

PARISH NEWSLETTER

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

St Arvan's Church is open 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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31st July 2022
The Seventh Sunday
after Trinity

The Collect

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; 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 book of Ecclesiastes [1. 2, 12-14; 2. 18 - 23]

Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

I, the Teacher, when king over Israel in Jerusalem, applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to human beings to be busy with. I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.

I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me – and who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labours under the sun, because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. What do men get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

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

Psalm 49 1 - 13

R/ My mouth, O Lord,
shall speak of wisdom

Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all you that dwell in the world, You of low or high

degree, both rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak of wisdom and my heart shall meditate on understanding.

R/ My mouth, O Lord,
shall speak of wisdom

I will incline my ear to a parable; I will unfold my riddle with the lyre. Why should I fear in evil days, when the

malice of my foes surrounds me, Such as trust in their goods and glory in the abundance of their riches?

R/ My mouth, O Lord,
shall speak of wisdom

For no one can indeed ransom another or pay to God the price of deliverance. To ransom a soul is too costly; there is no price one could pay for it, So that they might live for ever, and never see the grave.

R/ My mouth, O Lord,
shall speak of wisdom

For we see that the wise die also; with the foolish and ignorant they perish and leave their riches to others. Their tomb is their home for ever, their dwelling through all generations, though they call their lands after their own names.

R/ My mouth, O Lord,
shall speak of wisdom

Those who have honour, but lack understanding, are like the beasts that perish. Such is the way of those who boast in themselves, the end of those who delight in their own words.

R/ My mouth, O Lord,
shall speak of wisdom

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians [3. 1-11]

If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living

that life. But now you must get rid of all such things – anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth.
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

[Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Luke](#)

Glory to you, O Lord.

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to the crowd, 'Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.' Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'

[St Luke 12.13–21]

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 find ultimate meaning in the life, death and resurrection of Christ and in the service of God and our neighbour
For integrity and truth in public life
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 here and throughout the world who continue to suffer from the Coronavirus pandemic - for doctors, nurses, all medical staff, carers, medical 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; Anne-Louise; Abigail; John Metivier, priest; David Nicholson, priest.

For the Departed:

The recently departed; John Rogers; Liz Evans; Jeremy Richardson
our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Phyllis Irene Clay; George Howell; Jan Evans; Bill Rogers; Benjamin Vaughan, bishop, Ray Parnel

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'

Zephaniah

Jereboam: Excuse me...I don't think I know your name, but haven't we met somewhere before? I'm Jereboam.

Zephaniah: Well, you do look familiar. Pleased to meet you, anyway: I'm Zephaniah. You weren't by any chance with Jesus the other day?

Jereboam: That's it, yes! It was you who asked him about the inheritance.

Zephaniah: That's right.

Jereboam: But you didn't quite receive the answer you hoped for, did you? You'd been cheated out of this inheritance, and Jesus more or less told you to forget about it.

Zephaniah: It was frustrating, I'll admit – for two reasons, really. First of all that inheritance would have come in very handy – I was rather depending on receiving it. Then, as a separate issue, I felt I'd been treated unfairly, and I wanted to defend myself as a matter of principle.

Jereboam: Jesus almost contradicts himself, you know. One moment you've got to love everybody, whoever they are, and the next moment he ignores it when people don't treat you properly. His standards don't seem entirely consistent.

Zephaniah: I don't think he is contradicting himself, though. He wants us all to lose the sense of our own self-importance, to consider other people rather than ourselves.

Jereboam: Fair enough...Well, I suppose the big question is – a few days on – did you follow his advice?

Zephaniah: I did, actually. It was infuriating at the time, giving up what I thought was rightfully mine, but in the end I felt liberated.

Jereboam: Liberated?

Zephaniah: Yes: I was allowing myself to give up control and to accept the situation as it was.

Jereboam: But surely there's more to Jesus' teaching than just accepting everything unquestioningly...

Zephaniah: That doesn't sound like Jesus, does it? No: I think he wants us to use our lives to deepen our love of God – our dependence on Him, if you like – whether that means accepting or resisting the situations that present themselves. As far as that inheritance was concerned, my love for God was best encouraged by accepting the situation and not fighting it.

Jereboam: That's interesting. Look, I might be able to help a bit if you're short of money.

Zephaniah: Don't worry: I'll be all right. But thanks anyway...

Thought for the Week

"In the last analysis, the individual person is responsible for living his (her) own life and for "finding himself." If he persists in shifting his responsibility to somebody else, he fails to find out the meaning of his own existence.

- Thomas Merton -

This Week

Today's the first reading from the book Ecclesiastes offers a powerful caution about focusing too much on the things of this world: "Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!" In St Luke's gospel Jesus tells the parable of the rich man storing up treasures for the future, and he warns, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Thursday is the feast day of Saint John Vianney, priest, (the Cure d'Ars) and

Saturday the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord.

This week we complete our readings from the prophet Jeremiah. Friday has a consoling reading from the prophet Nahum "the vision still has its time." In St Matthew's Gospel this week we hear words about faith and discipleship. Monday is Matthew's version of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. On Tuesday there is the choice between two gospels: Jesus comes to his disciples across the water in a storm, and invites Peter to come to him, across the water; when Peter comes he takes his eyes off Jesus and goes down. In the other Gospel option, the Pharisee asks why Jesus' disciples don't follow the dietary laws and Jesus says, "It is not what enters one's mouth that defiles the man; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one." In contrast to the lack of faith of the religious leaders, Jesus delights in the faith and trust of a non-Jew, a woman in the enemy Gentile territory to the north. Peter recognizes Jesus as the Son of Man and seems to doubt him at the same time. Jesus sums up our discipleship: "*Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? The disciples wonder why they could not drive out a demon from a boy, Jesus answers, "Because of your little faith." Faith "the size of a mustard seed" is enough.*

Next Sunday in St Luke's Gospel, Jesus cautions us to be ready for the coming of the Lord. "Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into."

