

# 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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## 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021 The Fourth Sunday of Advent

### The Collect

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; 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 Micah

*The LORD says to his people:*  
But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,

from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

[5. 2 - 5a]

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

### **Psalm 80. 1-7**

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
leading Joseph like a flock;  
shine forth, you that are enthroned  
upon the cherubim.  
In the presence of Ephraim,  
Benjamin and Manasseh,  
stir up your strength and come to help us.

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

O Lord God of hosts,  
how long will you be angered  
despite the prayers of your people?  
You have fed them with the bread of tears;  
you have given them bowls  
of tears to drink.  
You have made us the derision  
of our neighbours,  
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

### **A reading from the letter to the Hebrews** [10. 5 - 10]

When Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God" (in the scroll of the book, it is written of me).' When Christ said, 'You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and Offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings' (these are offered according to the law), then he added, 'See, I have come to do your will.' He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

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

### **Gradual Hymn**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
I am the handmaid of the Lord;  
Let it be to me according to your word  
**Alleluia!**

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

Hear the Holy Gospel  
according to St Luke

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

**M**ary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?

For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

[St Luke 1. 39 45]

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 celebrate Christmas with hope and joy  
For all migrants, refugees, and all forced to flee from their homelands  
Those who care for the environment and the natural world  
Those here and 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; for Matthew Oubridge; Daniel; Derek Higgs; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Reg Owens; Nick Hoskins; Reg Cook; Ivor Shepherd; Oliver John Gollop; Peter Ayres; Ivor Richard

### 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'*

## Isaiah

**Jereboam:** So, Isaiah, do you think that the Church has changed at all since it started twenty years ago?

**Isaiah:** Obviously we've grown in numbers for a start, and spread geographically, but I suppose that one of the biggest changes has been that we've gradually come to see ourselves as being quite distinct from the Jewish people. Of course Jesus himself was a Jew, so, to begin with, we thought of ourselves simply as a particular group of Jews, but that view has rather changed now.

**Jereboam:** Can you identify what caused this shift of opinion?

**Isaiah:** Well, first of all many Gentiles joined our numbers. They obviously didn't share our Jewish heritage or sense of identity. Then we began to notice how we interpret the Scriptures differently from the way the Jews do.

**Jereboam:** Can you give some details?

**Isaiah:** The main thing is that there are many places in the Scriptures that we feel refer to Jesus. So when, for example, the psalm says something like "may your hand be on the man you have chosen", to us that man is Jesus.

**Jereboam:** Excuse me, but it can't refer to Jesus: the psalms were written long before he was born.

**Isaiah:** Don't forget that no-one's disputing that the Scriptures were inspired by God. I think we can safely assume that He was capable of foreseeing Jesus' birth.

**Jereboam:** Fair enough, I suppose.

**Isaiah:** Then there are many prophecies that we understand as foretelling Jesus' life on earth. He is for us the Messiah that the Jews are still waiting for.

**Jereboam:** I can see that the significance of those passages will be very different for you.

**Isaiah:** I'll admit that it's also difficult sometimes: you read one of those texts full of impassioned longing for the coming of the Messiah, and it's hard not to replace that wonderful outpouring of emotion with a rather complacent sense that Jesus has already come to us. We can ruin the emotional tone of such passages, if we're not careful.

**Jereboam:** How do you deal with that problem?

**Isaiah:** In two ways: first of all, if you think of the longing the Jews feel for the advent of their Messiah, we feel a similar longing for Jesus' return - the so-called "second coming".

**Jereboam:** And the other way?

**Isaiah:** That way's rather personal to me: when I think about our Lord's birth, I try to adopt for a moment a Jewish frame of mind. I imagine that I'm still waiting for a Saviour; I try to hear in my mind the Jewish chants and recall their rituals. So in my imagination I deprive myself of Jesus, as a way of training myself to appreciate him more deeply.

**Jereboam:** Apart from anything else, that exercise must keep you sympathetic to the Jewish point of view.

**Isaiah:** I hope so, yes: I always try to honour the religion within which our Lord grew up.

**Jereboam:** Thank you for your contribution, Isaiah.

## Thought for the Week

"Jesus Christ, the God-Man, was born in a manger and is spiritually reborn on the altar.

He suffered on Calvary and continues to offer Himself on the altar.

