



February 5, 2017 – Epiphany 5(A): Feast of the Presentation

Each year on February 2, the church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, also known as the Feast of the Purification, and Candlemas.

This feast commemorates the 40th day after Jesus' birth, when he was presented in the Jerusalem Temple and Mary was purified in accordance with Jewish Law.

The Book of Leviticus mandates that, after childbirth, a woman must go to the temple to offer “two turtle-doves or two pigeons, one for a burnt-offering and the other for a sin-offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean” (Leviticus 12:8).

The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple is chronicled in the Gospel of Luke, when St. Simeon the Righteous saw Jesus in the temple and “took him in his arms and praised God,” saying, “My eyes have seen your salvation” (Luke 2:30).

This blessing by Simeon is the basis for the canticle *Nunc dimittis* or “The Song of Simeon”:

*Lord, you now have set your servant free
to go in peace as you have promised;
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior,
whom you have prepared for all the world to see:
A Light to enlighten the nations,
and the glory of your people Israel.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen*
(Luke 2:29-32; Book of Common Prayer, p. 120).



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“An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church” (Church Publishing, 2000) edited by Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, explains that when the celebration of the Presentation was first introduced in Rome in the seventh century, it included a procession with candles and the singing of the *Nunc dimittis*, which is why this feast also became known as “Candlemas.”

Collect for the Presentation

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly pray that, as your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts by Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen (Book of Common Prayer, p. 239).

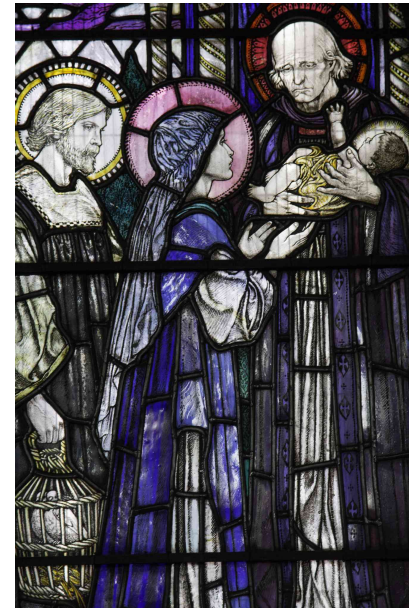


“Christ in St. Simeon’s Arms,” detail from stained glass in Old St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Edinburgh, Scotland (Photo by Lawrence Lew)

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