

PARISH NEWSLETTER

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

St Arvan's Church is now during the day both for worship and private prayer, Again, we stress there is no obligation while Covid-19 infection rates remain high to attend in person, and that your own safety and health & those of others must remain paramount.

There is now no legal obligation to wear masks in church, but please do so if you wish. If you feel unwell with Covid-like symptoms, or have tested positive, please take part in our church services online rather than attend in person.

Our live-streamed 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;
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15th May 2022
The Fifth Sunday
of Easter

The Collect

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen 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 Acts of the Apostles

The apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, 'Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?' Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 'I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." But I replied, "By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth." But a second time the voice answered from heaven, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, "Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved." And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, "John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?' When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, 'Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.' [11. 1 - 18]

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

Psalm 148 1 - 6

**R/Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Alleluia! Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights.
Praise him, all you his angels;
praise him, all his host.
Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you stars of light.

**R/Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

Praise him, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for he commanded and they were created.
He made them fast for ever and ever;
he gave them a law which shall not pass away.

**R/Praise, O praise
the name of the Lord.**

A reading from the Revelation to St John [21. 1 - 6]

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.'

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

For Your Prayers

Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia,
Jesus said: 'I give you a new
commandment
love one another just as I have loved you.
Alleluia

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

**Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St. John.** [13. 31 - 35]

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

During the supper,
when Judas had gone out, Jesus said,
'Now the Son of Man has been glorified,
and God has been glorified in him.
If God has been glorified in him,
God will also glorify him in himself
and will glorify him at once.
Little children, I am with you
only a little longer.
You will look for me;
and as I said to the Jews
so now I say to you,
"Where I am going, you cannot come."
I give you a new commandment,
that you love one another.
Just as I have loved you,
you also should love one another.
By this everyone will know
that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.'

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)

That we may rejoice in the glorious
resurrection of Christ our Lord
The people of Ukraine.
The peace of the world
Those killed and injured in Ukraine
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; Marion Webster;
Lorna; Michael; Lisa; Carole Bates; Anne-
Louise; John Metivier, priest;
David Nicholson, priest.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Maurice (Mike)
Menage; Judith Lee; our own departed
relatives & friends, & those whose
anniversaries of death fall at this time.
Anne Florsa Clay; Iris Raven; Barbara
Zerny

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.*

*Our thanks to the Parish of St Catharine's
Chipping Campden & to the author for
permission to reproduce 'Jereboam'*

Keturah

Jereboam: What can I ask you
about, Keturah?

Keturah: Sorry?

Jereboam: It's just that I need to
write one of these articles again, and I
can't think what to ask you. It's years
since Jesus was around, and the
Church...well, it's a great community and
you do wonderful things, but nothing
seems to change particularly. I'm stuck for
subject-matter. What do you suggest?

Keturah: It certainly doesn't feel
as if nothing changes. There are things
going on all the time. For a start, I reckon
we must have every type of person you
can possibly imagine represented within
the Church. We don't always fit together
very comfortably.

Jereboam: But I thought you were
all supposed to love each other. What's
that Jesus said? "By this love you have for
one another, every one will know that you
are my disciples."

Keturah: That's what he told us,
yes, but he didn't say that we'd find it easy
to do. We just have to keep trying.

Jereboam: How do you try to love
each other, then?

Keturah: Personally I think of
something else Jesus told us: "As the
Father has loved me, so have I loved you.
Remain in my love." Here's how I see
things: if, as Jesus said, I remain in his
love, and if, as he said, Jesus loves all of
my brothers and sisters in the Church,
then I can become a part of Jesus' love for
them.

Jereboam: I think I'm with you. So,
in order to love the others, you try to
remain aware of Jesus' love for you.

Keturah: Yes, that's right, but
there's another side to that as well. The
ultimate expression of Jesus' love was his
sacrifice of himself on the Cross, so when
I receive his body and blood at the
Eucharist, his love becomes part of me in
a tangible way.

Jereboam: Let me get this straight:
you receive his body and blood, and
therefore you receive his love...

Keturah: and therefore I am able to share in his love for my brothers and sisters...

Jereboam: and therefore I have an article to write! Thank you, Keturah.

Thought for the Week

“What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.”

St Augustine

This Week

On the Fifth Sunday of Easter St John's Gospel returns to the Last Supper. Jesus gives his followers a new way of life: “This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Throughout this week, as we hear about the inspiring development of the early community of the Church - with the acceptance of the good news by the Gentiles - we experience the assurance of Christ.

The Gospels this week continue the “Last Discourse” of our Lord, taking chapters 14 and 15 of the Fourth Gospel.

In these passages we experience Jesus, “the way, the truth and the light.” He consoles his disciples with the gift of his peace, which is different than the peace the world offers.

What Jesus gives is a relationship as close as a vine is to its branches. He calls us to remain connected with him so that we can remain fruitful. Without him, we dry up and wither. When we are so united with Jesus, we can ask him for whatever we need to be fruitful. His invitation is for us to remain in his love, to make our home there. The resulting relationship is that of a friend. And this friendship is his gift to us - not our choosing him, but Jesus choosing us as friends who can open our hearts to him.

Therefore, in this relationship of connectedness and fruitful love flowing to us and through us to others, Jesus says that the one command he gives us is that we love one another - that we stay loving

and fruitful.

Finally, Jesus reminds us that if the world didn't like his announcing and living of this good news, then it won't like our announcing and living it either.

Next Sunday: St John's Gospel offers us comfort and peace in a very direct way. Jesus says “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.”