A Homily for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity

+ Is there a purpose for living? If so, what is it? This is question that sooner or later we all come to ask. It's the question raised by each of the readings at the Eucharist today.

The rich landowner in today's Gospel parable only cares about making the most of the exceptional harvest that has taken place for *his own* well-being. He is pictured by Jesus as being totally self-centred. The words 'I' and 'me' figure quite prominently in what he has to say. He considers no one else, nor does he have the slightest inkling that death, coming soon, will deprive him of his carefully hoarded wealth and pass it on to others. Again, 'the Preacher' - the author of Ecclesiastes - in the first reading, regards it as a 'great injustice' that the fruits of his own toil and strain should go to someone who hasn't worked for them. But his regret seems to be more about the transience of life itself. Nothing lasts; all therefore is vanity, meaninglessness.

So, he supposes – in a later passage - quite logically that the sensible way for him to live is to take what comes his way, hoping for maximum enjoyment and minimum effort for himself. His words are echoed by the rich landowner: 'take things easy; eat, drink, have a good time.' or as the saying goes "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die."

If that's actually how the universe operates, then it's a sensible approach: if this life is all that there is, we had better make sure that we enjoy it as best we can without worrying too much about the results of what we do. Why bother? Our own prevailing culture is well on the way to a world where established truths and ethical ways of behaving have ceased to matter, only our own opinions and projections of reality reinforced by our own particular social or social media cocoons – a kind of *virtual reality* not linked to computer simulations. I think we can all point to views expressed by those in authority who should know better (and perhaps do, such is their cynicism) and those who seem to put their fingers in the ears and sing 'lalala' very loudly to drown out inconvenient facts. And you don't have to delve into anything so ridiculously wacky as the QAnon conspiracy theory to see this at work. Given our scepticism

about all kinds of authority these days, mirrored in the rise of political populism, it's very easy to be seduced by all this. Having said that, there is also a widespread and genuine human hunger out there for some kind of spirituality, some kind of meaning to everything, and often we see it expressed not only in what used to be called the 'New Age,' but also the intolerant and anti-intellectual certainties of exclusive sects and various forms of religious fundamentalism. In a way these all witness to the abiding human need for faith in something greater than ourselves, and also point to the dangers of do it yourself forms of belief which can so often end up in some very dark places indeed. This also, of course, points to the widespread and valid perception that the Church itself isn't really addressing the kind of questions people are actually asking. Now, of course, there are all kinds of reasons why people are not engaged by religious faith – I don't want to be simplistic about it - but these are certainly among them.

In contrast to all this, St Paul (in today's second reading) points us directly to a vision of human reality, and ultimate meaning, based on Christ's life, death and resurrection. He says that God has rescued us from the power of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son - that when we were baptised we were buried with Christ and raised with him through faith in the power of God. Since we have been raised with Christ - that is, since we share in his gift of Resurrection, he says we should seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God' - in other words we should seek the values of the kingdom of heaven – the values of mercy, compassion and justice - which we believe are sewn into the very fabric of the universe, even if they're hidden for much of the time.

St Paul isn't saying here that we should search for a spiritual perfection which is totally otherworldly or has nothing to do with life as it is, or which has no impact on the way we live. Quite the reverse. There were those who did that - they were called Gnostics, and the New Testament and the early Fathers have some harsh things to say about them, the way they treated others, and their retreat into another particularly dangerous form of unreality.

The authentic Christian tradition tells us that faith must engage the mind as well as the emotions, and our actions as well as our prayers.

The *truly* human life is one in which our present existence is seen and lived out in the light of 'the things that are above, where Christ is'. Christ, Paul tells us, who is the image of the invisible God ... in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Christ gives us through his teaching and his actions – above through his death and resurrection - the fullness of all that it is to be truly human. That is why we are urged to reject whatever is *not* of Christ: that is, those things which are not consistent with being 'raised with Christ' - the things which lead us to become focused on ourselves and our own egos and our own desires to the exclusion of everyone else, those things which lead us away from our calling to be focused on love of God and love of our neighbour, which are so bound up they can't be separated.

Instead, the *true human life*, Paul tells us, should display compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness, love - all of them virtues which lead to a concrete expression of commitment towards other people in the messy reality of human life as we find it in a broken and divided world. This is where we can find God himself, and, as a consequence, the meaning of life. We don't find him either by immersing ourselves in a kind of selfish hedonism, or in a retreat into an esoteric form of spirituality divorced from the realities of human nature and the realities of life and the cries of those in need.

Unlike the writer of Ecclesiastes, at least as he writes in this morning's first reading, which isn't, of course, as he thinks at the end of the book as a whole, we don't believe that life is just 'vanity,' devoid of meaning. In Christ, God is, in the words of St Augustine, "closer to us than we are to ourselves." He is Being itself, and the ground of our own being. This is the God who comes to us in Word and Sacrament and teaches us the truths about himself and the nature and purpose of life. This is where we discover him and grow in our love for him, where we hope to be led into his presence both now and into eternity. Human life, doesn't consist in the 'abundance of possessions'. Instead, we are called to move away from being closed in on ourselves and, as Jesus

demands, to be open to others, and their needs in order to become part of the Kingdom – the life of God himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gives himself endlessly for the life of the world. +

Services in the Group: 7th Sunday after Trinity

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
(*Live streamed*)
Hymns (*New English Hymnal*)
364 (*t; Blaenwern*), 436, 387, 297

There is a daily (*except Mondays*) said celebration of the Eucharist at St Arvans at 9 a.m.

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**

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.**

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**