



Podcast for Candlemas: 2nd February 2021

Mgr Daniel McHugh

Candlemas is one of my favourite Feasts: it is celebrated on 2nd February if you mark Christmas on 25th December, and on 15th February if you mark Christmas on 6th January. Either way, the Presentation of Our Lord takes place 40 days after His birth.

Without going into the historical development of the Liturgy too much, it has certain central elements that appeal to us:

- First, the Procession commemorating the Presentation of Jesus in the temple, an opportunity for us to offer ourselves, our lives, along with Him to the Father.
- Second, carrying the lighted candles, a custom that grew up in France in the 10th century, highlighting the beautiful Proclamation by the old man Simeon whose words on encountering the Child Jesus are recorded in the Gospel for the Feast: “Jesus is to be a light for all peoples and the glory of Israel”.

At Mass in the Parish we had the tradition that the Procession, which begins the Mass, led to the Altar, and the candles I blessed in the Narthex, were then placed round the Altar table by the Congregation, symbolic of their offering their lives in Communion with Jesus in the Eucharist.

- This year the Mass I celebrate is done remotely, and those joining via the camera in the Pandemic, have asked to have lighted candles on the table where Mass is celebrated, a type of a physical presence too with me in offering ourselves with the Lord Jesus in the Mass.
- Lighted candles, of course, are now used more widely to express Hope and belief in the future: very symbolic at this time of the Pandemic when we remember so many who have died across the world, though still having hope in our hearts.
- The old man Simeon prophesized as you will hear in the Gospel I will read in this Podcast, that the Child Jesus whose Consecration we celebrate would be rejected and “a sword would pierce the soul of Mary” – something that was fulfilled in the Crucifixion and Death of Jesus.

The role of Mary in the Presentation in the Temple was more prominent in the Candlemas celebration pre Vatican 2 times when Liturgical Reform flourished: the focus was more on the Purification of Our Lady in past times which was part of this occasion; the Prayer of the Church – I will say the Prayer at Lauds after the Gospel reading – includes the concept of our need to be “pure in mind and heart” to come before God.

So, already the joy of the Presentation is tinged with the sorrow of the Crucifixion. And, for us in life, there is always the joy and the sorrow, but also the Hope of a new life beyond this. Hanna, the Prophetess, spoke in the Temple of the “deliverance” that would come with Jesus. Death and destruction, are not the end; they do not have the last word, as the Resurrection of Jesus shows.

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Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



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Now the Gospel reading for Candlemas.....

A final prayer from Lauds, Morning Prayer....

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