

**Berrow with Pendock, Eldersfield, Birtsmorton
and Hollybush**



A Service for Candlemas

***Please have 4 candles close at hand – tea lights
are fine – and the means to light them safely!***

THE WELCOME

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Dear friends, forty days ago we celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we recall the day on which he was presented in the Temple, when he was offered to the Father and shown to his people. As a sign of his coming among us, his mother was purified as we now come to him for cleansing. In their old age Simeon and Anna recognise him as their Lord,

as we today sing of his glory. In this service we celebrate both the joy of his coming and his searching judgement, looking back to the day of his birth and forward to the coming days of his passion.

HYMN

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

We are in the light, the love and the glory of the Lord,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**May all our lights together become one flame
that warms the world to Christ.**

*The Paschal candle is lit, followed by four other
candles;*

The Paschal candle has been lit to remind us that
Jesus Christ is the light of all the peoples of the
world.

Christ is our light
Illuminate and guide us.

The candle of hope is lit to remind us that Jesus
Christ scatters the darkness in our world.

Christ is our light
Illuminate and guide us.

The candle of love is lit to remind us that Jesus Christ is the light that shows us the way to the Father.

Christ is our light

Illumine and guide us.

The candle of truth is lit to remind us that Jesus Christ is the light that leads us to eternal life.

Christ is our light

Illumine and guide us.

The candle of wonder is lit to remind us that the Good News is Jesus Christ the light of the world who is with us now.

Christ is our light

Illumine and guide us

Blessed are you Lord our God for you have called us out of darkness to share in your light. The bright light of Christ scatters the darkness from within and is a lantern to our path. Bless these lights that we have lit in our homes, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: that they may remind us of your presence and send your saving love revealed through Jesus Christ out to others in our homes and lives.

Send your light before us Lord into the days ahead, that we will not walk in darkness, but in the brightness of your love. Amen

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Hear the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ: 'I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me shall never walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.'

Let us therefore bring our sins into his light and confess them in penitence and faith.

cf John 8.12

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our
neighbour,**

in what we have thought,

in what we have said and done,

through ignorance, through weakness,

through our own deliberate fault.

We have wounded your love,

and marred your image in us.

We are sorry and ashamed,

and repent of all our sins.

**For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us, forgive us all that is past;**

and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light.

Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon *you*,
pardon and deliver *you* from all *your* sins,
confirm and strengthen *you* in all goodness,
and keep *you* in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE COLLECT

Let us pray together that we may know and share the light of Christ.

**Almighty Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ was presented in the Temple and acclaimed the glory of Israel and the light of the nations:
grant that in him we may be presented to you and in the world may reflect his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.**

THE READINGS:, Malachi 3:1-5, Luke 2: 22-40

Please read Hebrews 2:14 to the end at home.

THE REFLECTION

Today we celebrate the feast of Candlemas, or as it is known in the Book of Common Prayer, “The Presentation of Christ in the Temple”, and often called “The Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin”. Candlemas marks the end of the season of Christmas and Epiphany (which can be interpreted as seeing the light). Candlemas has several interwoven themes – presentation, purification, meeting, light. It is a pivotal moment in the Church year, when we take one last look back at Christmas and the Incarnation, and then turn to look ahead -- to Lent and the Cross.

The feast commemorates the purification of Mary after giving birth to Jesus – the requirement after child-birth as set out in Leviticus chapter 12 of the Old Testament, to take place 40 days after the actual birth. And the feast also commemorates the presentation of Christ in the Temple.

The blessing and lighting of candles is now the distinctive feature of Candlemas; they signify the entrance of Christ, the True Light, into the Temple.

Let's first focus on our Old Testament reading from Malachi, written in the 4th Century BC; the passage begins:

“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple.”

In former times, God's presence in the Temple was visible - he was present in the inner chamber in the form of a pillar of fire and smoke which had once led them through the desert to the Promised Land. But 500 years earlier, the Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians and the cloudy, fiery pillar of God had not been seen since.

God's continued absence was considered to be due to one thing: the sins of his people. If only they could be purified.

Malachi describes the messenger as a “refiner's fire”. In our passage today, God declares that a

messenger will come to the temple with the purpose of cleansing and warning the people. The people expected more drama – more pillars of smoke and purifying fire.

However, Luke's Gospel, by contrast, shows Jesus entering the Temple quietly as a mere 40 days old baby, meekly carried into the Temple in his mother's arms. Three ritual ceremonies are included by Luke – the purification of the mother Mary, the redemption of the first-born, and the presentation of the child to the service of God. We might have missed the significance of the main event entirely -- the arrival of Mary, Joseph and especially the baby Jesus in the Temple, but for Simeon and Anna spotting it and drawing it to our attention.

