

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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5th December 2021 The Second Sunday of Advent

The Collect

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the prophet Baruch [5.

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God. Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting; for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven. For God will give you evermore the name, 'Righteous Peace, Godly Glory.' Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height; look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them. For they went out from you on foot, led away by their enemies; but God will bring them back to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne. For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up, to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God. The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God's command. For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory, with the mercy and righteousness that come from him. [5. 1 - 9]

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

Canticle: St Luke 1. 68 - 79
Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

Blessèd be the Lord, the God of Israel,
for he has come to his people
and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant, David.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

Through his holy prophets he promised of old, that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us. He promised to show mercy to our

forebears and to remember his holy covenant.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight,
all the days of our life.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation,
by the forgiveness of their sins.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

In the tender compassion of our God,
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness
and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

**R/ Blessed be the Lord,
who sets his people free.**

**A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Philippians** [1; 3 - 11]

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow

more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Prepare a way for the Lord.
Make his paths straight,
and all mankind shall see
the salvation of God.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Hear the Holy Gospel
according to St Luke

Glory to you, O Lord.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."' [St Luke 3.1-6]

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 closer to Christ as this Advent season proceeds
For all migrants, refugees, and all forced to flee from their homelands
Those who care for the environment and the natural 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; Lorna

For the Departed:

The recently departed; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Edward Priddis; Nancy Stephens; David May; Derek Jones, priest; Ronald Harry.

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 2nd Sunday before Advent

Joanna

Jereboam: So, Joanna, if I've understood correctly, you're a cousin of John – the one they call "the Baptist".

Joanna: Yes, that's right: our fathers were brothers. The two families always lived in the same area, so John and I know each other pretty well.

Jereboam: Excuse me saying this – and I haven't seen or heard John myself – but I have the impression that he's quite a stern man, even perhaps a bit angry.

Joanna: No, no: he's a very sensitive person...very open, very kind.

Jereboam: Somehow I've been given a different impression.

Joanna: What's happened with John is that he's always sensed the full possibilities of people. He sees everyone's gifts and respects the absolute dignity of every person. At the same time he feels great sadness when these possibilities are distorted by people's weakness. That's why he has an urge to wash away any negative influences – almost like a physical process. Even in his childhood he did his best to put right anything he saw as being damaged by human failings. Clearly there's a connection with his ministry of baptism.

Jereboam: And he's always known Jesus too?

Joanna: Yes: in that case it's the mothers who were cousins. Their families met only occasionally because they lived a considerable distance away from one another, but nevertheless there was always a strong understanding between the two boys.

Jereboam: What did they used to speak about?

Joanna: As I remember it, John often used to speak of the potential of people he knew – of how he wanted to help them to realise that potential. Jesus didn't say all that much, but he encouraged John. He'd say "yes, I think you're right" or "I agree" or something like that. So whilst John would react to everything and discuss it, I had the feeling that Jesus observed a great deal, but was waiting for his opinion to mature. John was always more immediate, but we could all see that nothing escaped Jesus' attention.

Jereboam: That's very interesting. Just one more thing: is this rumour true about John eating locusts? I can't help feeling intrigued!

Joanna: I'm sorry, I don't know. You'd need to ask him that yourself.

Jereboam: Well, thank you, Joanna. Goodbye.

Thought for the Week

"The fact remains that our task is to seek and find Christ in our world as it is and not as it might be. The fact that the world is other than it might be does not alter the truth that Christ is present in it and that his plan is neither frustrated nor changed: Indeed, all will be done according to his will. Our Advent is the celebration of this hope."

*Thomas Merton:
"Advent: Hope or Delusion?"*

This Week

"Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendour of glory from God forever." Those words from the prophet Baruch are from today's first reading on 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."

Tuesday is the feast day Memorial of Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. Wednesday sees the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with its own special readings.

This week we focus on the first readings from the prophet Isaiah. With the Babylonian Captivity, the temple was destroyed, the leaders of the people were taken away and only a remnant was left behind. A life-threatening desert separated the people from one another. In this context, Isaiah proclaims God's vindication of the people in exile. The desert will be reborn. A highway will bring their liberation. And the signs will be that there is healing and peace. "Comfort, give comfort to my people," says the Lord. *The valleys will be filled in, the mountains leveled - every obstacle will be overcome to build a highway for our God to come and save us.* The people can hardly believe the good news. They are weak and weary of their captivity. Isaiah proclaims, "They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles' wings." He offers support: "I am the LORD, your God, who grasp your right hand; It is I who say to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'" The people have been at a distance from the Lord for some time and were not obeying the commandments. The Lord says, "I, the LORD, your God, teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go." The final first reading this week is a piece from the book of Sirach in which the prophet Elijah is praised. Elijah, who was destined to come again to restore order before the day of the Lord, is seen in the reading from St Matthew's Gospel to be John the Baptist.