In His earthly life, He spread His teaching and worked miracles among the crowds.

In the Eucharist, He spans the centuries and communicates Himself to all."

*St John Chrysostom (347-407)*

## This Week

Today's first reading from the prophet Micah reminds us that of the seemingly unimportant town of Bethlehem, "from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel." St Luke's gospel offers again the story of Mary's going to visit her cousin. Elizabeth understands immediately Mary's situation and praises God saying, "How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."

St Luke's Gospel is our guide this week. We begin with Luke's story of the Visitation which continues with Mary's beautiful response, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord." Then we have the naming of John by Zechariah. Finally, we have Zechariah's prayer of praise after being allowed to speak again. The scenes and canticles, or songs, which are part of the story, are so well known to us that we can miss hearing them with an open heart.

The first celebration of The Nativity of the Lord is the Mass at Midnight. The first reading is from Isaiah: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." This powerful reading deserves a slow contemplation. The Gospel is from St Luke: the journey to Bethlehem, the birth, the angels announce the birth to the shepherds. The second celebration of The Nativity of the Lord is the Mass at Dawn. The Gospel is from Luke: the shepherds visit the newborn child. "And Mary kept all these

things, reflecting on them in her heart." The Gospel at the third celebration of the Eucharist on Christmas Day I is from the beginning of St John's Gospel: "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

**Next Sunday;** The First Sunday of Christmas (the Sunday in the Christmas Octave ) is sometimes known as the Feast of the Holy Family. Readings are taken from the book of Sirach, the first book of Samuel, and either St Paul's letter to the Colossians or the first letter of St John. The gospel is the story of the teenage Jesus teaching in the temple while his parents could not find him. Jesus goes back home with his family. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favour before God and man."

## A Reflection for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

+ As we approach Christmas, today's Gospel goes back almost to the beginning of the story of God's coming among us, with the meeting of the cousins Mary and Elizabeth, both of whom are expecting the children who are to change the course of humanity's history.

There are a lot of experiences of human contact with the Divine recounted in the Scriptures and later in the history of the Church, but nothing quite resembles this first chapter of St Luke's Gospel. This seems to be of an entirely different order. We find it very difficult to believe that the Incarnation, an event so momentous as to concern the future destiny of the human race, should be announced so quietly to a young girl in a provincial town in an out of the way region of the ancient world. But we shouldn't be surprised, because here we see the consistency and truth of God's nature.

In today's Gospel we see Mary hurrying through the hill country of Judea to give her news about the angel's message to her cousin. She is shocked, confused; on a human level, she wants to spend time

with perhaps the one person close to her who she thinks will understand. On another level, her great hurry says to us both how profoundly she has been moved by the Word she carries, and that to receive the divine Word is not to remain unaffected and as we were before, but to be almost forced to carry that Word, who is Jesus Christ, to others.

So we see in this story the joyful willingness with which Mary at once acts as a disciple, even if at a conscious level she doesn't realise it. She is revealed here to be her Son's first disciple. And at the same time as we see Mary's discipleship, we see the urgency of God himself to communicate his joy.

Israel has waited for long generations for the coming of the Messiah, here we see God acting decisively when the time is ripe.

What we have in today's Gospel, can most probably only have been originally handed down to us by the witness and later reflections of Mary herself in the early days of the Church. Of course, no one pretends that St Luke's account is a detailed fly on the wall account of the meeting between the heavenly messenger and Mary, or of today's meeting between Mary and Elizabeth - how could it be - but it's essentially a faithful recollection of a message of good news and of joy, which begins here, but doesn't end here. Mary, Elizabeth and John are each animated, given new life and a new direction in life, by their contact with the as yet unborn Christ, the Word of God. They are all together caught up in the sacred drama of God's unfolding plan for the human race and for the whole creation. The atmosphere of today's Gospel is both a kind of sanctified excitement in the face of the hidden mystery of God, and also the resulting peace which comes from Mary's willing acceptance of what she has been chosen to do.

And the importance of this acceptance, this "yes" to God's purpose for humanity shouldn't be underestimated. It underlines Mary's importance as a kind of representative of all of us - of the entire human race - in that here we don't have God in some way forcing his will upon us, but always seeking our agreement and our co-operation in his vision for our future: a vision of love, redemption, and infinite possibilities. Mary's "yes" makes that future possible, she's not just a

replaceable pawn in God's game (because that's not how the God we believe in behaves) but, as St Luke says, she is full of grace, a willing and joyful participant in the bringing about of the birth of the Incarnate Son.

