

“IN HIS TEMPLE NOW BEHOLD HIM” THE THEOLOGY OF CANDELMAS LEVEL 3: CLASS 3



This Month's Collect (*Second Sunday after the Epiphany, BCP., 215*):

Almighty God,
whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ
is the light of the world:
Grant that your people,
illuminated by your Word and Sacraments,
may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory,
that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed
to the ends of the earth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Scriptural Foundations for the Presentation of the Infant Christ in the Temple

Leviticus 12:1-8

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the people of Israel, saying: If a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be ceremonially unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Her time of blood purification shall be thirty-three days; she shall not touch any holy thing, or come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed. If she bears a female child, she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation; her time of blood purification shall be sixty-six days. When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. He shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement on her behalf; then she shall be clean from her flow of blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, male or female. If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.

Exodus 13:1

The Lord said to Moses: Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine.

Numbers 18:15-16

The first issue of the womb of all creatures, human and animal, which is offered to the Lord, shall be yours; but the firstborn of human beings you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. Their redemption price, reckoned from one month of age, you shall fix at five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary (that is, twenty gerahs).

This is the ceremony of pidyon ha-ben/redemption of the firstborn son. Based on Exodus 13:2, 14–15, every firstborn son belonged to the Lord. Originally, the firstborn son was to be the priest of the family offering sacrifice for other members of the family. Due to the Israelites worshipping the false calf, God chose the Levites, who refused to worship the false idol, to take the place of the firstborn (Num. 8:14, 16–18). Since the firstborn son was technically a priest, he had to be substituted by a priest from the tribe of Levi. Therefore, in order to release the firstborn from their priestly obligation, God demanded that they be redeemed from their priestly service by offering 5 shekels to the priests in the Temple (Num. 18:15–16).

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.

Theological Foundations for Candlemas

This Feast brings the “Season of the Incarnation” to a fitting end. In many ways, it acts as the “Pentecost” of this period of the liturgical year. The theological foundations of this feast forms a fitting transition from Christmas to Easter which is drawing near. The Liturgy of this Feast brings to our attention a number of truths that deserve special consideration as we begin to look at the texts of the liturgy.

Prophecies are fulfilled

We have listened over Advent and Christmastide to the several prophecies of the Old Testament prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah and how the Temple’s greatest glory was reserved for the day when the Messiah appeared in its sacred precincts and revealed Himself. Today, their words are fulfilled. Jesus enters the Temple for the first time; in future years He will manifest Himself there as the Messiah and the Son of God.

Christ’s redemptive ministry has begun

As seen in the above Scriptural passages, Christ was brought to the Temple and redeemed by an offering. The small Christ child is still in His Mother’s arms, but already she is offering Him in sacrifice. Christ is given to the Father. If we align this truth with the liturgy, His presentation at Mary’s hands constituted the “Offertory,” His death on the Cross would be the Eucharistic Prayer and Elevation, the Resurrection the “Breaking of the Bread” and Holy Communion. This day commemorates the offering of His whole redemptive work.

Light conquers darkness

During Advent, the darkest days of the year, the Church cried out for the Light. On Christmas, the Light shined in the darkness and only a few received it - Mary, Joseph, and the Shepherds. On Epiphany, the Light casts out its brilliant beams to the whole world. We heard in the reading from Isaiah, “Arise, shine for your light as come!” Now on Candlemas, the Light is placed in our very hands to hold during the service. Today, we bless candles and carry them in procession as Mary carried the Christ Child into the Temple. We re-light them during the reading of the Gospel and during the entire Eucharistic Prayer, carrying it to the Communion Rail to receive Holy Communion as we recall the Light of Christ now given to us. We echo the words of Simeon today “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.”

The Church now receives Christ in Her arms

The Church now steps to the foreground and lovingly receives God’s Mercy in her arms. One of the antiphons for the procession this day is “We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness, O Lord, in the midst of your Temple. (Psalm 48: 10). Older translations read “We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple.” During Advent, we waited the Royal Wedding Feast. At Christmastide, the attention was centered on the mystery of the coming of the Bridegroom in His Incarnation. At Epiphany, the Church stands to celebrate the Wedding Feast of the Lamb hearing the call of Isaiah “ Arise, shine;

for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, today’s feast is called “Hypapante” or the “Meeting.” One of the ancient antiphons of this day from Matins is “Behold, the Lord and King is come to His Holy Temple; rejoice and be glad in **meeting** your God, O Zion.” This is why we sing Psalm 48 so much on this day.

