

# PARISH NEWSLETTER

## 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  
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## 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022 The Baptism of the Lord

### The Collect

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; 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 prophet Isaiah

Thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When

you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, 'Give them up,' and to the south, 'Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.'

[43; 1 - 7]

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

### Psalm 29

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

Ascribe to the Lord, you gods,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters;  
the God of glory thunders;  
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.  
The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice;  
the voice of the Lord  
is a voice of splendour.

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord  
breaks the cedar trees;  
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;  
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,  
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.  
The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare.  
And in the temple of the Lord  
all are crying, 'Glory!'

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

The Lord sits enthroned above the flood;  
the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.  
The Lord shall give strength to his people;  
the Lord shall give his people  
the blessing of peace.

**R/ The voice of the Lord  
is upon the waters**

### A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. [8; 14 - 17]

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

### **Gradual hymn**

Alleluia, Alleluia! John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said:  
This is the Lamb of God  
who takes away the sin of the world.  
**Alleluia!**

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

Listen to the Gospel of Christ  
according to Saint Luke

**R/ Glory to you, O Lord.**

In the wilderness John proclaimed a baptism of repentance. As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptise you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptised and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

[3, 15 - 17, 21 - 22]

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 we may have confidence in the God who shares our life to unite us with his. Especially at this Christmas season for those who are homeless and without adequate food.

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; Lorna; Michael; John Metivier, priest.

### For the Departed:

The recently departed; for Matthew Oubridge; Derek Higgs; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Angela; Phyllis Meade; Hartley Brooks; Margot Brooks; Connie Cook

## 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'*

# Esther

**Jereboam:** Is this right, Esther? You saw something extraordinary at the river Jordan the other day?

**Esther:** It wasn't so much a question of what I actually saw, but yes, I did experience something quite extraordinary.

**Jereboam:** What had taken you to the Jordan in the first place?

**Esther:** Well, I'd heard that this man John was conducting his cleansing ceremonies in the river. That reminded me of Naaman being healed, after Elisha had told him to wash seven times in the Jordan. So I told myself that there was nothing to lose, and I went along to see whether my pains might be cured. I've been suffering for years, you see.

**Jereboam:** And did it work?

**Esther:** I think it must have done: I wasn't aware of any immediate change, but by the end of the afternoon I felt better than I have done for years.

**Jereboam:** That's marvellous! Was that the extraordinary experience you mentioned?

**Esther:** Not exactly, although I'm sure the two things were connected. Just after my cleansing – or baptism, they call it -- a man called Jesus stepped forward. He and John seemed to know each other pretty well already. They had a curious discussion about which one of them was going to baptise the other. In the end it was John that baptised Jesus, and as he did so I felt something shift inside me. I think we all felt it – it was as if the whole place somehow changed. All at the same time, we realised that there was something remarkable about Jesus. I don't think that he himself had particularly changed...it's just that we all suddenly realised how special he was. I know this sounds a bit strange, but I had a strong sense that Jesus was connected to God.

**Jereboam:** Actually I was speaking to someone else who reckoned that Jesus himself is God.

**Esther:** Oh, I couldn't...well, I was about to say that I shouldn't describe anyone like that, but I'll admit that Jesus does rather give that impression. There's something quite extraordinary about him.

**Jereboam:** Thank you for being so frank, Esther.

## Thought for the Week

"The purpose of the incarnation is to establish full communion between God and humanity so that in Christ humanity may find adoption and immortality, often called deification by the Fathers: not by emptying human nature but by fulfilling it in the divine life, since only in God is human nature truly itself."

- Olivier Clement,  
"The Roots of Christian Mysticism"

## This Week

Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. We hear the Lord say in the first reading from Isaiah, "Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit." Those words are echoed in the reading from St Luke's Gospel, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." This feast marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of the Epiphany Season, or winter ordinary time, in the Church calendar.

During the weekdays, we begin a three-week cycle of captivating readings from the first book of Samuel. We read of Samuel's mother, Hannah, who promises the Lord, "if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the LORD for as long as he lives." Samuel hears a call from the Lord and responds, "Speak, for your servant is listening." An epic battle against the Philistines ends in devastating losses for Israel and the capture of the Ark of the Covenant. In his old age, Samuel rules Israel and the elders ask Samuel to appoint a King to rule them. Samuel meets Saul. "When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD assured him, "This is the man of whom I told you; he is to govern my people."

From now until the beginning of Lent, the weekday gospels are from St Mark's Gospel. Mark offers us a look at the beginning of Jesus public ministry. Jesus calls his first disciples, fisherman at work: Simon and Andrew, then James and John. "Then they left their nets and followed him." He drives out evil spirits and heals

the sick. He hears the cry of the leper: "If you wish, you can make me clean," and Jesus, "moved with pity" heals him. Friends lower a paralytic from a roof down into the crowd in front of Jesus, who heals him and says, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Jesus extends an invitation to the despised tax collector, Levi: "Follow me."