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A Homily for The Fifth Sunday of Easter

+ To+ If we were to ask people outside the Church what they thought Christianity was all about – I suspect a lot of people would say that it is about tolerance and understanding, about treating others as one would wish to be treated oneself and, yes, essentially about love. I think that's broadly true, although you may get a less flattering response depending on your sample – for instance on Twitter you'd probably get quite a lot of superficial nonsense about sky fairies and believing in a lot of things things we are really not committed to accepting at all. So, tolerance and understanding, treating others as one would wish to be treated oneself and love. Now commendable though all these things undoubtedly are, this isn't a view necessarily shared by all the writers of the gospels. Tolerance and understanding in one form or another are essential to the Gospel message but they are not at its heart. The principle of treating others as we would wish to be treated ourselves is explicitly stated by Jesus himself in St Matthew's Gospel – in fact he says that ‘this is the law and the prophets.’ But, of course this isn't unique to the teachin of Jesus - most religions and philosophies at least pay lip service to it.

So what about love?

If we try to see how many passages we can find which refer to love (*agape*) in the gospels of Saints Matthew, Mark and Luke. It won't take that long. St Mark doesn't use the word at all, while St Matthew and St Luke use it only once each. As for the verb 'to love', that's not exactly overused either. But St John's Gospel, as in a lot of other ways, is

different. John does use the word “love” many times.

Again if we were to ask people what “love” means, I suspect we would quite a few different responses. I may be wrong, but I doubt whether many of them would get anywhere near what St John means when he uses it. For us and our contemporary culture, love means very different things depending on the situation, but even in the context of the Christian faith, the way the word love has come to be used has come perilously close to being seen as an automatic emotional response, an instinctive feeling rather than anything else. Our problem is that whereas New Testament Greek has at least three words for different aspects of what we call love, in English we only have the one.

And it's important to be specific, to try to get to the heart of what the Gospel is talking about when it uses this idea of love. Today's gospel gives us useful guidance on how to understand the meaning of love, and its demands, in our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. Because we are commanded by Jesus to love one another **as he has loved us**. The context could hardly be described as either romantic or undemanding. It's important to remember that the Gospel passage today occurs in the context of the Last Supper. Judas is about to set in motion his act of treachery; Jesus before the Last Supper has just washed the feet of the apostles in an unexpected act of humility that turns their expectations upside down, and Jesus tells them he will not be with them for very much longer. Death hangs in the air.

So already then, we see love being presented in a situation and in a way that is unlikely to be obvious to most people. When Jesus tells the disciples to love one another as he has loved them, he is really telling them two things. Firstly, that his life among them has set a pattern for what love is; he is saying, love one another in the **same way** as I have loved you. That is, love without reserve, a love which is the opposite of transactional. A love which is constant and truthful, given in the knowledge that it will be costly and even sacrificial. Jesus's whole life and death were illustrations, of what he meant. Secondly, by giving his the disciples the “new commandment” to love one another as he had loved them, Jesus was saying that they should love **because he had**

loved them. We are only ever capable - if we ever are - of this astonishing kind of love because we have first received it from Christ himself.

It's no co-incidence that the new commandment of love is given at the Last Supper, the meal which brings about the Eucharist, the perpetual memorial of the body broken and the blood poured out for the life of the world. Because **this** is where we are taught to love, this is where we receive the grace - the power - to be transformed by the Risen Christ himself; this is where we are made like him. This is where we are shown the **meaning** of love in our offering of his death and resurrection, and our receiving of his divine life. When we come here it shouldn't really be with any other attitude than wonder and gratitude at being loved by God in Christ to such an extraordinary extent.

The reality of this love is beyond anything we can understand or explain. It seems by normal human standards to be foolishness beyond words, yet we know it's not.

But I think it's wrong to try to separate entirely our ordinary human experiences of love, which are themselves an essential part of our God-created natures, from the kind of love that is a direct gift from God and is often called in the words of the Authorised Version of the Bible and the 1662 Prayer Book, 'charity'. Of course, in our society the word 'love' is often used glibly, insubstantially and in many ways wrongly; and the word 'charity' has come to mean either something coldly given, or the responsibility of an organisation of some kind. It's worthwhile, now and then, to stop and not to take love too easily for granted or underestimate how costly it is to love in the way Jesus did and tells us to do.

To go back to the beginning, we are right if we put love at the centre of Christianity, and, of course, much of the New Testament does so. But the relatively infrequent references to love in the first three gospels, and the stress in today's gospel from St John on exactly what love really means and how demanding it is, are both useful in reminding us sometimes to be less glib about the way we use it. The love Jesus not only talks about but lives out to the point of death and beyond is a tough kind of thing; it's more an act of the will than the emotions; it's a concrete, tangible reality, and **we ourselves** can

only hope to live it as a gift given by the Holy Spirit from the Risen Christ. And that's the vital point; ultimately it isn't our capacity to love that matters, it's the love of God *for us* which we see in its fullness in the gift of the new life of the Resurrection. The first letter of St John says: *"In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."* And in the end that's why we are here this morning: at the altar to receive that gift of God's love in the hope of resurrection, in the hope of salvation, in the hope that his love will be the centre of our lives, and ultimately at the centre of the life of the world. +

Services in the Group The Fifth Sunday of Easter

9 a.m. Morning Prayer at Devauden

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
Hymns (New English Hymnal)
186; 115; 285; 364

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist at Kilgwrrwg

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.**

The Upcycling Warehouse in Chepstow (opposite Chepstow Railway Station) is collecting refugee relief goods for Ukraine.

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**

SEVERN WYE MINISTRY AREA

PRAYING TOGETHER

"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."

JAMES 5:16

Praying Together for our Ministry Area and our local communities

**THE 2nd AND 4th MONDAY
OF EVERY MONTH**

7.30 TO 8.30 PM

**St Christopher's Church,
Bulwark, Chepstow**