

FEBRUARY 2: THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

Today's feast is sometimes known as the Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin, and also as Candlemas. In the Eastern Church it has been called the Meeting of Christ with Simeon. Such a variety of names is ample testimony to the wealth of spiritual meaning that generations of Christians have discovered in this small incident.

The title, "The Presentation," reminds us of the Jewish law (Exodus 13:2;22:29) that every firstborn son had to be dedicated to God in memory of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt, when the firstborn sons of the Egyptians died and those of Israel were spared.

When Mary placed her small son into the arms of Simeon, it was the meeting of the Old and New Dispensations. The old sacrifices, the burnt offerings and oblations, were done away; a new and perfect offering had come into the temple. God had provided himself a lamb for the burnt-offering (Genesis 22:8), his only Son. The offering was to be made once for all on the cross. At every Eucharist those who are in Christ recall that sinless offering and unite "themselves, their souls and bodies" with the self-oblation of their Lord and Savior.

It is traditional that candles are blessed on this day, for use throughout the rest of the year, which is why the feast is also sometimes known as "Candlemas".

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I Almighty and everliving God, we humbly beseech thee that, as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

II 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.

Lessons and Psalm

Malachi 3:1-4

Psalm 84

Hebrews 2:14-18

Luke 2:22-40

Preface of the Epiphany