The Liturgy of Candlemas and its Theology

Book of Occasional Services (pg. 47-50) and BCP (pg. 239, 922, 997)

The Opening

This procession is intended for use immediately before the Holy Eucharist on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. When circumstances permit, the congregation gathers at a place apart from the church so that all may enter the church in procession. If necessary, however, the procession takes place within the church. In this case it is suitable that the Presider begin the rite standing just inside the door of the church.

Candles for use in Church during the year and candles to be carried in procession are on a table. Alternatively those who will process are provided with unlighted candles.

The congregation stands. The Presider greets the people with these words

Presider: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Dear people of God, forty days ago we celebrated the joyful feast of the Incarnation of Jesus. Today we recall the day on which he was presented in the temple, fulfilling the law of Moses. Led by the Spirit, Simeon and Anna came to the temple, recognized the child as the Christ, and proclaimed him with joy. United by the same Spirit, we now enter the house of God, where we shall recognize Christ in the breaking of bread.

The Blessing of Candles

“In honor of the divine mystery that we celebrate today, let us all hasten to meet Christ. Everyone should be eager to join the procession and to carry a light. Our lighted candles are a sign of the divine splendor of the one who comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole universe radiant with the brilliance of his eternal light. Our candles also show how bright our souls should be when we go to meet Christ. The Mother of God, the most pure Virgin, carried the true light in her arms and brought him to those who lay in darkness. We too should carry a light for all to see and reflect the radiance of the true light as we hasten to meet him. The light has come and has shone upon a world enveloped in shadows; the Dayspring from on high has visited us and given light to those who lived in darkness. This, then, is our feast, and we join in procession with lighted candles to reveal the light that has shone upon us and the glory that is yet to come to us through him. So let us hasten all together to meet our God. The true light has come, the light that enlightens every

man who is born into this world. Let all of us, my brethren, be enlightened and made radiant by this light. Let all of us share in its splendor, and be so filled with it that no one remains in the darkness. Let us be shining ourselves as we go together to meet and to receive with the aged Simeon the light whose brilliance is eternal. Rejoicing with Simeon, let us sing a hymn of thanksgiving to God, the Father of the light, who sent the true light to dispel the darkness and to give us all a share in his splendor. Through Simeon's eyes we too have seen the salvation of God which he prepared for all the nations and revealed as the glory of the new Israel, which is ourselves. As Simeon was released from the bonds of this life when he had seen Christ, so we too were at once freed from our old state of sinfulness. By faith we too embraced Christ, the salvation of God the Father, as he came to us from Bethlehem. Gentiles before, we have now become the people of God. Our eyes have seen God incarnate, and because we have seen him present among us and have mentally received him into our arms, we are called the new Israel. Never shall we forget this presence; every year we keep a feast in his honor. *Saint Sophronius, bishop (AD 560-638) Orat. 3 de Hypapante*

We are well familiar with the beautiful symbolism associated with light. Light means Christ and the supernatural life of grace. Today, the Church, responding to Simeon's words, "the light of revelation to the Gentiles" keeps a genuine 'light feast.' Candles are blessed for liturgical use as well as in homes. These candles are to remind us of our baptismal candles; for the candles we received at our Baptism signified our enlightenment in Christ. We are reminded to keep the flame of Faith alive in our hearts until we meet our Bridegroom when he comes. At this Liturgy, we light our candles during the Procession, at the Gospel, and during the Eucharistic Prayer until Communion. The Church today tells us this: you ought to hold burning candles at every Eucharist, ordinarily acolytes perform this function in our stead. Today is truly a "Candle-Mass."

Rite of Blessing Candles

BOS, 2022

Let us pray.

