

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

27th March 2022
The Fourth Sunday
of Lent
Mothering Sunday

The Collect

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, 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 book of Joshua

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

[5. 9-12]

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

Psalm 32

R/ You, O Lord, are my hiding place.

Happy the one whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.
Happy the one to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

For I held my tongue; my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long.

Your hand was heavy upon me day and night; my moisture was dried up like the drought in summer.

R/ You, O Lord, are my hiding place.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and my iniquity I did not hide.

I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all the faithful make their prayers to you in time of trouble; in the great water flood, it shall not reach them.

You are a place for me to hide in; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with songs of deliverance.

R/ You, O Lord, are my hiding place.

'I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye.

'Be not like horse and mule which have no understanding; whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle, or else they will not stay near you.'

Great tribulations remain for the wicked, but mercy embraces those who trust in the Lord.

Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the Lord; shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

R/ You, O Lord, are my hiding place.

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians [5. 17-21]

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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.

I will leave this place
and go to my father and say
'Father, I have sinned
against heaven and against you.'

**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.

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe--the best one--and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He

called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.'

Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!'

Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

[St Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32]

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

Our mothers, both living and departed
Expectant mothers, and mothers & children who are refugees
The people of Ukraine.
The peace of the world
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; Sheena; 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: Ketith Duffield; John North-Row; Philip Bell, priest

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'

Miriam

Jereboam: Have you just been listening to Jesus?

Miriam: Yes.

Jereboam: I sense that it was quite an emotional experience for you.

Miriam: Yes: emotional, but very refreshing too. Jesus told the story of a young man who asks for a share of his father's money, as a sort of anticipated inheritance. Then he goes away and wastes it on a dissolute life-style. In the end he's starving and so has to return home, where his father welcomes him with open arms. There's a great reconciliation, and they have a feast.

Jereboam: What a lovely story. Presumably he was describing God's capacity for forgiveness.

Miriam: Yes, but the story also felt particularly relevant to my family. It's not that my son leads a dissolute life, but somehow he's lost his way. It's worrying, to say the least. My husband and I, we often talk about life as being rather like climbing a mountain: you're always trying to improve and, if it doesn't sound too pompous to put it this way, you're trying to come closer to God. So with your children you try to set them on the right path, to help them up the mountain – or at least the first stages of it. The problem with one of my sons is that he's so easily side-tracked and seems to go off in the wrong direction. My husband and I try to tell ourselves that maybe he'll somehow stumble on another route that leads up the mountain – maybe a route we don't know ourselves. That would be fine, of course, but it's difficult to stay optimistic after so many setbacks.

Jereboam: But you were encouraged by Jesus' story....

Miriam: Yes, I don't know what I found more reassuring: his story with its happy ending, or the sense that someone with such spiritual authority understands our situation. I want to wrap his authority around us all, like a sort of cloak!

Jereboam: I shouldn't be surprised if many parents had a similar reaction to Jesus and his story.

Miriam: And many more could feel encouraged if they read your report.

Jereboam: I'd like to think so.

Thought for the Week

“Have that tender care that expresses itself in the little things that are like a balm for the heart... With our neighbours go into the smallest details, whether it is a question of health, of consolation, of prayerfulness, or of need. Console and ease the pain of others through the tiniest of attentions. Be as tender and attentive towards those whom God puts on our path, as a brother towards brother or as a mother for her child. As much as possible be an element of consolation for those around us, as soothing balm, as our Lord was towards all those who drew near to him.”

Bl Charles de Foucauld

This Week

Today 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.”

The weekday gospels this week are all from St John's Gospel. After two days of healing stories, the opposition against Jesus builds. In Cana, in Galilee, Jesus heals the son of a royal official. Back down in Jerusalem, he heals a man who was sick for 38 years, incurring the wrath of his enemies because he did it on the Sabbath. Because of this, and because he called God his Father, they now plot a way to kill him. Jesus says his opponents do not want to come to him for life. He calls God his father and says, “I have testimony greater than John's.” Unafraid of his opponents, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for a feast and openly tells people that he has come from God. They did not arrest him then, “for his hour had not yet come.”

Thinking they know where Jesus is from (in both senses: where he lived now and his origin in heaven), his enemies insist that Jesus can't be a prophet: “Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”
Next Sunday: St John's gospel brings us the story of the woman accused of adultery. Religious leaders bring a woman to Jesus challenging him: “Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” Jesus responded only, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” The crowd quietly dispersed. Jesus seeing there is no one left to accuse the woman says gently, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.”

A Homily for The Fourth Sunday of Lent

+ Jesus got into trouble. Usually people get into hot water either because of what they do or because of what they say. Or – as with Jesus, a combination of the two. The religious establishment, those who were the opinion formers of the day disapproved of his teaching and thought he kept company with the wrong sort of people. A religious teacher is supposed, so many people think, to uphold a conventional view of life, not to rock the boat, not to do anything to cause offence or to give reason to regard religious faith as anything other than a kind of social cement. The critics of Jesus - in today's Gospel, the Pharisees and scribes - were shocked that he mixed with people whose standards were not very high; the “tax collectors and sinners” St Luke mentions were not necessarily criminals or particularly vicious people: just people who were a bit careless in their way of talking, a bit lax in their religious observances: in ritual hygiene, in what they ate. Just Not Our Type. But Jesus mixed with them, spoke to them, ate with them, talked about God to them as if they were people who would be receptive and capable of understanding. And Jesus seems almost determined to get into much more trouble by his explanation of *why* he behaved in the way he did. The story - the parable - he told was, like all his parables, about God and

