

# 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  
01291 622064;  
Mobile 07867803479

## 13<sup>th</sup> March 2022 The Third Sunday of Lent

### The Collect

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **AMEN**

### A reading from the prophet Isaiah

The LORD says this:  
Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. [55. 1 - 9]

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

### Psalm 63 1 - 9

**R/ My soul is athirst for God,  
even for the living God.**

O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul is athirst for you. My flesh also faints for you, as in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So would I gaze upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory. Your loving-kindness is better than life itself and so my lips shall praise you. I will bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name.  
**R/ My soul is athirst for God,  
even for the living God.**

My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips, When I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night.

For you have been my helper and under the shadow of your wings will I rejoice. My soul clings to you; your right hand shall hold me fast.

**R/ My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God.**

### A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians [10; 1 - 13]

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.' We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

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

## **Gradual Hymn**

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
King of endless glory.  
Repent, says the Lord;  
the kingdom of heaven is at hand.  
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,**  
**King of endless glory.**

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

Hear the Holy Gospel  
according to St Luke

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

**T**here were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.' Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down." [St Luke 13. 1- 9]

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**

The people of Ukraine.  
The peace of the world  
Refugees and those killed and injured in Ukraine  
That we may grow closer to the Lord as this Lenten season continues  
Those without adequate food and shelter  
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.  
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; Marion Webster; Lorna; Michael; Judith; Lisa; John Metivier, priest.

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed; for Timothy Zorab; Tony Moles; Doris Andrews; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Margaret Argile; Alec Davies; Roger Brooks; Elisabeth Davies; Audrey Lines

## **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'*

## **Noah**

**Jereboam:** Noah, you must be one of Jesus' best-known followers.

**Noah:** Maybe...that's not for me to say.

**Jereboam:** Come on: lots of us admire your poetry. Anyway, I'd be interested to hear what you think. Some people found Jesus' last session rather difficult. Apparently he used images like trees being cut down if they fail to produce fruit. He doesn't mince his words, does he?

**Noah:** Of course I admire Jesus' strong use of language. He also pointed out that the best way to encourage a plant to grow is to prune it...meaning that to correct somebody can be a form of love.

**Jereboam:** But perhaps he doesn't appreciate how demanding his principles are.

**Noah:** I think he understands more than you realise. And I do agree with him that self-discipline is of huge importance. As a poet, I'd be lost without self-discipline.

**Jereboam:** Really?

**Noah:** Oh yes: with my work you need ideas, obviously, but a crucial part of the process is deciding what to leave out, what isn't right for the context. You can't write well without questioning every word acutely.

**Jereboam:** But in everyday life self-control can be so difficult. Urges are often powerful, you know; you can't simply reject your emotions.

**Noah:** Who said anything about rejecting emotions? I'm a poet, you know! From my point of view, the very first thing you always do is to acknowledge all your emotions. Let's suppose that I felt the urge to steal your money...which in truth I don't, but let's suppose I did. The emotions that made up that urge might include excitement about the prospect of spending the money, excitement at doing something daring, appreciation of the bright, shiny coins themselves – none of those emotions is necessarily bad. No, the problem isn't the emotion; it's how you

respond to it that counts. Actually the problem tends to be a lack of emotion.

**Jereboam:** How do you mean?

**Noah:** Well, I spend hours of my life wondering what's wrong with some particular word or line that I've written. In the end the answer is always the same: there's something insensitive about what I've written, as if I've lost touch with reality. So a love-poem is beautiful if you portray the full human nature of the people you describe. The moment your characters appear less than real, the poem becomes irritating and sentimental. I'd say that evil is similar in one way – it happens when we shut ourselves away from essential truths...like not honouring your ownership of your money. Here's another example: a woman becomes an object of lust only if you ignore her dignity as a human being. So the problems come when you detach yourself from certain emotions, certain sensibilities. We don't need less emotion, we need more of it – a more complete range of emotions, you might say.

**Jereboam:** You remind me of something I heard once about evil being a lack of something, rather than a positive force in itself.

**Noah:** There's something in that, you know...

## This Week

The gospel on this Third Sunday of Lent tells us of Jesus' warning that we must be willing to repent now and that our lives could end by accident or through the evil of someone else. The parable of the barren fig tree reminds us of God's patient love for us, even when we show no signs of changing our lives.

