

Sentence
This is a light to reveal God to the nations and the glory of his people Israel. *Luke 2:32*

Luke the evangelist tells us that Jesus was presented in the house of God, as the Law of Moses required. He also records how the Christ-child was greeted by Simeon and Anna, two figures who represented Israel's longing to see the Redeemer promised by God. The evangelist gave Simeon a song to sing, the *Nunc dimittis*, which acclaims Jesus as the saving Light of God. To symbolize the enlightening truth of Christ the western Church developed the custom of blessing candles on this feast — hence its other title, *Candlemas*.

The chief title of today's feast, "The Presentation," comes from the ancient Jewish law that every firstborn son had to be dedicated to God's service. But the Law of Moses allowed parents to redeem their child by offering something else in his stead. In Jesus's case, Mary and Joseph offered the redemptive substitute which the law appointed for the first-born of poor parents, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Thus, paradoxically, the Redeemer himself was redeemed.

Many Christian writers have delighted to see the deepening of this paradox in the story of Simeon. In the fourth century, Ephrem of Edessa wrote: "When Simeon the priest received Christ into his arms and presented him to God, he understood that he was not offering Christ, but was himself being offered."

In celebrating the feast of the Presentation, the people of the Church become like Simeon, who cradled the infant Light of salvation in the crook of his arm and knew him to be as fragile as a candle-flame. In baptism, in meditating upon Scripture, and in the eucharist Christians cradle the same Light and take responsibility for the life of Christ in our world. And yet the paradox continues. Even as they hold Christ in their hands, they may discover that they are really in the crook of Christ's arms, being presented by him in the sanctuary of God's joy and glory.

See Readings, page 430.

Collect

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
for you have sent us your salvation.
Inspire us by your Holy Spirit
to recognize him who is the glory of Israel
and the light for all nations,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Readings

Malachi 3:1-4 Psalm 84:1-7 or Psalm 24:7-10
Refrain How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! Or CR 4
Hebrews 2:14-18 Luke 2:22-40

Prayer over the Gifts

Almighty God,
accept the joyful offering of your Church,
and grant that your Son may shine in us
as the light that lightens every nation.
We ask this in the name of the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preface of the Incarnation

Prayer after Communion

God for whom we wait,
you fulfilled the hope of Simeon,
who did not die till he had welcomed the Messiah.
Complete in us your perfect will,
that we in Christ may share in your eternal kingdom;
for he is Lord for ever and ever.