

Worship for 31st January

The Presentation of Christ

If you can, have a candle lit for this service

Today we remember the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and the two people who had waited faithfully to see God – Simeon and Anna. They kept trusting God's promises and they were proved right. Today we celebrate the faithfulness of God as we come together in Spirit and rejoice.

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 recognized him as their Lord, as we today proclaim his glory. Now 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.

Lord God,
the springing source of everlasting light,
pour into the hearts of your faithful people
the brilliance of your eternal splendour,
that we, who by these kindling flames
light up this temple to your glory,
may have the darkness of our souls dispelled, and so be counted worthy to stand
before you in that eternal city where you live and reign, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Collect of the Day

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. Amen.

A reading from the Book of Malachi (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.

Psalm - 24 (NRSV)

O gates lift high your heads;
grow higher ancient doors.
Let him enter, the King of glory.

'Who is the King of glory?'
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant,
the Lord, the Lord, the valiant in war.

O gates lift high your heads;
grow higher ancient doors.
Let him enter, the King of glory.

'Who is he, the King of glory?'
He the Lord of armies,
he is the King, the King of glory.

Gospel

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

Alleluia!

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

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

Alleluia! Praise to Christ, the Light of the world!

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke (2:22-40 NRSV)

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..

Thought for the Day

Sometimes we too, like Simeon and Anna, have to wait for God to act and this can be hard. We know something of this given our present trials with COVID. But like those two faithful people, we too have to wait faithfully, not losing hope, trusting and praying as we wait.

Intercessions

Take some time to reflect on your life this week. Where do you need God's presence and help? Give thanks for where you feel you have received it and pray for those situation - places and people - who are in particular need at this time.

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

An Act of Spiritual Communion

Our Father, who art in heaven...

Act of Reception

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

Final Prayer

Lord, you fulfilled the hope of Simeon and Anna,
who lived to welcome the Messiah:
may we, who have received 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.

Act of Dedication

Father, here we bring to an end our celebration of the Saviour's birth.
Help us, in whom he has been born,
to live his life that has no end.

Here we have rejoiced with faithful Simeon and Anna.
Help us, who have found the Lord in his temple, to trust in your eternal promises.

Here we have greeted the light of the world.
Help us, who bear these candles,
never to forsake the light of Christ.

Here we stand near the place of baptism.
Help us, who are marked with the cross,
to share the Lord's death and resurrection.

Here we turn from Christ's birth to his passion.
Help us, for whom Lent is near,
to enter deeply into the Easter mystery.

Here we bless one another in your name.
Help us, who now go in peace,
to shine with your light in the world.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Blessing

May Christ, whose glory fills the skies, fill us with radiance and scatter the darkness from your path.
Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, gladden our eyes and warm your heart.
Christ, the Dayspring from on high,
draw near to guide our feet into the way of peace.
And may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon us, now and evermore. Amen.