**Next Sunday** the first reading from Isaiah promises vindication which will "shine forth like the dawn." In the first letter to the Corinthians, St Paul reassures us that each of us has different gifts of the Spirit. "There are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone." The Wedding Feast of Cana is the centrepiece of John's Gospel. His mother told the servants to follow his orders and Jesus performed his first public miracle "and so revealed his glory."

## A Reflection for the Baptism of the Lord

+ I know it's quite common on today's feast for priests to ask people to remember their own baptisms. There's nothing wrong with that – it's never a bad idea for us all to be reminded of our vocation and the promises we made – or were made for us – at the font. But today it rather misses the point. The baptism practised by John the Baptist was a very Jewish ritual. Like the other rites of purification practised in the Old Testament, it involved water, but there the close visual resemblance ends. John himself in today's Gospel makes that point very clearly where he says *'I baptise you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'*

John's baptism of repentance was meant to have a psychological effect, not what we would call a sacramental one – in other words it doesn't do anything in and of itself – it doesn't change someone through the action of the Holy Spirit. So, what's going on here in the story of Jesus' Baptism we've just heard? From all the Gospel accounts, John the Baptist wasn't exactly a cosy figure and he offered little in the way of comfort and reassurance. Despite his background – he comes from a family of the Jewish

priesthood - he lived an unconventional kind of life, as a prophet and preacher of repentance. He would soon be executed for his refusal to tread the tightrope of a religious politician. He wasn't willing to accommodate or compromise his essential message.

And for anyone to come to John for baptism was to ask to be cut down to size and jolted into repentance. And in today's Gospel - we see Jesus, who the Christmas message declares to be God among us, receiving the baptism of repentance at the hands of John. This isn't, on the face of it an appropriate thing for Jesus to do. He is the promised Saviour, the anointed Messiah, he doesn't need this at all, and yet he submits to something which symbolises repentance and humility.

What Jesus does seems to have struck John the Baptist himself as a strange act of role-reversal. Jesus, God come among us, is behaving like someone needing to repent.

And that's the point. Although Christmas Day itself now probably seems a while ago, today we are really not so very far from the Bethlehem stable at all, in that here by the banks of the river Jordan we see God coming among us to share our human condition and declaring his solidarity and one-ness with his people. Jesus

doesn't do this because he has to: he does this as a continuation of the event begun when the angel appeared to Mary - this is God acting out of love and compassion and declaring he will not be separated from us and submerging himself in the messiness of human reality. It's very easy to isolate the Feasts and Seasons of the Christian year from each other. But, of course, they are only proclaiming just different aspects of the same message of salvation. The Lord's birth, life and death and rising again are not isolated incidents but part of the same process of God's sharing our life, and what that inevitably entails, in order to share his eternal, divine life with us. Here at the baptism of the Lord – as we do at the stable in Bethlehem and on the cross of Good Friday and in the garden on Easter morning we see Jesus sharing our material nature, taking on the sin of the world in order to free us from it. It's all part of the great act of solidarity humanity which lies at the heart of the Christian

message, and we see this solidarity dramatically acted out before us in his baptism.

We are again here at another anxious, worrying, start to the year. We don't know what the coming weeks and months will bring. But, of course, we never do.

Whatever is thrown at us, individually or collectively or globally, today's liturgy reminds us very clearly we are not alone, it reminds us that God in Christ understands and knows our experience – he has shared it: he is in this with us and for us.

Here at the beginning of a New Year, the message of the Lord's Baptism is that of the prophet Isaiah in today's first reading: *Thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.*

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## Services in the Group today Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Sung Eucharist at St Arvans at 10 a.m.

Liturgy of the Word with hymns  
at St Deiniol's, Itton at 11.30 a.m.

Hymns sung at the liturgy today at St Arvans are from the New English Hymnal: 48, 57; 387; 55

### The Baptism of Christ

*On the Feast of the Baptism the opening rite at the Eucharist – the penitential rite of confession & absolution – is replaced with the rite of sprinkling*

### Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water

*Today we celebrate the Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist in the waters of the River Jordan. Our eyes are, once again, turned to the beloved Son of the Father, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins*

*of the world. The rite of sprinkling reminds us of our baptismal calling to turn away from sin and, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to live the risen life of Christ. This rite of Sprinkling may be used to replace the usual penitential rite.*

### Introduction

*Year C*

My brothers and sisters: the kindness and goodness of God is revealed in Christ who has saved us through the cleansing waters of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has poured over us. We will use this water to remind us of our baptismal calling, by turning from sin and being washed in the overflowing compassion of Christ, the Beloved Son of the Father.

### Silent Prayer

God our Father,  
your Son our Lord Jesus Christ  
was baptised in the waters  
of the River Jordan by John,  
and anointed with the Holy Spirit.  
We ask you to bless this water which we  
use in faith.

Pour out your forgiveness upon us  
and strengthen us in holiness.  
Give us living water always springing up  
as a fountain of salvation, that Christ your  
Beloved Son may lead us to your  
presence in purity of heart.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

*The following prayer is said  
after sprinkling:*

May almighty God, forgive us our sins  
strengthen us in goodness  
and keep us in eternal life  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The Eucharist continues with the Gloria*

## Our 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**

*MJG 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022*