In the weekday readings at the Eucharist, Jesus challenges the people in his hometown of Nazareth to look at him in a new way - "No prophet is accepted in his own native place." In a fury, they drive him out of the temple. Peter asks Jesus the limits of forgiveness. Jesus says that we must forgive again and again. He tells the parable about the servant, who though forgiven himself, does not forgive his fellow servants. Jesus has come to fulfill the law and the words of the prophets, not abolish them. When someone claimed that Jesus must be using Satan's power to heal, Jesus responds "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house." When asked to name the "greatest" commandment, Jesus names two, thus putting together the necessity of loving God with our entire being and loving our neighbor as our very selves. The week ends as Jesus tells a powerful story of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple. I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

**Next Sunday** we hear the story of the Prodigal Son from St Luke's Gospel. The younger son, who asks for his inheritance and spends it all, returns and asks to be a servant at his father's house. Instead he is welcomed home with open arms by his father who was filled with compassion, ran to his son and forgave him. The older son is jealous and will not share in the happiness but the father says to "celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."

## Thought for the Week

"True sanctity does not consist in trying to live without creatures. It consists in using the goods of life in order to do the will of God. It consists in using God's creation in such a way that everything we touch and see and use and love gives new glory to God. To be a saint means to pass through the world gathering fruits for heaven from every tree and reaping God's glory in every field. The saint is one who is in contact with God in every possible way, in every possible direction. He is united to God by the depths of his own being. He sees and touches God in everything and everyone around him. Everywhere he goes, the world rings and resounds (though silently) with the deep harmonies of God's glory."

Thomas Merton.  
Seasons of Celebration

## A Homily for The Third Sunday of Lent

+ Nothing ever stays the same for long. It's an obvious fact of life, and it's always been that way. It's not change itself which is the problem – it's that the pace of change and the speed of news and information – usually bad news - is such that so many people say they are profoundly confused and made anxious and traumatised by what seems to be the ceaseless discontinuity of life as we now live it, the endlessly negative messages it sends us, and the lack of any real sense of a hopeful future.

What is our response to this as followers of Christ, as people who have a certain belief and a meaning to our lives, a knowledge even if partial, of where our lives might fit into the scheme of things and an idea that the narrative of our lives is part of an ongoing stream of belief and practice which will lead to life and hope, not despair and disorientation, and in hope, not despair?

Now, in the news from Ukraine we are seeing human beings at their very worst. A Spanish friend asked me the other day, half-jokingly 'do you still believe in God?' My reply was that my problem was more one of finding it difficult to believe in humanity. But, of course, that's too simplistic, because at the moment we are also seeing human beings at their very best. We are shown hatred, unimaginable horror and violence, greed and cynicism, but on the other hand we are also seeing courage, generosity, compassion and a deep-down sense that hope can prevail against despair.

The most pressing problem for the Church - that is, for all of us who try to follow Christ - is how do we witness to the reality of the Gospel in a way many people - even perhaps most people - who for all kinds of reasons now know next to nothing about the religious and cultural traditions of our faith - can relate to? How do we translate the message of the Gospel in ways people can understand in a world which is not the one – both in good ways and in bad ways - most of us grew up in? How can we witness to meaning in a world which seems on a day-to-day basis largely devoid of it, and sometimes even rejects the concept of meaning altogether? To put

it more succinctly, where is the good news in what we are saying and in the way we are living?

Obviously, those are questions we're going to have to leave hanging in the air: we are not going to answer them now, but we can begin by saying that the point about the *conversion* Jesus speaks about in the Gospel today, and which he tells us is essential, is that it can't ever *begin* with other people, or the nature of society – although, of course, it applies equally to those, if the God we believe in is a God of mercy and justice, a God of love – but it always has to begin with me – it has to start in our own hearts and minds.

Jesus says we are called upon to repent – that is, to turn in the direction of the things that lead to life. We have to be very wary of that puritanical impression that repentance is about repressive guilt, the kind of attitude which seeks to suck the joy out of life. It was H.L. Mencken who said in the 1960s that puritanism was the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy. Jesus was many things, but he wasn't a puritan: "*the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.*" The world is good, and its good things are meant to be enjoyed.

But repentance has always been regarded as an essential pre-condition of following Christ, so we have to take care to spell out what it really means. Repentance is the desire to change for the better, it's being drawn to the love of God and our neighbour through the power of the cross and resurrection. Guilt, on the other hand, is really the inability to move on, a morbid fixation on past failures and faults, and those of others, and it's negative and destructive, not only of ourselves but those we live with and amongst. Maybe one of the reasons for a lot of the resistance to the Church's message is that it has so often given the impression of being against life itself. No, we are called to repent – to turn our lives around - and move on.

