



INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

The First Reading - Malachi 3: 1-5

At a time when God's people and their leaders were not living virtuously, the prophet Malachi criticised them for careless religious rituals, for cheating and for marriage to pagans. He predicts that the Lord will, like a craftsman melting gold and silver, "refine" the Levite priests of the temple.

The Psalm - Psalm 24: 1-10 or Psalm 24: 7-10 or Psalm 84

The Second Reading - Hebrews 2: 14-18

Jews who became Christians lost the comforts of their old religion, including its speculations about angels. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds these converts that Jesus replaces and vastly improves upon everything they have

given up. Here the writer argues that Jesus is superior to angels and closer to us than angels could be.

The Gospel Reading - Luke 2: 22-40

The audience of Luke's gospel were pagan converts. They were happy to become Christians but puzzled that they had inherited a religion that started among the famously exclusive Jews. So Luke shows them two representatives of the Jewish heritage proclaiming how that tradition was destined to be transformed by Jesus.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Malachi%203:%201-5%0Acw%20Psalm%2024:%201-10%0Acw%20%2BOR%0APsalm%2024:%207-10%0Acw%20%2BOR%0APsalm%2084%0AHebrews%202:%2014-18%0ALuke%202:%2022-40

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty and everliving God,
we humbly beseech thy Majesty,
that, as thy only-begotten Son was this day
presented in the temple in substance of our flesh,
so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts,
by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty and everliving God,
clothed in majesty,
whose beloved Son was this day presented in the temple
in the substance of our mortal nature:
May we be presented to you with pure and clean hearts,
by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

As we join Simeon and Anna in the temple and behold the salvation of God, let us pray to the God of Israel to bring the light of Christ to all peoples.

Deacon or other leader

For the peace of the world, and for our unity in Christ.

Kyrie, eleison.

For Nour bishop and all bishops, for the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Kyrie, eleison.

For the church throughout the world and the faithful in every place.

Kyrie, eleison.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority.

Kyrie, eleison.

For mercy, justice, and peace among peoples of the earth.

Kyrie, eleison.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, travelers and prisoners, the hungry and the oppressed.

Kyrie, eleison.

For the dying and the dead.

Kyrie, eleison.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Kyrie, eleison.

Joining our voices with _____ and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

God of eternal radiance, hear the prayers we offer this day, shine the light of faith in our hearts, and kindle the fire of charity in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

POST COMMUNION

God, for whom we wait,
you fulfilled the hopes of Simeon and Anna,
who lived to welcome the Messiah.
Complete in us your perfect will,
that in Christ we may see your salvation,
for he is Lord for ever and ever.

God our Father, source of all light, you revealed to aged Simeon your light that enlightens all nations and have now filled our hearts with the light of faith through this holy supper. Lighten our path that we may walk in the way of holiness until we come to the Light that shines forever, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Almighty ever-living God, we humbly implore your majesty that, just as your Only Begotten Son was presented on this day in the Temple in the substance of our flesh, so, by your grace, we may be presented to you with minds made pure. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

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. *Common Worship*

Lord Jesus Christ, light of the nations and glory of Israel: make your home among us, and present us pure and holy to your heavenly Father, your God, and our God.

Eternal Lord, our beginning and our end: bring us with the whole creation to your glory, hidden through past ages and made known in Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of steadfast love,
you sent your Son to be the light of the world,
saving people everywhere from sin and death.
As Anna gave thanks for the freedom he would bring,
and Simeon saw in him the dawn of redemption,
complete your purpose once made known in him.
Make us the vessels of his light,
that all the world may glory in the splendor of your peace. Amen.

God of love,
you refine silver and shelter the sparrow's nest.
Accept the prayers we bring this day,
for you know all that tests and troubles us.
Embrace our needs in your blessing,
so that we may be sustained,
even in times of trial. Amen.

