

Holy Communion for the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)



The Stour Valley Benefice
*The Parishes of Cavendish, Clare, Hundon, Poslingford,
Stoke-by-Clare & Wixoe*

- A short introduction to the Season -

The season of joyful celebration that began at Christmas now reaches its conclusion with the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas).

The child who has been manifested to the magi at his birth is now recognised by Simeon and Anna, when he comes to be presented in the Temple according to the Law of Israel.

He is both 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' and 'the glory of God's people Israel'. But the redemption he will bring must be won through suffering; the Incarnation is directed to the Passion; and Simeon's final words move our attention away from the celebration of Christmas and towards the mysteries of Easter.



Spiritual Communion

The term 'Spiritual Communion' has been used historically to describe the means of grace by which a person, prevented for some serious reason from sharing in a celebration of the Eucharist, nonetheless shares in the communion of Jesus Christ.

In joining with Revd Mark today as he celebrates the Eucharist from his own home, you too are able to join with him in communion. The Book of Common Prayer instructs us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', although we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members. In making our communion spiritually, we are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.

Welcome and Introduction

Hymn - Like a candle flame

- 1 Like a candle flame,
flick'ring small in our darkness.
Uncreated light
shines through infant eyes.
*God is with us, alleluia,
God is with us, alleluia,
come to save us, alleluia,
come to save us, alleluia!*

- 2 Stars and angels sing,
yet the earth sleeps in shadows;
can this tiny spark
set a world on fire?
*God is with us, alleluia,
God is with us, alleluia,
come to save us, alleluia,
come to save us, alleluia!*

- 3 Yet His light shall shine
from our lives, Spirit blazing,
as we touch the flame
of His holy fire.
*God is with us, alleluia,
God is with us, alleluia,
come to save us, alleluia,
come to save us, alleluia!*

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950) © 1998 Make Way Music

The Gathering

Minister: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the
 Holy Spirit.
All: **Amen.**

The Greeting

Minister: The Lord be with you.
All: **and also with you.**

Introduction

Minister: Dear friends, forty days ago we celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we recall the day on which he was presented in the Temple, when he was offered to the Father and shown to his people. As a sign of his coming among us, his mother was purified, as we now come to him for cleansing. In their old age Simeon and Anna recognised him as their Lord, as we today sing of his glory. In this eucharist, we celebrate both the joy of his coming and his searching judgement, looking back to the day of his birth and forward to the coming days of his passion.

Gloria in Excelsis

All: *Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest.*
Glory to God, in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.**

Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest.

The Collect

Minister: Let us pray that we may know and share the light of Christ.

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 for ever.

All: **Amen.**

The Liturgy of the Word

The Old Testament Lesson (Malachi 3:1-5 NRSV)

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight - indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

Minister: This is the word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

The New Testament Lesson (Hebrews 2:14-18 NRSV)

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Minister: This is the word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading (Luke 2:22-40 NRSV)

Minister: Today the Lord is presented in the Temple in substance of our mortal nature.

Today the Blessed Virgin comes to be purified in accordance with the law.

Today old Simeon proclaims Christ as the light of the nations and the glory of Israel.

All: Alleluia. Praise to Christ, the light of the world.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

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 turtle-doves 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 for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped 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.

Minister: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

The Creed

All: **We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from
heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin
Mary and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and
the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic
Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness
of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Minister: Let us pray, as we are commanded by the Law of God.

Give to the Church the spirit of prophecy, to proclaim the light that has come to lighten all nations. As Mary and Joseph made their offering according to the Law, so may all Christian people offer their prayer and praise for the gift of the Son according to his new law of love.

Let all people know that the day of salvation has come and the love of God reaches out to the ends of the earth. May those who administer justice understand that all law and power come from God, to be offered back to him with humility. Give grace to all who teach, that they may be guided in wisdom and insight.

As Jesus found the shelter of an earthly home in Nazareth, may his presence bless our homes and all the families in our community. Bless those who rejoice in a new birth. Be with our older people and grant them still the bright vision of divine love.

Have mercy on parents whose hearts are pierced by the loss or suffering of their children. May the light that was brought by the Son of God be their light in the time of darkness. Bless those who are near death, that they may be sustained by the sight of salvation.

We pray for those who have departed in peace from this world and entered into the greater life. May the light of heaven shine perpetually upon them, in the realm where the secrets of all hearts are revealed.

We pray in the name of Christ, our light and our salvation.

