

# The Presentation of the Lord (“Candlemas”)-2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

Liturgical colour: white (the colour of Christ, white like cleansed from all sins, the colour of the redeemed, the colour of peace with God, heaven, and eternity)

# 40 days

40 days later... Again, a last “Happy Christmas” to all of you! – Finally, the Christmas time of the Church Year is completed. 40 days after Christmas Day. Forty... Trained readers (or listeners) of the Bible are used to this special number. 40 days was the duration of the Flood in the days of Noah, to drown the sin in the world, to wash the earth, to be prepared for a new start. 40 years(!) the people of Israel had to wander through the wilderness from the slavery of Egypt to Canaan. 40 years to be cleansed and prepared for a life in the promised

land of milk and honey. 40 days the Lord Jesus spent in the wilderness, meditating and praying, before He started His mission of redemption. In dependence on these 40 days, we commit 40 days of Lent from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday and Easter as a time of preparation and repentance for the coming salvation. 40 days after Easter we celebrate the feast of Ascension of Christ. And also the time of Advent – the time for preparation and repentance before Christmas – was originally in former times 40 days long (starting mid-November after Saint Martin’s Day – today only the Orthodox Churches of the East and the Roman-Catholic archdiocese of Milano (Italy) still have six weeks of Advent).

Now, 40 days after Christmas, the Christmas time ends with the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. This refers to the Jewish rite to “present” the firstborn male child of a family to God in the Temple in Jerusalem and to offer representatively a sacrifice to release him, according to the Old Testament Law, which is the **Old Testament Reading** for this day, Exodus 13, 1-2+14-16:

1 The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.” [...] 14 And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’

16 It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.”

Combined with that rite, the Jewish law schedules a time of cleansing for the mother of the child. After 40 days she had to undergo a cleansing ritual to be cultically clean again. Therefore, this day is especially linked to Mary, the mother of Jesus. And in former times, on this day the during winter newly produced candles were blessed for their purpose and many candles were lit in the church. Therefore, the day and service are vernacularly called “(Mary’s) Candlemas”.



This story is told in the **Gospel** for today, according to St. Luke, chapter 2, verses 22-40:

22 And 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 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, 28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 29 “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the

presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” 33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” 36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, 37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. 39 And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

The Gospel Reading also tells us about Simon, an old man and prophet. His song, the so-called “Nunc dimittis” (Latin for “Now you are letting (your servant) depart”) is traditionally sung at the end of Holy Communion, the moment we have seen and tasted the beneficial presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Holy Communion is the moment



when we stay with Joseph and Mary, Simon, and Anna in the Temple, at the same time in the heavenly service there is no time and space between us and God and all the Saints and Christian brothers and sisters of the world. We are one unity – foremost one unity with Jesus Christ, and therewith we obtain salvation. This is possible because Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man at the same time. He can be bodily among us as a human being, can embrace us and knows all moments of life (the bright and the dark) as well *and* He is real God and has therefore the power to be everywhere at the same time and the power to release us from sin, death, and devil. Theology calls this “two natures in the one person of Christ” and we find one of the biblical proofs in the **Epistle Reading** for today, from the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 2, verses 14 to 18:

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

40 days...40 days (sometimes years) seem to be an adequate period of time for us humans to prepare for something or tune in to something. In 40 days we have the possibility to think about something unhurriedly. We can make well-considered arrangements. And 40 days are traditionally a good period to recover. It is no coincidence that we speak about “quarantine” – this word derives from French and means forty. Forty days of isolation (“isolation” comes from the Italian “Isle of Lazzaretto Vecchio” (isola = isle) outside of Venice where a place for quarantine was established during the bad black death epidemic during the 14<sup>th</sup> century). – Of course, we can be thankful that we have medical tests nowadays to shorten times of quarantine when we are suspected to be infected with Covid or whatever. But it is worth to think about a time of contemplation in advance of an important change in my life or to recover after a separation, hardship, or sickness, as well as to prepare for spiritual input (like the Gospel of Easter) or experiences. Shortly, in two weeks, we will start into the 40 days of Lent. We can take Candlemas as a reminder to take Lent seriously for preparation and repentance. After it, we might experience the Gospel of Easter more intensely. I am sure about that and I wish for you to feel the message that God is with and for us, in Hebrew “Immanuel” – Happy Christmas!

## Prayer for Candlemas

Almighty ever-living God,  
we humbly implore your majesty that, just as your Only Begotten Son  
was presented on this day in the Temple in the substance of our flesh,  
so, by your grace, we may be presented to you with minds made pure.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in  
heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.

### BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with  
favour and + give us peace. Amen.

## Hymn for Candlemas <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJPIwirGWWc>

519 In His Temple Now Behold Him

The image shows a musical score for hymn 519, 'In His Temple Now Behold Him'. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are as follows:

1 In His tem - ple now be - hold Him, See the long - ex -  
2 In the arms of her who bore Him, Vir - gin pure, be -  
3 Je - sus, by Your pre - sen - ta - tion, When they blessed You,  
pect - ed Lord; An - cient proph - ets had fore - told Him,  
hold Him lie While His a - ged saints a - dore Him  
weak and poor, Make us see Your great sal - va - tion.  
God has now ful - filled His word. Now to praise Him.  
Ere in per - fect faith they die. Al - le - lu - ia,  
Seal us with Your prom - ise sure; And pre - sent us  
His re - deem - ed Shall break forth with one ac - cord.  
al - le - lu - ia! Lo, the in - car - nate God Most High!  
in Your glo - ry To Your Fa - ther, cleansed and pure.



This compilation comes from **All Lutheran Church of Brussel**, [www.alcb.be](http://www.alcb.be), a congregation of the Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in België, member of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) represented by The Reverend Johannes Reitze-Landau, [pastor@alcb.be](mailto:pastor@alcb.be). The selection of the readings follows the German Protestant Series of the Biblical Readings for the Sundays and Church Feasts based on the "Ancient Church Series", last review in 2018.

The Biblical passages are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).