O eternal God, who has created all things; on this day you fulfilled the petitions of the just Simeon: We humbly ask you to bless and sanctify these candles for our use. Graciously hear our prayers and be merciful to us, whom you have redeemed by your Son, who is the light of the world, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Sarum Missal

Holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God, who has created all things out of nothing, and by your command has caused this liquid to become perfect wax by the labor of bees: and who, on this day fulfilled the petition of the righteous man, Simeon: we humbly ask you, that by the invocation of your most holy Name and through the intercession of Blessed Mary ever Virgin whose feast is today devoutly observed, and by the prayers of all your Saints, You would ✠ bless and ✠ sanctify these candles for our service and for the health of our bodies and souls, whether on land or on sea: and that you would hear from Your holy heaven, and from the throne of Your Majesty the voices of this Your people, who desire to carry them in their hands with honor, and to sing Your praises; and that You would look with favor on all who call upon You, whom You have

redeemed with the precious Blood of Your Son, who being God, lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. *All: Amen.*

Second Prayer

O almighty and everlasting God, who on this day presented Your only-begotten Son to be received in the arms of holy Simeon in Your holy temple; we humbly implore Your Mercy that You would ✠ bless and ✠ sanctify and kindle with the light of heavenly benediction these candles, which we Your servants desire to carry lighted to magnify Your name; that by offering them to You, the Lord our God, being worthily inflamed with the holy fire of Your most sweet charity, we may deserve to be presented in the holy temple of Your glory. Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ *All: Amen.*

Third Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, the true light, who enlightens everyone coming into the world, pour forth Your blessing ✠ upon these candles, and ✠ sanctify them with the light of Your grace; and mercifully grant that as these lights, enkindled with visible fire, dispel the darkness of night, so our hearts illumined by invisible fire, that is, the brightness of the Holy Spirit, may be free from the blindness of every vice; that our mental eye being purified, we may perceive these things which are pleasing to You and profitable to our salvation; so that after the dark perils of this world, we may deserve to arrive at the never failing light: through You, Christ Jesus, Savior of the world, who in perfect Trinity lives and reigns God, world without end. *All: Amen.*

Fourth Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, who commanded the purest oil to be prepared by Your servant Moses to keep lamps continually burning before You; graciously pour forth the grace of Your blessing ✠ upon these candles, that they may so afford external light, that by Your gift, the light of Your Spirit may not fail within our minds. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. *All: Amen.*

Fifth Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, who appearing this day among us in the substance of our flesh, was presented by Your parents in the temple; whom the venerable old man Simeon, enlightened by the light of Your Spirit, knew, received, and blessed; mercifully grant, that enlightened and taught by the grace of the same Holy Spirit, we may truly acknowledge You, and faithfully love You; who with God the Father in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, lives and reigns God, world without end. *All: Amen.*

Canticle of Simeon

Simeon and Anna are our examples on this Feast Day. Simeon longed for the Messiah for many years, and now rejoicing, holds Him in His arms. He bursts into song with this canticle. We sing this canticle every night during Compline. At the close of each day, we hold the Savior in our arms, mystically speaking. We hold Him in faith, in grace, in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. We thank Him for His blessings during the day, but also we are reminded when we sleep in death: Dismiss me, your servant. For with the eyes of faith, I have seen you, my Savior! You are my light and my salvation!

The following canticle is then sung or said, during which the candles are lighted, if the people are not already holding them.

Antiphon: A Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel.

Canticle of Simeon:

*Lord, you now have set your servant free **

to go in peace as you have promised.

A Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel.

*For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, **

whom you have prepared for all the world to see.

A Light to enlighten the nations,

and the glory of your people Israel.

Antiphon: A Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel.

The Procession

Presider: Let us pray.

O God, source of all light, today you revealed to the aged Simeon your light which enlightens the nations. Fill our hearts with the light of faith, that we who bear these candles may walk in the path of goodness, through Jesus Christ the Light of the World. Amen.

Deacon: Let us go forth in peace.

All: In the name of Christ. Amen.

During the procession, all carry lighted candles; and appropriate hymns, psalms, or anthems are sung

Antiphon: We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness, O Lord, in the midst of your temple. Your praise, like your Name, O God, reaches to the world's end; your right hand is full of justice.

Psalm 48:1–2, 10–13

1 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; *

in the city of our God is his holy hill.