In this story we see the God who respects the autonomy of his creatures, who works by persuasion and grace rather than through coercion, power, might and terror. The God, who is love, works through love, that is his nature.

And the love of God finds a response in the heart of Mary; as St Augustine wrote, she conceives and gives birth to Christ in her heart before ever she does so in her body.

And the God of love often acts quietly, operating in the silences of the world and the unexplainable experiences in our own lives, and in the poverty of the human heart. The events of today's Gospel take place in the obscurity of a fairly humble Jewish home in the hill country of Roman-occupied Palestine.

The events of the Annunciation – which Mary has come to Elizabeth to share and reflect upon doesn't take place at the centre of power at the heart of an empire, or with a fanfare of trumpets either human or divine.

To put it into contemporary terms, there is no publicity, there are no flashing cameras or a scrum of reporters, no social media frenzy. No one knows other than those directly involved. The message is first delivered to a young girl alone in her home, then to her older cousin who is still reeling herself from the strange events of her own unlooked-for pregnancy. Only quite a bit later does this message reach the seats of power and the ears of the rich and powerful, and with predictably brutal and cold-hearted results, firstly for the Holy Innocents – the slaughtered children of Bethlehem a few months later, and then, of course, ultimately to the two young men, the martyred John the Baptist and Our Lord himself, both of whom are the victims of violent power which is itself brought to judgement.

But that's to leap ahead much too far for this morning. For the moment here in poverty and obscurity the world is turned upside down. But this is the mysterious nature of the Word of God among us, and even today he operates in the same kind of way – quietly but determinedly and joyfully to reassure us, to free us, to

inspire us and to give us life and hope, even at those times when we think those things are impossible. +

## **The great Advent Antiphons**

### **O Sapientia - December 17<sup>th</sup>**

O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High. You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner. O come to teach us the way of truth.

### **O Adonai - December 18<sup>th</sup>**

O Adonai and leader of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush and you gave him the Law on Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power.

### **O Radix Jesse - December 19<sup>th</sup>**

O stock of Jesse, you stand as a signal for the nations; kings fall silent before you whom the peoples acclaim. O come to deliver us, and do not delay.

### **O Clavis David - December 20<sup>th</sup>**

O key of David and sceptre of Israel, what you open no one else can close again; what you close no one can open. O come to lead the captive from prison; free those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

### **O Oriens - December 21<sup>st</sup>**

O Rising Sun, you are the splendour of eternal light and the sun of justice. O come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

### **O Rex Gentium - December 22<sup>nd</sup>**

O King whom all the peoples desire, you are the cornerstone which makes all one. O come and save man whom you made from clay.

### **O Emmanuel - December 23<sup>rd</sup>**

O Emmanuel, you are our king and judge, the One whom the peoples await and their Saviour. O come and save us, Lord, our God.

## **Services in the Group today Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

Morning prayer

at St James, Devauden at 9 a.m.

Sung Eucharist at St Arvans at 10 a.m.

A late Advent Liturgy at Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg at 11.30 a.m..

## **All our Christmas Services**

### **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> December:**

6 p.m. Nine Lessons & Carols at St Arvans

### **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> December :**

*Christmas Eve*

4.30 p.m. Carols by Candlelight at St Mary's, Penterry

6.30 p.m. Christmas Eve Carol Service on Devauden Green

11 p.m. Midnight Mass (*The first Eucharist of Christmas*) at St Arvans

*This is the midnight celebration for all our parishes*

### **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Day**

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Carols at St James, Devauden

10.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Carols at St Deiniol's, Itton

### **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> December The First Sunday of Christmas (The Holy Family)**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

*The Eucharist will be said in the Lady Chapel at St Arvans Church at 10 a.m. each day of the Christmas Octave*

*A short reflection and celebration of Night Prayer is live-streamed from the Lady Chapel at St Arvan's every Wednesday at 8 p.m.*

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

**With regret, the Carol Service at Itton has been cancelled this year due to the pandemic**

Services may be subject to change due to the possible introduction of any - as yet unknown - Covid-19 rules & restrictions.

## 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**