



CANDLEMAS DAY



LITURGY BYTES *by Michele Hall*



Every so often a feast falls on a Sunday, and this weekend it happens once again. February 2nd is the Feast of the Presentation. This happens only every 6 years. The Feasts of the Lord take precedence over the normal Sunday cycle which began as Winter Ordinary Time just a few weeks ago.

The Presentation of the Lord commemorates the day when Joseph and Mary, according to Jewish tradition, brought Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem for the first time, 40 days after his birth. When December 25 was adopted as Christmas in the Roman Rite, back in the 4th Century, the Feast of the Presentation began to be celebrated on February 2nd, 40 days after Christmas.

At the start of the 8th Century, the Pope at the time added a candlelight procession at the beginning of Mass. Shortly after, the blessing and distribution of candles were added and continues today. The connection with candles and light led to the day being called Candlemas Day. The Presentation of the Lord could be seen as an extension of the Christmas mystery, the Incarnation, even though it falls in Ordinary Time. It also connects the celebrations of Christmas and Easter as it highlights Christ, the Light of the World.

In the Gospel reading, we hear Luke telling us that the Christ child was brought to the prophet Simeon in the temple. Simeon had waited his entire lifetime to meet the Messiah. This account is remembered daily in the Gospel Canticle Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours for those familiar with this beautiful expression of prayer.

This weekend, we invited everyone to bring a candle or two from home for a blessing, as we bless the Church candles that are used here. We also are sending families home with a single blessed candle and prayer highlighting Christ, the Light of the World, for our homes.

Have a blessed, bright, and joy-filled week ahead!