

+++ *From the Pastor* +++

Sunday, January 31, 2016

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord: Tuesday, February 2

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is celebrated by the Church on February 2. On this day it is customary to bless candles for use in the home and in the church. If you would like to have candles blessed, please bring them to Mass and place them on the table, which will be provided, in the sanctuary.

About the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord commemorates that day when the parents of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, brought Him to the Temple in Jerusalem and presented or dedicated Him to God the Father in keeping with the Law of Moses. In the East, during the Middle Ages, the Presentation of the Lord was called the *Hypapante* or Meeting, between Jesus, Simeon and Anna. It is also an epiphany as well, a part of the Lord's whole pattern of manifesting Himself to the world: Nativity, Visit of the Magi, Baptism in the Jordan, First Miracle at Cana. The feast was also known as the Feast of Simeon, the Old Man.

When the feast was later adopted in the Roman Catholic Church the increasing devotion to the Blessed Mother made it a day to honor her: The Purification, which was, of course, the reason for the presentation. In common with all Jewish mothers, the Blessed Virgin Mary took her child to the Temple after forty days, the period during which she was excluded from public worship according to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 13). To this day, the feast is kept forty days after Christmas but it is now called The Presentation of the Lord and is a feast of the Lord Jesus Christ and not a Marian one.

The English name for this feast, *Candlemas*, or Candle Mass, was common because the Holy Mass has often been preceded by the blessing and distribution of candles—at least since the seventh century—to symbolize Christ's role as the Light of the World. What better way to give the Season of Light's victory over darkness one last hurrah? Some suggest that the candle association grew out of the light processions in honor of Mary in Rome on the occasion, which were a Christian substitute for the ancient torch parades.

Though the revised calendar has overshadowed this lightsome feast, we may still like to keep at least a remnant of the Christmas Season's greenery and lights until now, in order to keep the old Christmas to Candlemas season. But not a day longer! There is an old legend that houses will be haunted by goblins that are still decorated for Christmas after Candlemas eve.

—From the *Catholic Source Book*, edited by Rev. Peter Klein