The gospels this week, taken from various evangelists, show Jesus as the fulfilment of the liberation promised. Jesus heals the paralytic. He tends to the lost sheep of his flock. He comforts us who labor and are burdened. Jesus teaches a true wisdom.

Next Sunday begins with the Prophet Zephaniah's announcement of liberation and God's presence among the people after decades of their own infidelity. In St

Luke's Gospel, John the Baptist is the focus of the expectation in the people who come to him asking what to do. He exhorts them to integrity and charity and announces the one who is to come: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

A Reflection for the Second Sunday of Advent

+ In Advent we enter into the longing of a nation and a faith in exile; many of the readings we hear during the liturgy speak of the desire of the people of Israel deported to a foreign country for their return to their homeland, others speak of the restoration of the holy city Jerusalem to its former glory, others again speak of the return of a king to reign over God's people and the establishment of peace and justice to the whole world.

Like the Israelites in exile, we too as Christians have an uneasy sense of exile, a feeling that this is not our real home, a sense that we too are strangers beside the waters of Babylon, singing the Lord's song in a strange land.

Now this has always been the case, as part of God's Church - which in the Resurrection of Christ exists in two worlds - we are citizens of this earth and of the kingdom of heaven - we can't help but feel a sense of alienation from the world we see around us, a sense in which we don't really belong and that our beliefs and hopes separate us from many of the attitudes which seem to be the dominant voices in contemporary society. I don't want to exaggerate this: this is just part of our Christian calling. The Gospel and the world has never and will never be - this side of the Second Coming - the same thing, or hold the same values dear. And the various misguided attempts down the centuries to try and force it to be the same haven't exactly ended well, to say the least.

But at this time of year we are right to feel a bit uneasy. I don't only mean because of the commercial remaking of Advent into just an extension of Christmas, but when we see shops and, more and more, web sites - decked out with expensive consumer products no one could possibly really need, when there are people outside on our own streets sleeping rough, or surviving by being referred to food

banks, not to mention those in parts of the third world without even the basic necessities and securities of life.

We as Christians ought to feel a certain amount of discomfort at our own involvement in all this in a culture where that's all Christmas is really about. We look for salvation in the strangest of places.

This morning, though, I want to look more closely at today's first reading. We hinted at the background to it at the beginning. The people of Israel had been in exile for a long time. Their country had been conquered by the Babylonians, and the Jewish ruling class, the political, military, spiritual and intellectual elites, had been taken prisoner and shipped off to a foreign land. But human beings, as we know, are infinitely adaptable, and the next generation was born into a situation of exile and to a great extent had assimilated into the culture surrounding them. Yet they still felt that sense of unease, a feeling of discomfort and disconnection. They were God's people, yet they were living among a culture, not governed by the law and the commandments, surrounded by strange temples and alien gods. Not, as for us, the glossy temples – real or virtual - of consumerism, but the real pagan temples of the Babylonian gods - and for the Jewish exiles these were not just different ways of approaching faith, but places of incomprehensible and cruel irrationality. Now, in the Old Testament reading the prophet Baruch calls on Jerusalem to remove her dress of sorrow and affliction and put on the beauty of God's glory. Jerusalem will see her exiled children return to her. Their exile and alienation is coming to an end, they will be enabled to live according to God's commands in a place where they can feel fully at home, where their lives can conform to their beliefs.

As we know, the people of Judaea did return to their homeland, but the system they set up still fell far short of the ideal they had set for themselves. The reason? And it's the crucial point is because a sense of exile and alienation from what is good and just and holy are part of the fallen human condition. No matter how we try, we can't ever completely escape them. No matter who else we try to blame, and I suspect we would differ wildly about that these days depending on our view of

the world, we can't get away from the fact that the problem with the world lies not only outside us, but very much *within* each of our own hearts and minds.

