

Candlemas, the Fest of the Holy Sacrament of the Presentation of Our Lord

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Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised; 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. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Today we celebrate Candlemas. If you are unfamiliar with that term, you may recognize today as the Feast day of the Presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes today is a feast, a time where we the church celebrates a fulfillment of prophecy ensuring to us that through the Incarnation, God sent God's only son to us born of a woman to be with us, ushering a new beginning of Salvation for all of human kind. Jesus is presented at the temple as required by Jewish Law. He is young, pure, innocent, and full of potential, and under God and with the community of faith who are bearing witness, he will be blessed and will also bless us as a result. A man named Simeon was prophesized to live until he encountered the Christ child in the temple, and utters those words that we heard, thanking God because he could now move on, he could now pass on from this world knowing that God has made good on God's promise and now he is able to have peace. Jesus is also recognized by another prophet, one named Anna and it is a huge disservice that we do not know what she said because as a prophet, she too also carried the word of God, but we are confirmed that she was present, not only as a fixture of the Temple and a servant of God, but as a witness. Both Simeon and Anna see and recognize Jesus as the Light that brings us out of darkness and is the Glory for all people. This very Hebrew ritual would typically be only for those of that specific faith but this was different, it

was for Jews, and Gentiles alike. Luke's target audience were Gentiles, and he takes great measures to remind the readers that Jesus is Lord and that Jesus is the Savior for all people.

This feast day, this celebration, has been represented by candles as they symbolize the Christ child, this pure and powerful light that will bring us out of world of darkness. In some places, congregants would bring candles into the parish so that they could be blessed and brought back home. Other parishes bring out all their candles that they have and that are going to be used throughout the year and have them blessed on this day.

When I encounter this day, I can't help but to believe that this is a Sacrament. Jesus is presented in the Temple, and as he is surrounded by the community of faith, he is blessed, and bears a true representation of what our Book of Common Prayer calls, "an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace." Sacraments are just that, the Word, and some sort of sign or symbol coming together that not only unites us, but allows us to encounter God. We here at the church have a total of 7 official Sacraments broken down as, 2 True Sacraments, Eucharist and Baptism and 5 Sacramental rites, Reconciliation, healing, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Confirmation. This all sparked my interest because there is a common thread with what we heard in our Gospel and in what we recognize in Sacraments. That common thread is the Presentation. Jesus is the candidate who is presented before the community that bears witness to the spiritual grace that he is receiving. In many of our sacraments, all but reconciliation and healing which are more intimate, there is a presentation typically done in the presence of the community where a candidate is presented and is receiving some type of spiritual grace. It is the Word of God and the rituals involved that come together to make a Sacrament Holy. This service at the Temple is sacramental, taking the Word of God and combining it with a ritualized

act along with the community present, is helping the people to affirm and strengthen their Faith and affirm the promises of God. "Lord you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised..." These words give us a preview of Salvation, the promise made by God that informs us we are God's children. Its one of the staple prayers found in our Book of Common Prayer when doing either Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline, and the rite of Burial. Echoes of it are heard also when we depart from here each Sunday when the deacon proclaims the dismissal, "Go in peace..."

What we hear in Malachi is then fulfilled, the messenger met the Lord at the Temple, but there is something else that is said that still holds true today. "Who can endure the day of his coming?" We saw what happened. Despite the healing and the grace people still expected something else from Jesus. They believed Jesus to be a king who would drive out the long-standing Roman occupation and set the people free. When they didn't get that, they rejected him and would later see the error of their ways. So, I say to all of us here, what's our excuse? How are we going to endure the day of his coming, because Jesus Christ will come again? We look into our world and we still don't respect the dignity of every human being, we still hold onto resources instead of sharing them with others, we still miss the mark when it comes to hospitality, and we still don't love each other as we love our selves. If we know what happens and what awaits us, why not make ourselves more amiable, how can we allow ourselves to have Christ change our lives? It would be in our best interest that we, are willing. We must continuously seek formation in order to be formed. He who is coming will sit as a metalworker, or even an artist and they will be someone who will change us similar to how a refiner changes precious metals or other raw materials.

This feast day is calling us back to something so Holy, something so sacramental. It challenges us to allow Christ to work in our lives. It asks us to hold on to our Baptismal Covenant so that we can properly endure Christ when he returns. And finally, it will helpfully make you consider your life, to be a light that drives out the darkness, and that we are candidates being presented, supported by a community, and blessed by God with outward signs of inward and spiritual grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.