



Candle

Sunday 2nd February – Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas)



Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (1621-1674), Presentation of Jesus at the Temple (Oil on Panel). Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Scripture: Luke 2.22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, the parents of Jesus brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed-- and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

To reflect

Today marks 40 days after Christmas and is the feast of the Presentation of Christ at the Temple, also known as Candlemas. This day marks the presentation of the baby Jesus at the temple in Bethlehem by his parents and the purification of Mary, both in accordance with Jewish law. On this trip to the Temple the Holy Family encounter Simeon and Anna. Simeon blesses the Christ child and proclaims him 'a light to lighten the Gentiles'. There are images of light, dedication and prophecy in the readings for Candlemas.

Candlemas has become a festival where candles are blessed and the end of the Christmas season is marked. As we come to the end of the Advent and Christmas Season (Epiphany continues) and the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany Words course you're invited to reflect. Where have you seen light in the days since 1st December? Where have you seen hope of Christ in your Christian life? What do you want to continue through the rest of the year?

Candlemas by Malcolm Guite

They came, as called, according to the Law.
Though they were poor and had to keep things simple,
They moved in grace, in quietness, in awe,
For God was coming with them to His temple.
Amidst the outer court's commercial bustle
They'd waited hours, enduring shouts and shoves,
Buyers and sellers, sensing one more hustle,
Had made a killing on the two young doves.
They come at last with us to Candlemas
And keep the day the prophecies came true
We glimpse with them, amidst our busyness,
The peace that Simeon and Anna knew.
For Candlemas still keeps His kindled light,
Against the dark our Saviour's face is bright.

To Listen (these and other suggestions can be found on a Spotify playlist at

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0F5bU2sf4OiOtQY3q78Rf2?si=a99cbbf61e7d4587>)

- 'Nunc Dimittis' there are many different settings of Simeon's words in the Gospel for Candlemas. These include those by Arvo Pärt, Pawl Łukaszewski, Amy Beach and Camille Sans-Saëns.
- 'O Nata Lux', these are words reflecting on Jesus as light, relevant on Candlemas. Settings include those by Thomas Tallis, Morten Lauridsen and Rhiannon Randle.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.