

Week 32: February 3rd



Candlemas

Yesterday was February 2nd and it was the official ending to Christmas. In the Church Year we can now allow Jesus to grow up and to do the work he came to do. February 2nd is 40 days after Christmas Day, and 40 is a significant length of time, we use it for preparation for Lent, for the days in the Ark, the years in the wilderness, and 40 days after his birth Jesus, as the first male child, was taken to the Temple. He had at 8 Days already been circumcised and named. But 40 days after the birth the offering would be taken and that was an offering not for the birth of the child or as a thank you for the child but for the purification or cleansing of the mother.

Candlemas is the festival when we meet Simeon and Anna, those two elderly faithful souls waiting for God's promises to be kept. Simeon believed that the time was soon to come when the Messiah would be revealed and Israel would be saved. Simeon was open to God and the ways in which God can work, and he recognised the moment. Also it says that the Holy Spirit guided him to be in the Temple on that special day. *I wonder if we have ever felt that we needed to be somewhere and it has turned out to be the right thing to have done?*

Anna means grace and she recognises what those who should have known failed to see. she also showed that despite being elderly and towards the end of her life she was still open to God being revealed in new ways. Neither Simeon nor Anna would have expected the Messiah to come as a baby and in such humble circumstances, but even so when they see him they know it is the one they have waited for.

Yesterday, in some traditions there will have been a festival for Candlemas and candles will be given out to remind people that Simeon said Jesus would be a light and that we are to be faithful witnesses just as the Simeon and Anna were.

You may remember how much I love rainbows, so when I found a Rainbow Candlemas, I thought you might like it too!

- Red: the red of the advent candles, red of the Christmas, reminding us of the coming of Christ and how the story has been retold throughout the ages of the shepherds, and the stable and the angels telling the good news.
- Orange: when Jesus was taken to the Temple the seven-branched candlestick would have been lit, signifying the presence of God. But we have the assurance of God with us always and not just when in Church!
- Yellow: Jesus is the light of the world, and we are to be the bearers of that light today.
- Green: New life, new shoots, this time of year the snowdrops are pushing their way through, and in folk lore they are called Candlemas Bells, or Mary's tapers and they mean Hope.
- Blue: The traditional colour used by artists for Mary's robes. An expensive pigment, but used to signify what an important role she had in the coming of Christ.
- Indigo: The darkness that can never put the light out. We need to shine in the darkness as Christ did.
- Violet: The colour of kings, the sign of things to come, when the crown of thorns becomes the crown of the King of kings, and Christ is the King of all.

Thank you loving God that you use everyone of all ages and abilities in your Kingdom. May we value all people and may those who feel they have nothing left to offer realise that you never stop using us as your witnesses. Amen