Everything is unexpected. And Luke paints it wonderfully - in Malachi's hands, this moment was supposed to be a moment of awe and wonder, a moment of unmissable glory. In Luke's hands, it is understated, it almost passes unnoticed and his setting of the story is not glory, but pain and suffering.

"This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel", says Simeon. The imagery is unmistakably that of the coming death and resurrection.

The old man Simeon comes to hold the infant, and acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ; the Messiah. This is the moment Simeon has been waiting for, and he rejoices with the words now known to us as the Nunc Dimittis, still sung at the monastic office of Compline, and also in our version of Evening Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer. The traditional words are hauntingly beautiful:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace:
according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation;
Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all
people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the
glory of thy people Israel."

Note that Simeon boldly proclaims Jesus to be the light of the world, not just the glory of his own people of faith. A light symbolised by our candles.

Then another elderly wise and holy person enters the scene, Anna the prophet. She too bursts into praise. It is a wonderful picture of the wisdom of old age paying homage to young innocence. It is a moment full of mystic meaning as Simeon blesses the baby Jesus, saviour of the world. There is a bitter-sweet tone to Simeon's words as he prophesies that the child will be a sign that will be opposed and that a sword will pierce Mary's soul also.

Everything is unexpected, yet when we penetrate the fog of surprise, we find it strangely familiar. In this episode of God coming to his temple as a vulnerable baby, of living among us, not in stone, fire and cloud, but in human flesh. In inhabiting suffering instead of glory, in redeeming all people, not merely his chosen people, the Old Testament story has come true in a whole new way, a more magnificent way that we could ever have imagined. And we might have missed it entirely, but for Simeon and Anna.

At this festival of Candlemas we recall how Jesus was presented to God in the Temple, the most holy of all the sacred places of his religious faith. We too today are called to present ourselves anew to God in worship – to put the past behind us, and to look

ahead to Lent and Holy Week and the commitment to follow in the way of Christ.

But in spite of many difficulties, in our hearts there is the light of hope, and the candles we usually hold alight today display a sense of light in an often all too dark a world. God calls us to share in the light of Christ – to bring help and comfort to others by that message of hope and light. So as we take one last look back at Christmas, giving thanks for the great gift of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, let us also look ahead with optimism – the way ahead may be uncertain and filled with further difficulties and challenges for many, but with Christ as our guide we may be confident of his presence and his sustaining strength, as we follow the path of our Christian journeys.

And our job, like Simeon and Anna, is not to triumph, but to be keepers of God's story, “to be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of his people Israel” -- a light to lighten our world. Amen.

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,

**maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,

begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;

**he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
**With the Father and the Son he is worshipped
and glorified.**

He has spoken through the prophets.
**We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic
Church.**

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of
sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

THE INTERCESSIONS

We pray that Christ may be seen in the life of the
Church.

You have called us into the family
of those who are the children of God.
May our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ
be strengthened by your grace.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a temple
where the Holy Spirit can dwell.
Give us clean hands and pure hearts
so that our lives will reflect your holiness.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world,
so that those in darkness come to you.
May our lives shine as a witness
to the saving grace you have given for all.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be members of your body,
so that when one suffers, all suffer together.
We ask for your comfort and healing power
to bring hope to those in distress.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be the Bride,
where you, Lord, are the Bridegroom.
Prepare us for the wedding feast,
where we will be united with you for ever.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
you have called us into fellowship with all your saints.
We unite our prayers with theirs and ask for grace to
serve you with joy
where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy
Spirit, one God, now and for all eternity.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the
sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

THE CONCLUSION

We extinguish our candles and say together;

**Here we turn from our celebration of Christ's
coming into the world and towards Lent and
Easter;
turning from his birth to his passion and
resurrection.
We remember that he came among us
and that he shares our joys and sorrows.
May we, who have extinguished our candles,**

**let the light of the Lord continue to shine in our
hearts, lives and homes and bring his light into
the world. Amen.**

We stand near the place of new birth.
Let us shine with the light of your love.

We turn from the crib to the cross.
Let us shine with the light of your love.

We go to carry his light.
Let us shine with the light of your love.

HYMN

Blessing

The Lord Jesus give light to our eyes,
Give light to our minds,
Give light to our hearts,
Give light to our whole lives,
That we may witness to him
Today and forever and the blessing
of God Almighty,
the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit
be upon us and those we love and care for and
renew each of us with his love tonight and for
evermore. **Amen.**

**Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in
peace: according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation;
Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all
people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the
glory of thy people Israel.**

Go in the light and peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.