

## **The Light of the World**

(Entrusted to the prayers of St. Anthony of Padua)

Beloved in Jesus Christ,

Today we celebrate the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, also called Candlemass.

At the time of Our Lord, a mother who had given birth was to go to the temple for the

Purification ceremony 40 days after childbirth,

and so this feast brings us to 40 days after Christmas.

This is also called Candlemass, because we bless candles and have our procession.

At St. John's we have a tradition of blessing ALL the candles that will be used in the coming year in the Church,

and so Father did that upstairs at the early Mass today.

Now the lighted candle represents Jesus, the Light of the World.

When we hold the candle, we should think of holding the Child Jesus.

Today, I thought we could consider what the great Fr. Guerenger<sup>1</sup> says about this feast:

At the time of Christ, he says,

there was living in Jerusalem an old man whose life was nearing its end.

He was a man full of hope, and his name was Simeon.

he had longed for years, to see the Messiah,

and at last his hope was to be fulfilled.

The Holy Spirit revealed to him

that he would not see death without first seeing that LIGHT which was to come into the world, Jesus.

As Mary and Joseph ascended the steps of the Temple

to take Jesus to the altar,

Simeon felt within himself a strong impulse of the Holy Spirit: he left his house, and

walked quickly towards the Temple,

forgetting his feebleness and old age.

Arriving there, amidst the many mothers who had come to present their children, he

recognizes the Virgin Mother that he had so often read about in Isaiah,

and so he presses through the crowd to reach the Child that she is holding in her arms.

Mary knows what to do: she places her child in the dear old man's arms.

Full of emotion, he says: "Now O Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation; a Light to enlighten the Gentiles, and give glory to thy people Israel."

You know, priests and religious pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily, and many lay people also pray these prayers.

The last prayer of the day, before bed, is this one from Simeon: 'Now Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace.'

He says this prayer at the end of his life,  
thankful that he has seen salvation, in Jesus.

Jesus. Who is the Light that has come into the world.

My grandmother had in her home a lovely picture of the Child Jesus.

When I think of grandma, I think of this image of Christ.

She passed away years ago, and my parents too,  
but we kids cherish and keep that picture in the family,  
we never forgot it.

Painted by Charles Chambers, this painting is called,  
'The Light of the World.'

Friends, Jesus is the Light of the World.

A world that - well, so obvious today - is in darkness;

St. Anselm says, 'When the divine light does not shine in a soul it is night, and it will become a den of sins and demons.'

He says, 'Woe to those who turn away from the light.'

More than ever in history, the world needs this Light.

We held our candles during the Holy Gospel,  
to say that Jesus is present when the Gospel is read.

Also, according to the Ritual, at the Sanctus,  
we again light our candles, to hold during the Consecration;  
we ourselves become other Simeons,  
holding the symbol of Jesus, the Light of the Gentiles.<sup>ii</sup>

St. Anselm says, that the candle is an appropriate symbol of Christ:  
The wax represents the Flesh of the Savior who became Incarnate,  
the wick which is within, is his Soul,  
and the flame is his burning Divinity.

John the Serene writes:<sup>iii</sup>

'The Lord is our Light. Souls brightened by this light do not fall into sin. Their pride is lowered to humility. The one illumined by this light, bears all things, puts up with adversities; he is not saddened by the things of time, but finds his strength in God.

WE are now to be 'lights' to the world, other Christs.  
To bring the warm and saving light to those we know.

The saints tell us that Jesus is symbolized by the sun.  
Mary is likewise, symbolized by the moon,  
because the moon illumines those who are in darkness,  
by the light it received from the sun.

May the Blessed Virgin pray for us, that we will be worthy bearers of Christ's Light.

---

<sup>i</sup> Liturgical Year, Vol. 3

<sup>ii</sup> At the first Presentation, there were Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna, a procession of 4 with the Child. Today, it is many, it is all of us who have made procession with this Light of the World. Fr. Guenger

<sup>iii</sup> Office for 3<sup>rd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, Thursday.