

# 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  
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

## 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021 The First Sunday of Advent

### The Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him 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 Jeremiah

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' [33. 14 - 16]

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

### Psalms 25, 1 - 10

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;  
my God, I put my trust in you;  
let me not be humiliated,  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.  
Let none who look to you be put to shame;  
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

Show me your ways, O Lord,  
and teach me your paths.  
Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
in you have I trusted all the day long.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.  
Remember not the sins of my youth

and my transgressions; remember me according to your love and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

Gracious and upright is the Lord;  
therefore he teaches sinners in his way.  
He guides the humble in doing right  
and teaches his way to the lowly.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.  
For your name's sake, O Lord,  
forgive my sin, for it is great.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

### A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians [3; 9 - 13]

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

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

### **Gradual Hymn**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy  
and give us your saving help.  
**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:  
**And also with you**

### Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St Luke

### **Glory to you, O Lord**

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

**T**here will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is

coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.' Then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

[St Luke 21.25–36]

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 draw nearer to Christ this Advent.  
For all migrants, refugees, and all forced to flee from their homelands  
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; Stuart Moles; Robert Pring; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Jeremy Hugh Winston, priest; James Griffin; Edward Roderick Hill; Elizabeth Jane Gollop;

### 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'*

*Jereboam today is based on the ordinary time Sunday readings for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Advent*

## Tom

**Jereboam:** Excuse me: I recognise you, don't I?

**Tom:** Yes, I'm Tom. You spoke to me the other week with my brother Ben.

**Jereboam:** Of course, yes. So you've just been listening to Jesus too, have you?

**Tom:** There's not much else to do around here.

**Jereboam:** Well... Let's just say that I don't live in the area, so I can't really comment. What did you think of Jesus, anyway?

**Tom:** He actually seems a really nice bloke, but I'm not so sure about him warning everyone to stay awake. I know he's quite interesting himself, but, considering the number of rabbis I've heard droning on for hours about the Scriptures, it seems a bit rich for one of them to start talking about staying awake.

**Jereboam:** You know, I don't think he was speaking literally: he meant that people should be on their guard. I think he used the phrase, "watch yourselves." You'll have heard him explain that we... Hey, watch out!

**Tom:** What's up?

**Jereboam:** You were going to step on that snake. Let's be careful: those ones are really poisonous.

**Tom:** Goodness, Jereboam, thank you – that was a close thing. So what were we saying?

**Jereboam:** We were talking about constantly staying awake and being on our guard...perhaps not referring to snakes, but to our actions and attitudes.

**Tom:** Is it really such a big deal, though? I mean, most people are basically nice, aren't they? Or don't you agree?

**Jereboam:** Well, since you ask, I think he has got a point, and I'll tell you why. If I don't work for a week, I start losing the knack of writing. If I don't work for two weeks, I get even worse, but I stop noticing that my standards have deteriorated. That's the big problem: not realising. I reckon Jesus is warning us not to let our standards slip. It can happen easily enough, believe me. Look, I'd better go now, but thanks for the chat, and do remember me to Ben, won't you?

**Tom:** Sure.

## Thought for the Week

“Advent is the perfect time to clear and prepare the Way. Advent is a winter training camp for those who desire peace. By reflection and prayer, by reading and meditation, we can make our hearts a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place.

*Edward Hays, "A Pilgrim's Almanac"*

## This Week

Sunday is the beginning of a new liturgical year with the First Sunday of Advent. This year is Year C.

The first reading today, from the prophet Jeremiah, offers a comforting promise of safety to beleaguered Israel: “those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem shall live in safety.” St Luke's gospel offers us a repeat of several of the daily gospels, advising us to be alert and vigilant, watching for signs. “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Tuesday is the Feast of the Apostle, St Andrew. Friday is the feast day of **Saint Francis Xavier**, the legendary missionary. During the first part of Advent - until December 17 – we will focus on the first reading, this week from the prophet Isaiah. These passages are about promises. Isaiah is consoling, building up and preparing his people to have hope. “In the days to come,” he says over and over. When the day of promise comes, “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.” Even though King David's line, and that of his father, Jesse, are almost wiped out, Isaiah proclaims hope: “On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.” Who would believe even a peace in nature - lion lying down with the lamb? “There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea.” God's unique ways of favouring the poor, which Mary comes

to know and proclaims in her *Magnificat*, are seen when Isaiah says, “He humbles those in high places, and the lofty city he brings down; He tumbles it to the ground, levels it with the dust.” Even Jesus' own statement about his mission is seen in the powerful images Isaiah uses to give us courage and hope: “On that day the deaf shall hear ... the eyes of the blind shall see ... the lowly will ever find joy in the LORD ... ” “On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people.”

The gospels for this first part of Advent are chosen from several gospels. They are meant to match the first readings and to show that the promises are fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus brings healing. He raises up the childlike. And Jesus calls and sends the twelve apostles to continue his ministry.

**Next Sunday** “Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendour of glory from God forever.”

These words from Baruch are in the first reading for the Second Sunday of Advent. St Luke's Gospel offers us a first look at the promise of John the Baptist as he cries out, “Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

## A Reflection for the First Sunday of Advent

+ Life being what it is these days, no sooner does Advent begin than we are almost immediately caught up - if we are not already - in preparations for Christmas itself, now only a few short weeks away. Yet the Church has always regarded Advent as a specific season in its own right and not just a way of marking this short period in the build up to the feast of the Lord's birth. Yes, of course, Advent is about making preparations and getting ready, but it's only *partly* about preparing ourselves spiritually for the feast of Christmas, and *mainly* about something rather different, something not really tied to the date of any particular festival at all. So what we are given here in Advent is an opportunity of a few weeks of reflection and pondering, if you like, to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ. Well,

you might say to me, if that's not about Christmas, then what is? But if you said that, you would be only right *up to a point*. At Christmas we will be celebrating the coming among us of the Lord who is the fulfilment of Old Testament Israel's longing for the Messiah, a word which means literally the anointed one. But at the first Christmas God came among us in Jesus Christ, in St John's words as the Word made flesh, as God become man – a human being - one of us. He came to earth in an unexpected way; the manner of his birth, his events of his life and above all his death and resurrection were equally shocking and unexpected.