And that feeling of unease goes with the territory of Advent. The message of Advent is that we find our true liberation from the problems and alienation of human nature in the coming of Christ. God sends his Son, the Word, God living, dying, among his people on earth, to lead us to God's kingdom – that is, to the values of the Gospel and to our eternal destiny.

He leaves us his Church with its Gospel, its sacraments of new life and hope to help us on our way, to give us food and encouragement on the long pilgrimage towards his kingdom.

We are called to care about the world and everything and everyone in it. We are committed by Christ himself to praying for the Father's kingdom to come about on earth as it is in heaven. But we are still strangers, and exiles, and most importantly pilgrims on the road.

We are in the world, but never completely of the world.

What does this Advent hope promise us? Will it bring about an end to all the anxieties, contradictions and dysfunction of our lives? No, of course, it won't! Remember, Jesus himself died, at the mercy of his enemies' violent power, and abandoned by his friends, in what seemed to be very much a victory for the so-called "realities" of the world. No, the Gospel, the message of the hope of the coming kingdom of God, doesn't promise us worldly success, or any kind of insulation from the often cold, hard facts of the world as it is - the world, of course, we all help to make.

What Our Lord *does* promise us if we unite ourselves to him in his death and resurrection, if we open ourselves up to receive his grace and mercy in the Sacraments of new life - as in this Eucharist today - and then through the grace we are given, show it by the way we live, by the way treat people, by the love we both receive from him and give to others - what he promises us is eternal life, the life of God's kingdom of holiness and love.

For now the journey - the pilgrimage from the rivers of Babylon across the desert to the holy city - continues. We are in the world but not of it; our true home is the

presence of God. And Advent is above all an experience of being in time, but not of it. That is its significance - that's why it is so valuable and why *we particularly* shouldn't abandon it to the frenzy of a premature Christmas. This vital season is an encounter with God's time which is deeper than our own time, eternal, not fleetingly transient, a place where hope becomes reality. And the coming feast of Christmas is about just that: God's coming among us to redeem the world - to lead it, and us all, to share in the joy of his life +

Saint of the Week

St Ambrose

7th December

St Ambrose was born into a Christian family around the year 340, and he became one of the most important figures in the Church in the 4th century.

Ambrose's father died in 354 and the family moved to Rome where Ambrose studied law, and entered a career of public service. He became a Governor in Northern Italy and was a very popular political figure.

There was a vacancy as Bishop of Milan and Ambrose attended the election to prevent arguments and conflict between opposing groups. He gave an address and as he spoke the people called for him to be made the next Bishop. He refused as, although he was brought up in a Christian family, he was not baptised (it was common at this time for baptism to come later in life), he was a layman and not trained in theology. He attempted to hide from the crowd, but their will that he should be the next Bishop persisted and within a week he was baptised, ordained a priest and consecrated as a Bishop (his feast day of 7th December is the anniversary of his consecration as Bishop).

As he became Bishop he sold all of his land and gave his money to the poor, and throughout his episcopate he took great care of the poor. Ambrose spoke out against the Emperor and defended the rights of the Church. He also introduced reforms to the liturgy and wrote many hymns, some of which are still in use today. He died on Holy Saturday, 4th April in the year 397.

CONCERT TODAY
Sunday 5th December 5 pm
St Arvans Parish Church
'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

Christmas Concert
Saturday 11th December 7 pm.
St Deiniol's Church, Itton
St Woolos Sinfonia

Chamber Music, Carols, Readings

Tickets £12

Children under 16 years: free

Available from

01291 641615

01291 641901

or on the door.

Proceeds in aid of the church

Advent Book
Recommendation
'Surviving Christmas
by Loving Advent'
by Roy Uprichard

Available as an ebook (*Kindle etc*) from Amazon.co.uk - either free for a few days, or thereafter at 79p
"Feel the ebb and flow of a season in this fresh look at our star-bright stories.

Told with a Celtic, Northern Irish twist, the author imagines not only the untold range of emotions coursing between the lines of our Nativity tales, but also, how we might today navigate our way through this festival full of ambiguity. Perhaps by the final pages you might also sense that one way to survive our commercialised Christmas is, paradoxically, by falling in love with Advent"

A real bargain and highly recommended for Advent reflection – and not just for the nice things he says in the acknowledgements!

Services in the Group
Sunday 5th December 2021

Sung Eucharist at St Arvans at 10 a.m.

Holy Eucharist at St Mary's, Penterry at 11.30 a.m.

Café Church at St James, Devauden at 4 p.m.

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**