

Reflections & Prayers for Sunday
31 January 2021
The Presentation in the Temple
also known as Candlemas



I like this image of the presentation in the Temple. Simeon, his white beard and wrinkled brow indicating his age, holds Jesus – though the young mother keeps a guiding hand on the baby. Joseph is holding the two doves which were all the family could afford for their temple sacrifice. Anna is off to the right; she too recognises who Jesus is and in a moment she too will declare her faith. One of the great lessons of Candlemas is about the faithfulness of Anna and Simeon, watching and waiting years for the promised Messiah. They are not passive: they are busy in prayer and service and then busy proclaiming, telling everyone, about Jesus. They are great examples to us!

Lauryn

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Readings for this Sunday

You may want to find your Bible and read the lessons set for this week:

Malachi 3: 1-5 “See I am sending a messenger...”

Psalms 24 “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.”

Hebrews 2: 14-end The son of God became human like us

Luke 2: 22-40 Simeon and Anna see Jesus in the Temple

Gospel reading: Jesus is presented in the Temple

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they 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 favour of God was upon him.

Reflection

The following is a reflection by Malcolm Guite, priest, poet and teacher. He reflected on Christ’s undimnable light and gave us the poem that follows. The line that particularly struck me is: “Candlemas still keeps His kindled light, against the dark our Saviour’s face is bright.” In what often feels like dark times at a dark time of the year, it is good to be reminded that our saviour’s face is indeed bright. The darkness does not overcome it. Guite writes:

“Though the 12 days of Christmas ended at Twelfth Night and Epiphany, there is another sense in which this season, in which we reflect on the great mystery of God in Christ as an infant, continues until February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

This feast came to be called by the shorter and more beautiful name of Candlemas because the day it celebrates, recorded in [Luke 2:22-40](#), is the day the old man Simeon took the baby in his arms and recognised him as ‘A Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.’ It became the custom of the church to light a central candle and bring it to the altar to represent the Christ-light, and also on the occasion of this feast to bless all the ‘lights’ or candles in the church, praying that all who saw that outward and visible light would remember also and be blessed by the inner light of Christ ‘who lightens everyone who comes into the world.’

It had always been prophesied that God would one day come into the Temple that human beings had built for him, though Solomon, who built the first temple had said 'even the Heavens are too small to hold you much less this temple I have built'.

Candlemas is the day we realise that eternity can come into time and touch us in the form of a tiny child, that God appears at last in His Temple, not as a transcendent overlord, but as a vulnerable pilgrim, coming in His Love to walk the road of life alongside us.

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.

Reference: <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2012/01/27/a-sonnet-for-candlemas/>

Prayers

The collect for Candlemas
Almighty and ever-living God,
clothed in majesty,
whose beloved Son was this day presented in
the Temple,
in substance of our flesh:
grant that we may be presented to you
with pure and clean hearts,



by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Intercessions

The Church of Christ

Lord, you sent a light to lighten the Church, which is not the light of earthly pomp and splendour, nor the light of power and dominance, but the light of a child whose life will lead to the cross and be lit by the resurrection. We ask that Christ, as the light that redefines and makes all things new, may bring his transforming radiance to bear on our Church so that it may truly and fully reflect your glory.

God's world

Lord, we ask you to give us the vision to see your love in the world in spite of human failings. Give us weak eyes for things of little worth, and eyes that are clear-sighted in all of your truth. Lead us in the ways of justice and of peace, that each may live for all and all may care for each.

The local community

Lord, inspire us with your love so that we in turn may hope to bring light to those with whom we live and work. Daily renew in us all the sense of joy, filling every corner of our hearts with love and gladness so that we may be light to others, and meet all that comes with gallant and high-hearted happiness, giving you thanks always for all things.

Those who suffer

Lord, we ask you to pour your healing light on those who suffer physical or mental pain. Give our spirits power to climb to the fountain of all light and be purified. Break through the mists of earth, the weight of clay. Shine forth in splendour, you who are calm weather and quiet resting place for faithful souls. You are the journey, and the journey's end.

