

Christ Church Freemantle

Sunday 31st January – Candlemas

Today we celebrate the feast of Candlemas, or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The actual day of Candlemas - February 2nd marks forty days since Christmas and I've been told that Candlemas marks a mid-way point, between looking back to Advent and Christmas, and looking forward to Lent, Holy Week and Easter. It may still be very slow and subtle, but change is afoot and the days are starting to very gradually lengthen since the darkest days of December and we are heading towards the light and growth of Spring.

I've found that this last year has been a real lesson for me in patience and holding onto hope. It is so easy to feel so impatient and fed up with never-ending restrictions and a lack of freedom, to yearn for our past life whilst simultaneously feeling anxious and fearful for the future. Maybe reading today's gospel reading can help us. Simeon and Anna were both elderly and had lived long devout lives of patient expectation. They had looked forward to this day for so long but had never given up on their hope to see God's promised Messiah.



If you read the pew sheet at all, you will be aware that both Mandy and I often use the poems of Malcolm Guite. Today's pew sheet has a sonnet for Candlemas which ends with this:

“They come at last with us to Candlemas
And keep the day the prophecies came true
We glimpse with them, amidst our busyness,
The peace that Simeon and Anna knew.
For Candlemas still keeps His kindled light,
Against the dark our Saviour's face is bright.”

At Candlemas there was an old custom to light a candle on the church altar to represent the Christ-light and to bless all the other candles for the year ahead, praying that all who saw that outward and visible light would be blessed by the light of Christ 'who lightens everyone who comes into the world.' Although we cannot light a candle in the church at the moment, we can all light a candle at home to represent our journey of light amidst the darkness.

Liz Coe