

A Message from Mary Beth

This week we're celebrating the feast of Candlemas which marks the presentation of Jesus in the temple. This was a Jewish tradition which required parents to bring their first born son to the temple forty days after birth and dedicate him to God. The tradition stemmed from the flight of the Jews from Egypt, when God redeemed his chosen people from enslavement by the Pharaoh. It was a powerful reminder of God's redeeming power.

Candlemas became a Christian celebration in the fourth century and for many centuries afterwards it marked the end of the Christmas season. It culminated the Christmas theme of Jesus bringing God's light into the world. In the middle ages, this was celebrated with candlelit processions and blessings of candles for people's homes. These candles were a tangible reminder to people that Jesus is the great light in the world. Every time they lit a candle, they'd be reminded of this.

In Luke's gospel, we learn that Simeon was an old man who'd been waiting upon God's promise to show him the Messiah before he died. When he saw Jesus, Simeon knew that promise was fulfilled. He witnessed something special in Jesus, as the Lord's Christ, who would bring salvation to the whole world.

When he saw the infant Jesus in the temple, he declared :

"My eyes have seen Your salvation, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of Your people of Israel."

His words were radical at the time as he proclaimed that Jesus would bring salvation to **all** of humanity. In those days, the Jews didn't look beyond their own religious community in their faith in God. So this Messiah was very special indeed.

Centuries later, we are the recipients of Jesus' salvation. We know it was bought on the Cross, paid for with great pain and suffering. Jesus endured this suffering for us; paying for our sins and thus bringing us God's redemption.

Candlemas reminds us of our redemption through the penetrating light of Christ. His light searches and cleanses us, not with abrasiveness but within the safety of His love.

Sadly, we can't celebrate Candlemas together in St Mary's this year. But we CAN light a candle at home, and seek God in the present moment, allowing Him to reveal the great light of His Son, redeeming our lives and our suffering world.

A prayer for lighting your candle:

Lord God, you kept faith with Simeon and showed him the infant Christ. Give me grace to put all my trust in Your promises and patience to wait for their fulfilment, through Jesus Christ my Lord.
Amen.

God bless you all.

Mary-Beth