

## Minor Festivals: The Presentation of our Lord, February 2

Merry Candlemas! Chances are on February 2 you will hear more talk about Groundhog Day than the greeting, “Merry Candlemas!” February 2 is the fortieth day after the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. According to Old Testament Mosaic Law, for forty days after childbirth a Jewish woman was ceremonially unclean. On the fortieth day she was to go to the Temple in Jerusalem and offer up a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a dove for a sin offering for her purification after childbirth. And so, in obedience to the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary made the journey from Bethlehem to the Holy City in order to carry out their religious responsibilities. By offering up two birds instead of a lamb and a bird, Joseph and Mary showed that they were poor. Jesus entered this earth under humble circumstances to be our Servant-King who came, not to be served, but to serve and give his life on the cross as a ransom for you and me.

The Mosaic Law also decreed that every first-born male belonged to the LORD, was to be redeemed at the redemption price of five shekels, and was to be consecrated to the LORD. So on the day of Mary’s purification, his parents had Jesus’ name placed on the rolls of the firstborn and offered up the redemption price.

While they were doing this, a devout man named Simeon approached them. He was patiently waiting for the promised Savior from sin. The Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him that he would not die before he saw the LORD’s Christ. With joy in his heart he took the child in his arms and rejoiced to see with his eyes the very One who would allow him to see God in all of his glory in heaven. He praised God with the words of the song which has become known as the Nunc Dimittis, or, Song of Simeon: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” Notice, Jesus is the Light of the World, who floods the world with the light of his forgiveness and eternal life. That’s why the celebration of the Presentation of our Lord is called Candlemas.

Simeon could leave the Temple confident that whenever the Lord called him out of this dark world of sin, he would bask in the eternal light of God’s glory. How appropriate it is for us to sing the Song of Simeon after we receive Christ’s true Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine of Holy Communion. We leave the altar at peace with God, knowing that our sins are blotted out through Jesus’ precious blood. This gives us peace of heart, soul, and mind, knowing that we don’t have to fear eternal punishment, but have eternal pleasures awaiting us at God’s right hand. We leave God’s house in peace, rejuvenated and motivated to serve our God in everything that we do at home, in our church home, in our neighborhoods, at work and at play. And, when the time comes, we leave this world in peace, assured that because of Jesus, the Light of the World, we will join Simeon in being forever embraced by the rays of God’s glory in heaven. May God bless you as you recall these truths on February 2, 2021. And may he grant you a Merry Candlemas!

Lord, when life’s troubles touch us, You seem to hide your face,  
And through our tears we often Can scarcely sense your grace.  
Then be our joy and brightness, Our cheer in pain and loss,  
Our sun in darkest terror, The glory round our cross.

Let us, O Lord, be faithful Like Simeon to the end  
So that his prayer exultant May from our hearts ascend:  
“O Lord, now let your servant Depart in peace, I pray,  
Since I have seen my Savior And here beheld his day.”

*After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read Luke 2:21-40.*

Pastor Zuberbier