All: **Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

Minister: Hear the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ: 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me shall never walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.'

Let us therefore bring our sins into his light and confess them in penitence and faith.

All: **Father eternal, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour, in what we have thought, in what we have said and done, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We have wounded your love, and marred your image in us. We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light.**
Amen.

Minister: Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace

Minister: In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high has broken upon us, to give light to those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

Preparation of the Altar

Minister: Father, in Christ there has sprung up a light from the righteous; accept the gifts we bring before you and grant that Christ may shine in us to the praise and glory of your name.

All: Amen.

The Eucharistic Prayer

Minister: The Lord be with you

All: and also with you.

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them to the Lord.

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: it is right to give thanks and praise.

Minister: It is indeed right and good, always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise through Jesus Christ, who is one with you from all eternity.

For on this day he appeared in the Temple in substance of our flesh to come near to us in judgement.

He searches the hearts of all your people and brings to light the image of your splendour.

Your servant Simeon acclaimed him as the light to lighten the nations while Anna spoke of him to all who looked for your redemption.

Destined for the falling and rising of many, he was lifted high upon the cross and a sword of sorrow pierced his mother's heart when by his sacrifice he made our peace with you.

And now we rejoice and glorify your name that we, too, have seen your salvation and join with angels and archangels in their unending hymn of praise:

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.**

Minister: Accept our praises, heavenly Father, through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and as we follow his example and obey his command, grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and his blood; who, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying: Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Therefore, heavenly Father, we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross; we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; we look for the coming of your kingdom, and with this bread and this cup we make the memorial of Christ your Son our Lord.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All: **Christ has died:**

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

Minister: Accept through him, our great high priest, this our sacrifice of thanks and praise, and as we eat and drink these holy gifts in the presence of your divine majesty, renew us by your Spirit, inspire us with your love and unite us in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, and with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
with all who stand before you in earth and heaven,
we worship you, Father almighty,
in songs of everlasting praise:

**All: Blessing and honour and glory and power
 be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Minister: Believing the promises of God, let us pray with
confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be 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,
 the power and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

Minister: We break this bread of life, and that life is the light of the
world.

**All: God here among us, light in the midst of us, bring
 us to light and life.**

The Agnus Dei

**All: Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
 have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,

have mercy on us.

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Giving of Communion

Minister: Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you, and his blood which he shed for you. Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

All: **We do not presume to come to this your table,
merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy so much as to gather up the
crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord whose nature is
always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the
flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ and to drink
his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made
clean by his body and our souls washed through
his most precious blood, and that we may
evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.**

Prayer after Communion

Minister: Lord, you fulfilled the hope of Simeon and Anna, who lived to welcome the Messiah: may we, who have received these gifts beyond words, prepare to meet Christ Jesus when he comes to bring us to eternal life; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.

Final Responsory

Minister: Father, we have sung your praise with shepherds and angels: may Christ be born in our hearts today.

All: **Praise to Christ our light.**

Minister: We have shared in the joy of Simeon and Anna; help us, like them, to trust your word.

All: Praise to Christ our light.

Minister: We have greeted Jesus, the light of the world; may we be filled with the light of your love.

All: Praise to Christ our light.

The Dismissal

Minister: Christ, whose glory fills the skies, fill you with radiance and scatter the darkness from your path.

All: Amen.

Minister: Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, gladden your eyes and warm your heart.

All: Amen.

Minister: Christ, the Dayspring from on high, draw near to guide your feet into the way of peace.

All: Amen.

Minister: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

All: Amen.

Minister: Go in the light and peace of Christ.

All: Thanks be to God.

Hymn – Hail to the Lord who comes

1 Hail to the Lord who comes,
comes to his temple gate!
Not with his angel host,
not in his kingly state:
no shouts proclaim him nigh,
no crowds his coming wait;

2 But borne upon the throne
of Mary's gentle breast,

watched by her duteous love,
in her fond arms at rest;
thus to his Father's house
he comes, the heavenly Guest.

- 3 There Joseph at her side
in reverent wonder stands;
and, filled with holy joy,
old Simeon in his hands
takes up the promised child,
the glory of all lands.
- 4 Hail to the great First-born,
whose ransom-price they pay,
the Son before all worlds,
the child of man to-day,
that he might ransom us
who still in bondage lay.
- 5 O Light of all the earth,
thy children wait for thee:
come to thy temples here,
that we, from sin set free,
before thy Father's face
may all presented be.

John Ellerton (1826-1893)

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