

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 30 January 2022
Candlemas**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. This week we reach Candlemas, the end of our Epiphany journey. This Sunday marks the occasion of Jesus' presentation in the Temple. In the Jewish faith, the first-born son was dedicated to God when the infant was six weeks old. We shall be exploring the story of Jesus' dedication. We shall also be thinking about the crucial roles in this story of two remarkable people, Simeon and Anna. Both had dedicated their long lives to God. They help us to think about how we may dedicate ourselves to God, too.

Traditionally, candles were blessed at the church service marking Jesus' presentation at the Temple, so this festival became known as Candlemas. May the light of Christ shine in your lives in the week ahead.

With prayers,

Revd Lesley

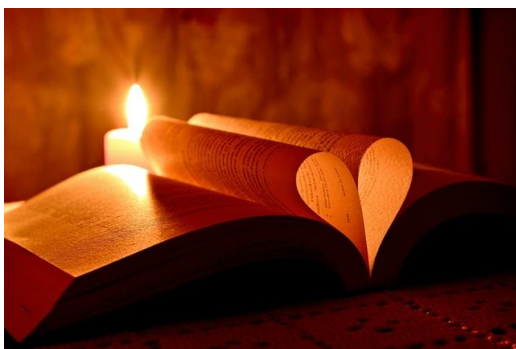
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Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, Light of the World shine upon us ...

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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Dedicating Ourselves

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence, and feel his love.

If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love, here, in your room. You may also wish to have a cross in your palm, or on the table, and a bowl of water ready for the time of confession.

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,
I place my hopes and dreams,
my fears and concerns,
into your safe and loving hands.
Enfold me with your love,
make my heart beat in time with yours;
in Jesus' name,
I pray. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the opening words of this hymn.

O Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end;
be thou for ever near me,
my Master and my friend.

If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.



As you offer your regrets to God, feel his love and forgiveness. Set free by his gracious love, go and live life inspired by love. May all that you say and all that you do speak of your love for God and for everyone.

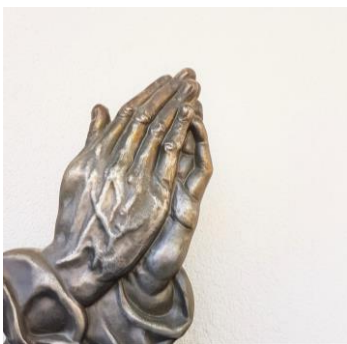
PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER **(The Collect)**

*Across our villages and the worldwide Church,
this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle
of prayer to our loving Father.*

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.

Amen.

This beautiful Collect reminds us that Jesus was presented to his Father in the Temple just like all first-born sons. Truly, he is one with us and his life was dedicated to being a bearer of God's good news to those craving God's love and peace. He was a beacon of light and hope. And, he calls us to follow his example. How are you spreading the good news of Jesus and how he has made a difference to your life?



This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Traditional

You may like to use these words as a prayer. Take a little time to reflect on the words and imagine God listening to you.

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

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

speaking 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.

Luke 2:22-40

Setting the scene

Our Epiphany readings have led us full circle, back to the baby Jesus. As a six-week old baby, Jesus is taken by Mary and Joseph to be presented at the Temple in Jerusalem. This was an important occasion in the Jewish faith. Jewish law required that a first-born son should be dedicated to God. In his gospel, Luke points out several times how devoutly Mary and Joseph observe their faith.

Mary and Joseph meet two other devout people while they are in the Temple. The first is Simeon, an elderly man who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

Miraculously, the Holy Spirit guides Simeon to visit the Temple at the same time that Mary and Joseph are presenting Jesus. As soon as Simeon holds the baby Jesus in his arms, he knows that the Holy Spirit's promise has been fulfilled. He knows that he actually holds the longed-for Messiah. In his moment of realisation, he praises God. Simeon declares that Jesus will be a light for non-Jewish people and Jewish people alike.

The second person that Mary and Joseph meet is a prophet, Anna. Unlike Simeon, she actually lives in the Temple, fasting and praying all day and all night. We are told that she was of a great age. She had been widowed after seven years and was now about eighty-four years of age. We do not know if Anna overheard Simeon's words. Instinctively, she knows that she has witnessed the Messiah. Like Simeon, she bursts into praise to God and starts to spread the good news about the arrival of the Messiah, to all who were waiting for him. Mary and Joseph must have had so much to think about and to discuss as they embarked on the long journey back to

Nazareth? As you think about the joy and praise of Simeon and Anna, take a moment to think about how knowing Jesus brings joy to your life.



Let all the world in every corner sing,
my God and King!

George Herbert (1593-1633)

Our call to follow their example

At the Presentation in the Temple, two very elderly people were given the opportunity to witness the presence of the Messiah. In Anna's case, widows were often neglected by society in Jesus' day. Yet here she is, centre stage with a special opportunity to see the Christ-child!

Sometimes, we may feel that circumstances restrict our ability to share the joy of knowing Jesus. It may be because of the coronavirus crisis or our frailties of age and health. Yet Simeon's and Anna's roles in the story of Jesus' Presentation remind us that we have a part to play Jesus' story, whatever our circumstances. Like Anna, we need to share the good news of Jesus in whatever way we can. Like Anna, we are "centre-stage" in God's eyes! We are called to offer Jesus prayer and praise.

Simeon and Anna were only able to experience the joy of Jesus' presence for a moment. Afterwards, Mary and Joseph took Jesus on the long journey back home to Nazareth. It is unlikely that Simeon and Anna ever saw Jesus again. So let us dedicate ourselves to offering thanks and praise through prayer that we are even more blessed. We have Jesus with us – always. Whatever our circumstances, we are loved by God. May thinking about this good news fill your hearts with both comfort and joy.

OUR PRAYERS

Here are some prayers for this Sunday. Feel free to add your own.

Loving God, thank you for making me feel valued and important.
Help me to remember, that whatever my circumstances,
I can serve you with prayer and praise.

Help me to share the joy of knowing Jesus,
where and when I can.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Loving God, I pray for those who live in the darkness of anxiety and fear;
for those whose home life is difficult, or whose homeland is blighted by
war or natural disaster. Lord, shine the light of your love on all those who
are in need. I lift up to you ...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Loving God, you reach out and touch the lives of everyone.
You are always ready to offer comfort and hope. Please care for those
who are dear to me. I lift up to you...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

The Lord's Prayer

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.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

O God, help me to serve you each day,
by following the example of Jesus, our Servant King.
Guide my daily living. Bless me and keep my loved ones safe,
I pray. **Amen.**