It's interesting, too, that in today's Gospel Jesus utterly rejects the idea that misfortune only happens to those who somehow deserve it. Whole political philosophies have been constructed around that mistaken and self-serving notion. Our Lord acknowledges that, yes,

bad things do happen to good people. We could explore that further, too – how long have you got?

During Lent particularly we are encouraged to respond to Christ's call in a more concentrated way, (if I can put it like that) in order to make us more open to the love of God to each other. It's meant to be a time when we can learn – from Christ – to live differently, to breathe with a different rhythm and to immerse ourselves in the atmosphere of the Gospels and the values it proclaims. God wants our hearts and minds to be renewed, to be turned in his direction. Our attitude to the society in which we live, and which we have to say is in so many ways is hostile to the values of the Gospel – and maybe not in the ways a lot of religious people like to think – our attitude shouldn't be a question of trying to preserve our exclusive spiritual or religious purity - we are not Pharisees – or puritans - after all - but it's a matter of sharing in the approachable, down-to-earth holiness of Christ who became one of us out of God's total solidarity with vulnerable, struggling, searching humanity. Our belief in the saving power of the cross and resurrection of Christ is meant to make us more fully human - more in tune with the true vocation of humanity - not less.

Remember, too: in the Gospel the fig tree in Jesus' parable isn't able to take care of itself. It needs the gardener to improve its condition. Repentance and change are not things for us to accomplish alone. God himself is the careful gardener who offers us the chance to change, to become what we're meant to be. Ours is the responsibility to respond to the ways in which he seeks to renew us.

## Services in the Group today

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Morning Prayer at St James, Devauden at 9 a.m.**

**Sung Eucharist at St Arvans at 10 a.m.**  
Hymns sung at the live-streamed liturgy today at St Arvans are from the New English Hymnal:  
73; 376; 461; 180

**Holy Eucharist with hymns at Holy Cross, Kilgrrwg at 11.30 a.m.**

MJG 19.03.2022

## A Prayer for Ukraine

written by Ukrainian Christians

O Lord our God, look down with mercy on the Ukrainian people. Protect and save them from the unjust aggressors who seek to subdue them. Grant them steadfast trust in your mercy and protection.

O Mother of God, who gave us your miraculous icon at Zarvanytsia, intercede for the Ukrainian people, who run to the shelter of your mercy in their times of need.

O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Grant peace and protection to the people of Ukraine. Give them strength and courage to defend what is good, right, and holy. Keep them safe from harm and provide for all their needs, both temporal and spiritual.

Hear our prayers, O Lord, and deliver us from distress, for You are merciful and compassionate and love mankind. To you we give glory: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

**Prayers are being offered daily for the people of the Ukraine at St Arvans Church. The church is open during the hours of daylight, and a prayer and an icon have been placed on the Lady Chapel altar as a focus for our prayers.**

**The Upcycling Warehouse in Chepstow (opposite Chepstow Railway Station) is collecting refugee relief goods for Ukraine.** They are on their way to Poland in vans this week and intend to go every week.

In connection with this, Emma Low from St Arvans is collecting items to be sent to the borders of Ukraine to assist those fleeing from the violence of the Russian invasion.

They are now in need of **first aid items and dried food (well withinin sell-by date, please)**

**There is a box at the back of St Arvans Church for those who wish to donate.**

St Mary's (Roman Catholic) Church in Chepstow is seeking to refurbish a bungalow in their school grounds in order to house Ukrainian refugees. They are hoping to raise £3-4,000 over the next few weeks..

**Dr Naylor Firth will be giving a talk on Chepstow during the Second World War at Itton Village Hall on Friday (March 25th) at 7 p.m.**  
Entry is free, but there will be a retiring collection for our five churches.

**Also on Friday March 25<sup>th</sup> (the same date but with a different expected 'demographic!') there will be a**

## **Spring Fashion Show**

**by Harts of Mionmouth  
in St Arvans Memorial Hall  
at 7.30 p.m.**

Tickets £10. In aid of St Arvans Church. Tickets are available from Jean Papps.

This is the first fundraising event since Kate's epic 2020 series of street concerts, and the concert she played in church with Charles Matthews in December 2020, so please support this if you possibly can!

## **2022 LENT COURSE**

### **THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL**

A six-session study course in sharing faith

### **PAULA GOODER**

'We need to return to the gospel, to recover joy, to see the Church again as a company of missionary disciples and to proclaim the faith with compassion, with confidence and with creativity to a new generation.'

STEVEN CROFT



## **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**