Strong and mighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus,
the presentation of your Son in the temple
was his first entrance into the place of sacrifice.
Grant that, trusting in his offering upon the cross
to forgive our sins and uphold us in the time of trial,
we may sing your praises
and live in the light of your salvation, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly beseech thee that, as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

O Lord Jesus Christ, as a child you were presented in the Temple and received with joy by Simeon and Anna as Redeemer of Israel: mercifully grant that we like them, may be guided by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge and love you until the end of our lives. Amen (*Church of South India*)

A Prayer to Bless Candles. God our Father, whose Son was revealed to Simeon as the light of the nations, and the glory of Israel, let these candles (+) be to us a sign of his light and presence, that, guided by the Holy Spirit, we may live by the light of faith until we come to the light of glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let the flame of your love never be quenched in our hearts, O Lord. Waking or sleeping, living or dying, let us delight in your presence. Let the flame of your love brighten our souls and illumine our path, and let the majesty of your glory be our joy, our life and our strength now and for ever. Amen *Johann Arndt, 1555-1621*

Let us all hasten to meet Christ, we who honour and venerate the divine mystery we celebrate today. Everyone should be eager to join the procession to share in this meeting. Let no one refuse to carry a light. Our bright shining candles are a sign of the divine splendour of the one who comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole universe radiant with the brilliance of his eternal light. Our candles show how bright our souls should be when we go to meet Christ. The God-bearer the most pure virgin, carried the true Light in her arms and brought him to help those who lay in darkness. In the same way we too should carry a light for all to see and reflect the radiance of the true light as we hasten to meet him. *Sophronius of Jerusalem*

Lord give us the eyes of faith,
to see your presence in the world.
Where fear closes our eyes, help us.
Where tears blind us, heal us.
Where busyness keeps us from noticing, slow us.
Where pride gets in the way, release us
Set us free to see your love at work in the world. Amen

The Candlemas Prayer

Lord God, you are the source of everlasting light.
Your son, our beloved Lord Jesus
was presented in the temple 40 days after his birth.
He was recognised by Simeon and Anna,
and welcomed as the promised Messiah.
May we like them, behold the glory of the Lord Jesus.
Grant that we may stand before you
with hearts cleansed by your forgiving love.
May we serve you all our days
and make your name known
as we worship you as our Lord.
So may we come by your grace
to eternal life .
Amen.

O God, who in the work of creation commanded the light to shine out of darkness: we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may shine into the hearts of all your people, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, and revealing to them the knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

First reading, [Malachi 3:1-4](#)

The Historical Situation: After Judah returned from its exile in Babylon, the people and their leaders did not quickly rise to great levels of virtue. An anonymous prophet, who took the name Malachi (pronounce it MAL uh ki, with a short a in the first syllable, and long i in the third; it's Hebrew for "my messenger"), upbraided them for several abuses, such as religious impiety, cheating and marriage to pagans. In these verses, his particular concern is the temple and its rituals. His prediction that the Lord will visit the temple connects the first reading with [today's gospel](#). The "sons of Levi" are the hereditary clan of priests who have been neglecting their sacred duties.

Proclaiming It: Malachi was passionate, and his imagery is vivid: How will the Lord come to the temple? **Suddenly**. How will we work? **Like the refiner's fire or the fuller's lye**. (A fuller was a craftsman who cleansed and thickened cloth.) So bring out the vigor in these expressions. Also emphasize "to the temple" so that your listeners know the locus of the action.

Second Reading, [Hebrews 2:14-18](#)

The Historical Situation: This letter was for some Jews who had become Christian, and who were feeling nostalgic for some of the institutions of Judaism from which they were now cut off. The author's intent is to show them that they have in Jesus everything they used to have in Judaism, and more. So there are references to Jewish ideas and theological concepts that are strange to most of us today.

The Theological Background: For example, evidently the addressees had believed that angels played important mediating roles between God and the faithful. Rather than simply dismiss this idea, the author spends chapters 1 and 2 of Hebrews explaining how Jesus, as the very son of God, is superior to the angels. To explain why Jesus had to suffer (and angels do not suffer), he says in chapter 2, verse 9, that Jesus was made for a little while lower than the angels, that he might "taste death" for the sake of all people.

