

Opening Prayer:

Open our eyes to your presence Lord and open our hearts to your love. **Amen**

Invitation to confession:

Christ the light of the world has come to dispel the darkness of our hearts.

In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

God be gracious to us and bless us, and make your face shine upon us:

Lord have mercy

Lord Jesus may your ways be known on the earth, your saving power among the nations:

Christ have mercy.

You have made known your salvation, and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations.

Lord have mercy

May almighty God cleans you from sin and restore you in his image.

Amen

The Collect (Special Prayer for the day)

Almighty and ever living God, clothed in majesty, whose beloved son was this day presented in the Temple, in substance of our flesh: grant that we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts, by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too." There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him. This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you O Christ.**

Reflection on the Gospel.

Today we celebrate the feast of Candlemas (Feb. 2nd) and we look forward to Spring, new life and lighter days. Before the invention of electricity candles were the source of light and traditionally church candles

were blessed on this day; today signifies the end of Epiphany and the Christmas season when we begin look forward to the adult life and ministry of Jesus. We also celebrate the Presentation of Christ in the Temple when, according to Jewish Law every first born male must be redeemed at the Temple at 40 days old, with a sacrificial offering made at the same time. In the case of Jesus, whose family were poor, it would have been 2 turtle doves and two young pigeons. Inside the Temple, Jesus' family were met by two elderly worshippers, Simeon, a devout man who had been told that God's anointed would be revealed to him before his death, and Anna a prophetess descended from the tribe of Asher. Both had been waiting and praying in the Temple for many years, just for this occasion, the coming of a Saviour. We don't know what it was about Jesus that made Simeon realise a promise had been fulfilled, or what it meant to Anna after many years of widowhood to see the new light and hope revealed in the presence of Jesus. But we do know that they **saw** because they had been faithfully waiting and watching for many years. In the words of Simeon's Song, "My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared, and light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. They saw Christ revealed, not just to them but to all of us, through their open eyes and expectant hearts. Simeon and Anna were patient, they understood what it was to wait, theirs was not a life of busyness in a world with no time to watch and pray; they gave God something special and were rewarded, they gave him their time and patience, and in him they saw his light- the light of Jesus. So light a candle today, to represent the light that is Jesus, the light that we use to guide us to find God in others; because God is all around us if we only look. He is in the faces of the lost and lonely, he is in the hands of the doctors, nurses and scientists. God is in the good deeds of a friend and the smile of a stranger. When we are too busy with living, and don't open eyes and hearts at what is around us, we can easily dismiss the sacred and the divine that is in our midst, and we miss out on the joy that was shared by Simeon and Anna, the joy of our salvation. As we turn away from a year of gloom and despair, we wait for what is yet to come in this long battle against Covid. Winter is not yet over, the journey ahead may be challenging, but we know that God is with us, in you and in me, and in the most unlikely of people and places. Our challenge is to show people the light of Christ that shines through our actions, and encourage others to find God's light in themselves. Amen

The Creed

We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.
We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.
We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Be still and Pray: We give thanks for the faithful vigil of Simeon and Anna in the Temple. May we be blessed with the same patience and steadfast faith, and may we be always be ready to welcome the light of Christ in our lives and recognise it in the lives of others. Pray for your families and friends and communities, and those you've yet to know. Those suffering from sickness or anxiety that they may be comforted by knowing you love them, especially Vincent Grove and Lesley Sainsbury. Remember those who have died recently, Geoff Roberts from Brafield whose funeral will take place on Friday. May he rest in peace & rise in glory, and keep in your hearts Pat and her family who mourn his loss. Amen

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven.....

The Blessing:

Lord God, Help us to shine with the light of your love and May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those you love, this day and always. **Amen**

Reverend Irene