2 Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth, is the hill of Zion, *

the very center of the world and the city of the great King.

10 Let Mount Zion be glad and the cities of Judah rejoice, *

because of your judgments.

11 Make the circuit of Zion; walk round about her; *

count the number of her towers.

12 Consider well her bulwarks; examine her strongholds; *

that you may tell those who come after.

13 This God is our God for ever and ever; *

he shall be our guide for evermore

The Marian Station

Today was also called “The Feast of the Purification of Mary” due to the Leviticus passages above. With humility and a spirit of true sacrifice she brought the offering of the poor, a pair of turtle doves. It is fitting to stop at an image of Mary during the Procession to honor her as well this day.

In a suitable place, the procession may halt while the following or some other appropriate Collect is said.

Let us pray.

O God, you have made this day holy by the presentation of your Son in the Temple, and by the purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Mercifully grant that we, who delight her humble readiness to be the birth-giver of the Onlybegotten, may rejoice forever in our adoption as his sisters and brothers; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymns for the Feast of the Presentation

H 257: O Zion, open wide thy gates

H 258: Virgin-born, we bow before thee

H 259: Hail to the Lord who comes

The Collect

On arrival in the sanctuary, the Presider goes to the usual place, and the Eucharist begins with the Collect of the Day.

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly pray that, as your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts by Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Readings

Malachi 3:1-4

Thus says the Lord, See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight-- indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

This passage not only discusses the Lord's coming to the Temple, but also his manifestation. This is an “Epiphany” feast as well

Psalm 84

1 How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! *
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

2 The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.

3 Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.

4 Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.

5 Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

6 They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.

7 Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.

**8 Behold our defender, O God; *
and look upon the face of your Anointed.**

9 For one day in your courts is better than a thousand in my own room, *
and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God
than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.

10 For the Lord God is both sun and shield; *
he will give grace and glory;

11 No good thing will the Lord withhold *
from those who walk with integrity.

12 O Lord of hosts, *
happy are they who put their trust in you!

Hebrews 2:14-18

Since God's children share flesh and blood, Jesus himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son. We celebrated at Christmastide the mystery of the Incarnation where the Second Person of the Trinity became flesh and dwelt among us. He is fully God and fully human. We now begin to see the connection between Christmas and Easter for He has come to destroy death and free us who are captives. Today, Christ, our Redeemer, is presented in the Temple becoming our Great High Priest. He enters into the Temple, the place of sacrifice, for the first time. His own sacrifice on the Cross is coming. His Paschal Mystery will be more efficacious than all the sacrifices ever offered in the Temple.

The Christmas Remembrance

As mentioned, Candlemas marks the end of the “Season of the Incarnation.” Today, in remembrance of this great gift bestowed upon us by this mystery, we are given the gift of a candle. The message the Church offers us in the Liturgy today is that we always hold on to “Emmanuel / God with us.” How do we “hold on to Christ” in our daily lives? Remember the times we light the candle:

- 1) **Opening Procession: We receive Christ by grace.** The candles remind us of our Baptism, the great Sacrament by which “God adopts us as His children and makes us members of Christ’s Body, the Church, and inheritors of the Kingdom of God (BCP, Catechism, 858.)” We enter union with Christ in His death and resurrection, we are birthed into God’s family the Church, we receive forgiveness of sins and new life in the Holy Spirit.
- 2) **The Word of God, especially the Gospel:** We have celebrated the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Everytime the Gospel is preached, Christ is present. It is a seed bursting forth with life in our hearts. It produces good effect in the hearts of those who hear.
- 3) **The Holy Eucharist.** The Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives. Christ is truly present. His flesh is the manna that nourishes us on this earthly journey. His presence is real and we hold him in our hearts and hands each time we receive Him in this most Blessed Sacrament.

Bring your blessed candle home. Light it in times of joy, times of prayer, times of sorrow, times of darkness. It is a reminder not only of our Baptismal grace of Christ in us, Emmanuel, but the Light which came among us at Christmas in which the darkness could not overcome. On earth there is no way of coming closer to Him. Only in Heaven will we be nearer. Today, we receive in our own hands these wonderful gifts of Christmas.