The communion of saints

Lord, we pray for those that are now with you on that glorious shining hill, where there is no cloud nor sun, no darkness nor dazzling. May your one equal light shine on those whom we love and those whom we pray for, now and for all eternity.

Lord, who sent us the light of the world to enlighten our lives, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

based on intercessions written by Lay Anglicana

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Igreja – The Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil
Monday	The Diocese of All Saints Cathedral – The Anglican Church of Kenya
Tuesday	The Diocese of Aluakluak – The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan
Wednesday	The Diocese of Amazonia – Igreja, The Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil
Thursday	The Diocese of Amichi – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Friday	The Diocese of Amritsar – The (united) Church of North India)
Saturday	The Diocese of Andaman & Car Nicobar Islands – The (united) Church of North India

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Silsoe (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Monday	Archdeacon of Bedford
Tuesday	Archdeacon of Hertford
Wednesday	Archdeacon of St Albans
Thursday	Parish of Southill (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Friday	Parish of Steppingley (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Saturday	Parish of Stondon (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	All those living outside the Parish
Monday	Knowle Drive, Leycroft Way
Tuesday	Lilac Way, Limbrick Road
Wednesday	Linwood Road, Loire Mews
Thursday	Long Buftlers, Longfield Road
Friday	Magna Close, Maple Cottages
Saturday	Meadow Walk, Meadway

The Sick:

Amy, Claire, Jo, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Enid, Chris, Sophie and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

For the recently deceased:

Peter Redsell, Diana Turner, Patricia Tollworthy, Susan Eastwood.

On their year's mind:

Jane Grieveson, Adrian Champion, Mary Bracey, Helen Whiting, Joyce Watson, Michael Coleby.

An Update from Berkeley

I wish to thank you all for your messages, prayers, practical support, and kindness, throughout my time with you, but especially during these last difficult months.

I want to particularly thank all those who, because of my illness and subsequent need to resign, have had to step into the breach to make sure St John's continues to thrive as a Christian community.

Including, but not limited to, the churchwardens and ministry team, members of the PCC, those who've worked to give extra support because of COVID, and Julie in the Parish Office.

St John's really is a very special community, and I will miss being amongst you. I commend to you the journey you have already begun, to continue reaching out to the wider community, making use of your particular gifts, such as art and music.

Restrictions because of Covid will not last forever, and there will be as great, if not a greater, need to be a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can find community and companionship and come to know God's presence in their lives.

Alex and I have now moved to our new home in Hertford. If you wish to get any messages to us, please contact Julie in the Parish Office.

We will both continue to hold you in our thoughts and prayers, especially as you continue on your journey of discernment for appointing your next vicar, and the future direction for mission and outreach at St John's.

Every blessing,

Berkeley

A notice from the Churchwardens

The Vacancy – next steps etc

Thank you to all of you who attended and contributed to the Vacancy Meeting on Tuesday with Bishop Michael, Archdeacon Jane and our newly reappointed Rural Dean, Richard Banham. And thank you also to those who were not able to attend but who have provided input to us as we update our Parish Profile and prepare for the recruitment process for our new vicar.

Following Tuesday's meeting, the PCC met on Thursday evening to work through the feedback and plan for the next few weeks in the lead up to the interview day, which will be May 6th. Please make a note of this date in your diaries – we will no doubt be looking for some help on the day, the precise format of which will, of course, depend upon the current state of restriction in relation to the virus.

The PCC will be meeting again in February for a further formal meeting at which various items need to be concluded, including the agreement of the profile. Please get in touch with the [churchwardens](#) if you have any questions or comments relating to the vacancy process. In the meantime, we send our grateful thanks to all of you who volunteer your time and talents for the benefit of St John's and our community.

A reminder... of this phone service:

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

Church at home:

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).