

Celebrating Christ, light of nations

Opening Antiphon

Leader: Light and peace and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Introduction

Opening Prayer and Blessing of the candles

Lighting of candles:

**Christ be our light, shine in our hearts,
shine through the darkness.**

Christ be our light, shine in your Church, gathered today.

Procession to the statue of the Blessed Virgin:

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Proclamation of the Gospel *Reflection*

The *Nunc Dimitis* (Song of Simeon)

**Save us Lord while we are awake; protect us while we sleep;
that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.**

At last all-powerful Master, you give leave to your servant to go in peace,
according to your promise;

for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared for all nations,
the light to enlighten the gentiles and give glory to Israel your people.

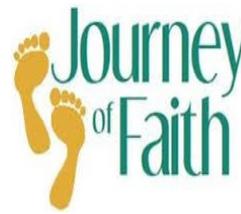
Glory be...

**Save us Lord while we are awake; protect us while we sleep;
that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace**

The Blessing

Anthem to the Blessed Virgin

**(Alma) Redemptoris Mater, quae pervia coeli
Porta manes, et Stella maris, succurre cadenti,
Surgere qui curat, populo: tu quae genuisti
Natura mirante, tuum sanctum Genitorem,
Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore
Sumens illud Ave, peccatorum miserere.**



The continuing revelation of Christ as the *Light of the World* through Luke and John

Session 9 2016-2017

Reminder of a hope for the sessions between now and Easter:

that we grow in our sense and experience of being both a **biblical** and a **liturgical** people who know ourselves to be shaped by the liturgical experience.

A Hymn of light:

Joy! Joy! The Mother comes and in her arms she brings
the Light of all the world, the Christ, the King of kings;
and in her heart the while all silently she sings.

O Infant God! O Christ! O Light most beautiful!
Thou comest - (Joy of joys!) all darkness to annul,
and brightest lights of earth beside Thy Light are dull!

The Feast of the Presentation
of the Lord Jesus in the Temple:

Forty days after the celebration of his birth, the Church remembers Jesus' presentation in the Temple at Jerusalem as recorded by St. Luke. In the old liturgical calendar it was this feast day which closed the Christmas season! Although the Christmas season is now complete on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, this feastday is still calculated from Christmas. (I notice that some churches still keep their cribs up until this feastday.)

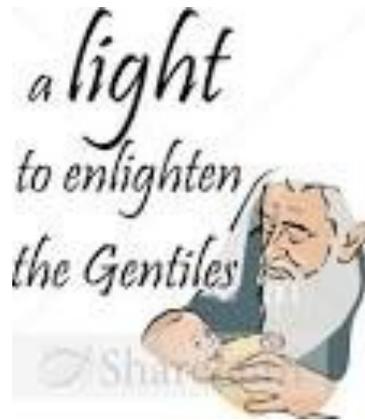
The Responsorial **Psalm** of the Mass of the feast commemorates the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Zion, but is used on this feastday in a prophetic way to announce Jesus the Messiah who "suddenly enters his temple" (c.f. the Prophet Malachi in the First Reading)

*O gates lift high your heads:
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the King of glory.
Who is the King of glory?
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant;
He is the King of glory!*



**Lumen
ad revelationem gentium
et gloriam plebis tuae Israel**

Traditionally, in the Liturgy, candles are blessed and carried in procession on this feastday (hence the title “Candlemas”)



The event of the Presentation reveals that the Jesus of Luke’s Gospel account is a Messiah figure who emerges from within a family, and a social world, in a definite era of history; he is bound up in the traditions of Israel, as are his parents. Obedient to the law of Moses, they are indeed “people of God”. His parents observe faithfully the laws regarding circumcision, purification and the presentation of the first born male in the temple at Jerusalem.

The encounter with Simeon defines the **special role** from God which this child is to have. This old man is quite elaborately described by Luke as a reliable prophet, and his words and actions show the pattern of *prophecy—fulfilment* which the Gospel loves to employ.

Simeon was expecting the “consolation” of Israel, and Luke establishes that he (Simeon) had been promised that he would see the Messiah before his death. He takes the child in his arms then immediately breaks into song, praising God for “keeping his word”. This is “Israel’s consolation”.

As we sing in an advent hymn:

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free.
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.
Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us for ever, now thy gracious Kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone,
by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.*

Simeon’s proclamation is similar to the earlier declamations of Mary and Zechariah – they are announcements in song—at least figuratively speaking. In their praises of God, all three express the significance of his child for the wider world. Remember Luke’s interest in writing for the good of gentile converts; he wants them to know that they are as dear to the Lord as their Jewish counterparts.

Earlier, Mary’s *Magnificat* announces the definitive plan of God unfolding, and she seems to have her Son’s own *mission statement* on her lips before he is even born!

Zechariah’s *Benedictus* praises God for “visiting” his people. It looks forward to the fulfilling of God plans through his own son (John the Baptist) who will be called a prophet of the “Most High” (a title for Christ which we take up in the *Gloria* each Sunday) ...he will “go ahead” to “prepare the way” so that the “rising Sun” can visit us, to give us **light**. Notice how St John in his Gospel reports the same “news” in the prologue (1:6-8).

These three “hymns” and the events accompanying them announce the presence of Christ in the world and for the world. They also announce his mission, with the prophecy of Simeon introducing the theme of the costliness of it all: *a sword will pierce your own soul too*.

The **light** which this child brings is the light of salvation, which God alone can bring about. It is more than a word from God; more than the words which came from prophets of old, more than an instruction or call to moral uprightness. It is (as we have seen in recent Sundays’ Gospels) an event. The same Jesus would proclaim that event of the Kingdom from the very beginning of his own preaching, when in the synagogue at Nazareth he translates the “mission statement” of his mother in her *Magnificat* into the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the “year of favour” from the Lord. That time has arrived in Jesus!



*Now, Master, you can
dismiss your servant in peace*