

Jesus: into our hearts ...

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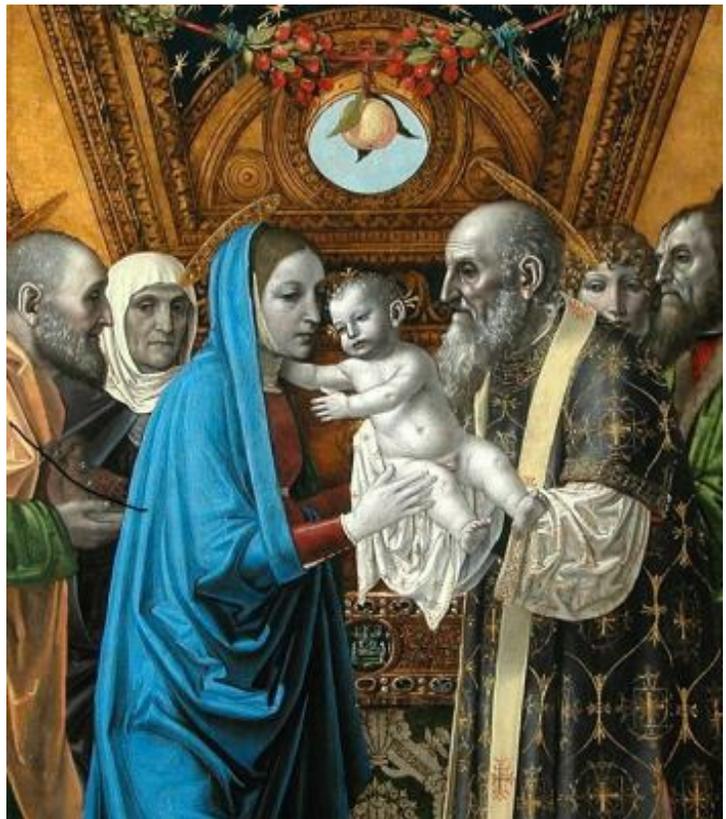
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord* February 2

**Today the Church celebrates the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem.
In that same spirit, we present ourselves today to the Lord, especially in the Mass.
Present yourself to Jesus today. Receive His life-giving light and love.**

**“Simeon gave back Jesus to His
Mother,
he was only suffered to keep
Him for one moment.
But we are far happier than Simeon.
We may keep Him always if we will.
In Communion
He comes not only into our arms
but into our hearts.”**

St John Vianney

This Feast is also known
as Candlemas Day, since the blessing
and procession of candles is included
in today's liturgy.



The symbolism of the candles is described

by Dom Prosper Guéranger, OSB, in his "Liturgical Year":

The mystery of today's ceremony has frequently been explained by liturgists, dating from the 7th century. According to Ivo of Chartres, the wax, which is formed from the juice of flowers by the bee, always considered as the emblem of virginity, signifies the virginal flesh of the Divine Infant, who diminished not, either by His conception or His birth, the spotless purity of His Blessed Mother. The same holy bishop would have us see, in the flame of our Candle, a symbol of Jesus who came to enlighten our darkness. St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking on the same mystery, bids us consider three things in the blessed Candle: the wax, the wick, and the flame. The wax, he says, which is the production of the virginal bee, is the



Flesh of our Lord; the wick, which is within, is His Soul; the flame, which burns on top, is His divinity.

The candles kept by the faithful in their homes should be seen as a sign of Christ "the light of the world" and an expression of faith.

From the Pieta prayer book: to pray while burning a blessed candle in one's home during a storm:

Jesus Christ a King of Glory has come in Peace.+ God became man, + and the Word was made flesh.+ Christ was born of a Virgin.+ Christ suffered.+ Christ was crucified.+ Christ died.+ Christ rose from the dead.+ Christ ascended into Heaven.+ Christ conquers.+ Christ reigns.+ Christ commands.+

May Christ protect us from all storms and lightning. + Christ went through their midst in Peace, + and the Word was made Flesh.+ Christ is with us with Mary.+ Flee you enemy spirits because the Lion of the Generation of Juda, the Root David, has won.+ Holy God+ Holy Powerful God! + Holy Immortal God! + Have mercy on us. Amen.

“Christ Himself says, ‘I am the light of the world.’ And we are the light, we ourselves, if we receive it from Him.... But how do we receive it, how do we make it shine? ...The candle tells us: by burning, and being consumed in the burning. A spark of fire, a ray of love, an inevitable immolation are celebrated over that pure, straight candle, as, pouring forth its gift of light, it exhausts itself in silent sacrifice." *Pope Bl Paul VI*

More on the Feast of the Presentation:

*The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord marks the time when Mary and Joseph first brought Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. According to Mosaic Law, after a time (40 days) of waiting, Mary was to bring an offering to the priest as purification after her having given birth (Leviticus 12:2-8). Hence, this feast is also known as the *Purification of the Blessed Virgin*. It was also within the context of this event that the Holy Family meets Simeon and Anna, encounters which are recorded in Luke 2:22ff.

The encounter with Simeon has given us one of the most beautiful and haunting canticles (songs) the Church has today. The words that Simeon spoke upon encountering the infant Jesus have been recited and sung through all the ages of the Church. The prayer is called the *Nunc Dimittis*, Latin words which comprise the first words of the prayer. Here is the complete text in English, taken from the *Liturgy of the Hours*:

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled.

My eyes have seen the salvation

**You have prepared in the sight of every people,
A light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people, Israel.**

To add to the haunting beauty of these words, the *Nunc Dimittis* is typically said at the office of Night Prayer, just before going to bed, when, as we lay ourselves down to rest, we also look ahead to our eternal rest. It's a wonderful grown-up bedtime prayer! (Hat tip: Patrick Conley)