God's *kingdom*; or to put that a different way, I suppose we could say that they were about what happens when God is in charge of things. And he spoke about the essential *nature* of God by telling this story which we know as the parable of the prodigal son, about two brothers - one hard-working, disciplined, thrifty, obedient, a worthy heir to his father's fortune; the other was careless, lived for the moment, indulged every appetite, was disloyal, broke his father's heart. One was Our Type and the other wasn't. But in Jesus' story a lot more attention is paid to the disreputable brother, both by the story's narrative and by the father. The elder brother, impeccable in everything, the model son we might think, gets a not very complimentary walk-on part at the end. It's a shocking story and it's meant to be. It challenges normal standards - everyone's normal standards; and if it really *is* about God, it paints a very different picture of the one who gave Moses the ten commandments. In the parable, the father loves both his sons, equally; but because the younger one is much more of a problem, he seems to pay more attention to him. He is obviously broken-hearted at the way he has behaved, and is constantly watching out for him to come back. When he does come back it's as though he'd been missing, feared dead, and is now discovered to be alive. This calls for a celebration - a feast. The younger son isn't treated on the basis of what he's done wrong, but on the basis of being his Father's son and wanting, however ambivalently, just to come home. And the same is true of the elder brother - 'All that I have is yours' his father tells him - only *he can't see it*. He describes his years of disciplined living as 'slaving', ("all these years I have been working like a slave for you") and there is no possible way he is going to recognise his dissolute younger brother as an equal member of the family. So we have the strange situation in which the younger, dishonourable brother is welcomed back home enjoying the party in his honour, while the honourable, dutiful elder brother who has never strayed from home feels excluded and resentful. But the point is that Jesus goes behind the question of deserving and being worthy, to the fact of belonging. It is God, and only God, who decides that we belong. Not us.

And we all belong. Now we can easily imagine the Pharisees and scribes listening to Jesus tell the story, recognising *themselves* in the elder brother, and concluding that this message was deeply unsettling, subversive of virtually everything they stood for, and that they were being attacked. They were. And, of course, we all are. In this deliberately provocative story, like much of Our Lord's teaching intensely paradoxical, deliberately exaggerated almost to an absurd degree, imbued with layer after layer of implication and meaning, Jesus wasn't in the business of conferring a blessing on the way human society orders its affairs. He was talking about the Kingdom - the way God operates- a wholly new order altogether, something which St Paul calls a new creation. This new creation was bound to get under the skins of those who were comfortable and in command in the old order. In the light of his portrayal in the Gospels, it's hard to understand where the view of Jesus comes from as this anaemic figure who wouldn't say boo to a goose - in the children's hymn terminology, "*gentle Jesus, meek and mild*". His teaching is continually pushing against every conventional religious stereotype there is; it's meant to challenge, to disturb, to needle - and not only those who opposed him, but also those who followed him, *then and now*. We can all too easily - whatever our theology might actually say - fall into the trap of thinking and behaving as if we *deserve* God's love, and those other people over there don't! There's a wonderful story about Fr Arthur Stanton, one of the Anglo-Catholic slum priests at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, and one of the greatest preachers of his generation, leaving a substantial sum of money in his will "to the undeserving poor", in the process cocking a snook at the Victorian or Edwardian obsession with social respectability in the highly justified belief that whatever society might say, the Lord himself would understand and approve. We all belong in God's kingdom. The words and the presence of Jesus in our midst - as here in the Eucharist - are constantly exposing the ways in which our hearts and minds and even our attitude to God himself can be so easily corrupted. It's why the proclamation of the Gospel is so vital in the life of the Church, and in the

prayer lives we ourselves lead. The Gospels won't let us get away with it, they constantly challenge us to an more authentic following of Christ. The Gospels show us the Incarnation leading inexorably and inevitably to the Passion: given God's nature and human nature it couldn't be otherwise. Jesus, by revealing his intimacy with the Father, his complete knowledge of the nature of God, inevitably made mortal enemies. As we said at the beginning, he got into trouble. And we will be reflecting on that more and more as Lent moves towards Easter.

Services in the Group today Sunday 27th March 2022

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:
436;186; 285; 161 [*t St Botolph*]

**Holy Eucharist with hymns
at St Deiniol's , Itton at 11.30 a.m.**

MJG 26.03.2022

A Prayer for Ukraine *written by Ukrainain 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.

Many thanks to Mrs Jean Papps and to all who assisted her, for organising the Fashion Show with Harts of Monmouth at St Arvans memorial Hall last Friday evening

Many thanks also to Dr Naylor Firth for his highly informative and entertaining illustrated talk on Chepstow during the Second World War at Itton Village Hall last. Friday

It was very good to be able to hold events in our parishes once again

Please Note: the Wednesday live-streamed reflection & Night Prayer this week will be at the later time of 9 p.m.

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
Lent Course 2022
Beginning **28th February**
for 6 Weeks
@ St Christopher's, Bulwark
11am and 7pm
If you would like to attend either group
please contact Rev Philip Averay at
revphilipaveray@gmail.com
or 01291 620980
Course Book costs £6.67

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**