One of the themes of Advent is that our desires, our deepest hopes and prayers, are often fulfilled in ways that surprise us, in ways that have a tendency to turn our worlds upside down. We know that Christmas is on the way, even in these uncertain, pandemic times we have to look very hard indeed to find many surprises there.

But in Advent - this essential period of watching and waiting and praying - we are presented with surprises and contradictions wherever we look.

The people of the Old Testament were looking for a Saviour who would rule on earth in God's name and usher in a time of everlasting peace and righteousness. Sometimes I think that we ourselves are only too happy to look for a Saviour who will immediately set right both our own lives and the world itself. The world is full of people who have approached faith in this way and not surprisingly have become disappointed and disillusioned when things don't quite work out that way. The Incarnation of the Son of God is the absolute opposite of the magic wand kind of religion that a lot of people think religious faith is all about and which they rightly reject. If our own experience of Advent is to be about anything meaningful, it's this: the asking of the questions: “what is it that we really hope for? And can we identify our deepest longings, and what do they say about us? The Gospels remind us constantly that we don't know when the end of the world - either the world itself, or – probably of far more pressing importance - our own part in it, is going to take place, and we are always urged to live each day as if it might be our last: that is, in charity, in our care for others, in making the most we can of

every opportunity we have of being the people God wants us to be. And today's Gospel returns to the same subject. But Jesus in the Gospel reading today reinforces our view of him as someone who surprises us. His main point again is about how we should behave *here and now*. He tells us to be alert and not distracted from looking for him by our own cares and anxieties, or by all the often very attractive, sometimes, all-consuming, distractions the world can put in our way. The coming of the Lord, then, for which we are preparing during these four weeks of Advent is also about his active presence in our lives here and now, and not only in the past or in the indefinite future. We are being asked to be alert and on the lookout for the signs of his presence with us and in our lives today: life is only too short and sometimes tragically unpredictable - we don't need to be reminded of that.

Yet this is the Advent Season which is taking place now. The problem for most of us, and for most of the time, is that we are not really on the alert at all. We are probably without exception all too easily distracted by the problems and sources of anxiety in our lives – whatever they might be - we may even be running through them in our minds right now – and there's nothing wrong with that – we are meant to bring these things to the altar and offer them up for and resolution.

But St Bernard of Clairvaux, in many ways one of the most influential and attractive of the mediaeval saints, speaks in his advent sermons about *three* comings of Christ - his coming among us as a human being in the Bethlehem stable; his coming to us here and now by word and sacrament into the daily reality of our lives; and his coming again at the consummation of all things at the end of time.

So Advent isn't only about preparing for Christmas; it's an opportunity for us all to engage in something profoundly counter-cultural and to ponder deeply on the themes of death and judgement, heaven and hell and, in the light of that, to reflect on the meaning and direction of our own lives. The preparation of Advent is a preparation to meet the Lord both here and now and at the end of our lives. Advent is about hard reality and its about bringing the solid hope and joy that Christ brings into the often hard reality of our lives.

Advent is an opportunity to open up to Christ, little by little, those areas where we need to be healed, where we need to be made strong. As someone said Jesus doesn't mind coming into the messy reality of our lives because after all, he was born in the mess of a stable. Incarnation is about the grace of God coming into the physical realities of the world.

And, if we possibly can, we must try to cultivate silence this Advent. That's an odd thing to say at this most noisy and pressured time of year. We must try to find silence in the odd corners of our day and to try to preserve that interior silence in our hearts even when we are at our most busy because if all our preparation amounts to is a hurried anxiety without periods of recollection and quiet, Christmas may come and go without leaving a trace of its true meaning. And that meaning has something to do with the fact that the true realities of life are not the things with which we surround ourselves and about which we worry so much. We are called to live in the hope of salvation, to have trust in the God who saves us +

## Saint of the Week

### St Andrew

30<sup>th</sup> November

The Gospels relate that Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, was from the village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee. He was a fisherman by trade and Jesus called him to be a 'fisher of men'. Early church writings suggest that he travelled around the Byzantine world as far as Kiev, preaching the Gospel. He was said to have been martyred by crucifixion in Achaia in western Greece on an X-shaped cross or *saltaire*. This was supposedly at his own request, as he felt he was not worth to be crucified on the same shaped cross that Jesus had been. Legend says that his relics were brought from Constantinople to Scotland, where the town of St Andrews stands today. His intercession was invoked in battle and he became Scotland's patron saint.

Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Saint Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus Christ and brought his brother with him: call us by your holy word,

and give us grace to follow you without delay and to tell the good news of your kingdom; 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.

## PLEASE NOTE:

**Our thanks** to The Revd John Waters who led yesterday's 'Café Church' at St Arvans and to all who helped with the afternoon.

## CONCERT NEXT SUNDAY

5<sup>th</sup> December

### 'Concertos and Carols'

Ystradivarius, the South Wales based baroque ensemble, presents a Sunday afternoon concert including works by Bach, Handel, Telemann and Leclair...along with a little anticipation of the Christmas season!

Tickets available on the door, or phone 01291 622064 to book in advance (leaving a message with your name and phone number):

Full price: £10 Students: £5

Accompanied children under 16 years: FREE

## 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**