

CANDLEMAS 2010

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

SERMON-CHRIST CHURCH PARISH

FATHER JOHN ALTBERG

LUKE 2.22



LIGHTEN OUR DARKNESS...OPENING WORDS
OF THE SECOND COLLECT AT EVENSONG...

Those words definitively connect today, Candlemas 2010, with Simeon meeting Jesus 2000 years ago and with Psalm 13 which David wrote 1500 years before that...the underpinning theme is consistently about LIGHT...not ecclesiastical flashlights...but rather THE LIGHT THAT OVERCOMES DARKNESS to protect us from 'dark' tendencies and behaviors...

HYPAPANTE...the title for today in the Eastern Church, meaning in Greek, THE MEETING, recounts Simeon recognizing the Messiah in the midst of what Mary and Joseph would have regarded as just another normal event...presenting the young child at the Temple.

The course of the event changed abruptly...Simeon somehow recognized this was the child of which the Prophet had spoken...

YOU DID WHAT YOU SAID YOU WOULD DO GOD...NOW I CAN DIE IN PEACE...SAID ELDERLY SIMEON AS HE CARRIED THE CHILD JESUS...HE RECOGNIZED THIS BABY WAS HIS KING...THE ONE FOR WHOM HE WAITED HIS ENTIRE LIFE...A LIGHT TO LIGHTEN THE GENTILES AND THE GLORY OF ISRAEL...

The GRADUAL we sang just minutes ago tells the story in yet another way...

"THE OLD MAN HELD THE YOUNG CHILD IN HIS ARMS; YET WAS THE YOUNG CHILD THE OLD MAN'S KING". The Gospel poignantly recounts the words of Simeon as he realizes whom he has just met.

This is indeed a powerful teaching moment in the Church Year...it forms the perfect conclusion to Epiphany...the season of appearances. Today is about Mary, about Simeon, about Jesus...about the light St John defines in his Gospel.

It is always about LIGHT to which we inescapably return. Why...?.LIGHT is about LIFE. The church is about LIFE. During Advent we focused the impending illumination of the darkness, at Christmas the LIGHT appeared, we emphasize it all the time in the Last Gospel and today...LIGHT is the topic, the popular name, CANDLEMAS...

That's why we held lighted candles during the Gospel, just as Catholic Christians have been doing on this day since about the 8th century. Light the candle again later...meditate about who is symbolized by that LIGHT...**THE** reason churches have candles!

Today's special liturgy forms around events recounted in today's Gospel...meeting the salvation – LIFE - God promised and delivered in the person of Jesus.

Who is the person YOU met today while holding the candle...what is your own experience meeting Jesus, the light who has come into YOUR world...place yourself in Simeon's role...who did you see...who are you going to tell?

LIGHT – LIFE - has overcome darkness...let it shine...forever...

