and departed are united in the life and love of the resurrection. Probably most of us are familiar with that overused quotation from the 19th century theologian Henry Scott-Holland which talks about death being

nothing at all and the possibility of talking to those who we have lost as though they have slipped away into the next room. It's not his fault that his words are so often taken out of context in a way that trivialises things and makes the communion of saints appear like a rather boring séance. What we believe is far more of a profound mystery than that, of which we can only grasp the barest outline. But this Feast of All Saints is saying to us that we are bound together in a relationship of living prayer, the prayer at the heart of the life of God himself, in the dynamic, ceaseless movement of love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the resurrection the boundaries of time and space are broken down, both we and those who have gone before us, live in this tremendous mystery, we who (in the words of the hymn) "feebly struggle" with life as it is here, they - "in glory shine" or, in those words we will hear a little later before the end of the year, "those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no person can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom we for evermore are one..."

We are all part of the Church, the great Body of Christ, which we can see here only in terms of the tip of an iceberg - the greater part and reality of it remaining hidden from our view.

We are all in need of some words of encouragement, particularly at the moment. So whenever we despair of the world in which we live, whenever we are tempted to think of the Church in a merely earthly way, whenever we look at our human nature and feel despondent about our all-too-human divisions, problems, idiocies and hypocrisies, we should remember the saints in the presence of God praying for us. They see God face to face but they are not now and never were plaster saints. They had their full share of human failings and frailties, but they were open to the grace of God. That's their claim to fame, Their humanity isn't compromised but completed. They started out on their pilgrimage of faith very much like the rest of us, many of them were undoubtedly difficult, impossible, demanding, tough individuals as well as those who displayed a more conventional gentleness and sympathy. They are a cross-section of disparate, ordinary humanity, all different - there's no

template - the white robe of sainthood isn't a one size fits all item of clothing, but even their faults and idiosyncrasies have been used by God for his greater glory. We are all called to be the saint our personalities allow. Their essential humanity is enhanced and brought to its full potential by their contact with and their putting on of those greater realities which this All Saints tide celebrates: those things which flow from the life of God: forgiveness, mercy, kindness and grace.

So, yes, the Saints - those known to us and celebrated, and those quieter saints known only to God himself - are heroes and role models, but their claim to heroism is their closer following of Christ - their status - if I can put it like that - owes everything to God. They point the way for us - but they point always to Christ and never to themselves. We need the grace to become more like them, and today we are not celebrating *them as such*, but the grace of God revealed in their lives, and the realisation in Christ of their human potential. And we are united with them, and they with us in the life of Christ's Resurrection. This is the greater, mysterious, future reality of which we get a foretaste at this Eucharist when we are fed with the living reality of Christ himself. We should remember and never give up hope. This, the Communion of Saints - the living Church both on earth and in heaven - is really what our faith is all about. +

2nd November All Souls Day

Today is a day of prayer for the faithful departed. It is natural for Christians to pray for one another, it is an important part of our faith. We believe that for those who have died, life is changed not ended and so it is natural that we should pray for our departed loved ones as much as we pray for the living, and praying for the departed is an ancient practice of the Church.

When we pray for the departed, we are expressing our belief that we are all one family in Christ, living and departed, and our belief in the resurrection and that we are all alive in Christ. After our death we believe that there is a time of further journeying and preparation before we can enjoy the fullness of our life in heaven and the resurrection life. In praying for the

dead we are seeking to support our brothers and sisters on that journey by commending them to God, in this we are not trying to bribe God but assist our loved ones with our prayers. C.S. Lewis wrote beautifully about his practice of praying for the departed: "*Of course I pray for the dead. The action is so spontaneous, so all but inevitable, that only the most compulsive theological case against it would deter me. And I hardly know how the rest of my prayers would survive if those for the dead were forbidden. At our age the majority of those we love best are dead. What sort of intercourse with God could I have if what I love best were unmentionable to Him?*"

Eternal God, our maker and redeemer, grant us, with all the faithful departed, the sure benefits of your Son's saving passion and glorious resurrection that, in the last day, when you gather up all things in Christ, we may with them enjoy the fullness of your promises; 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**