Then he says that this share in our suffering made our leader in salvation (Jesus) perfect. And the author implies something he'll develop later, that

Jesus replaces the priests of old Judaism, just like he does the angels. Without using the word "priest" yet, but rather using the verb "consecrate" (the work specific to priests), he says "those consecrated" (that is, us) and the one consecrating (Jesus) have the same Father. So we're Jesus' brothers and all children of God.

It's not the tight Aristotelian logic we like to see on our newspapers' editorial pages, but a different style of argumentation that made much sense its original audience. (And it's a style not completely out of date even today. I remember seeing this kind of argumentation in the books of the twentieth-century American Jewish novelist Chaim Potok, *The Chosen* and *The Promise*. They're about brilliant contemporary rabbinical students and their struggles with the ideas of the dominant culture. Recommended reading!)

In any case, all this sets things up for the small paragraph forming our reading.

- The "children" of verse 14 are the same children of the Father to whom Jesus consecrated us in verse 11.
- Then the author gives another justification for Jesus' death (still a scandal and an anomaly demanding explanation), namely the defeat of the devil and liberation of those enslaved by the devil.
- He revisits the angels theme again, this time somewhat dismissively.
- Then he specifically names Jesus as high priest, appointed to do the specific priestly task of expiating the sins of the people.
- Finally he reinforces the theme of our solidarity with him in the business of being tested (tempted).

Proclaiming It: Whew! There's a lot packed into a few dozen words. Before such a smörgåsbord of ideas, and absent any compelling link to the first reading or gospel, I'd choose one notion and try to emphasize it. My choice? Jesus' solidarity with us. "Jesus likewise **shared** in them [human blood and flesh]," **"he had to become like his brothers and sisters"**

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

This special Sunday has been called 'The Presentation of Christ in the Temple', 'The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary', and 'Candlemas.' Candlemas celebrates the many themes of these events, presentation, purification and light for the world. The presentation of Jesus in the Temple took place 40 days after his birth. For us 40 days after Christmas Day falls on February 2, but it is celebrated in church on the Sunday nearest that date. Candlemas is a watershed in the church year, it marks the point at which we take a last look back at Christmas and then turn our minds firmly towards the

Easter cross. We have been working through the Sundays of Epiphany, now we leave them behind and soon it will be Lent, for this reason it has been called a 'bitter-sweet Sunday.' This feast of Candlemas which we celebrate today can be traced to at least 543. The Feast of Lighted candles is mentioned by Bede and St. Eligius, who was bishop of Noyon from 640 to 648.

Let's look at the history behind this festival

So today we remember Jesus as just 40 days old and taken to the Temple by Mary, as ordered by the Jewish Law. Here is the commandment from Leviticus Chapter 12 and starting at verse 1. It is worth quoting in full because it puts our readings and the service today into historical perspective.

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.' "When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood. "These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean."

What this passage tells us is that according to Jewish law, women were considered unclean after the birth of a child and were not permitted to enter the Temple to worship. This state of uncleanness lasted 40 days after the birth of a son and 80 days after the birth of a daughter. At the end of the 40 or 80 days, the mother was brought to the Temple or synagogue and ritually purified. After this she could once again attend religious services and go out in public.

Since Jesus was a boy, it was 40 days after Mary gave birth that she attended at the Temple to bring a sacrifice. Now we are led to understand from Luke, that Mary did not bring a year old lamb, the reading mentions 'a pair of doves or two young pigeons,' one for a burnt offering and the other for

a sin offering. This implies that Mary presented the option for poorer people, so we may suppose that Joseph and Mary were not very wealthy. Nevertheless as faithful Jews they did their religious duty and observed the Law of Moses when it came to such things as childbirth, circumcision, and other rituals.

Luke is careful to point out that Jesus was a Jew who had his roots in the Old Testament. But clearly in this passage we see that Luke makes the point that with Jesus there is more than just a following of the old order of law.

Candlemas is a time when we remember the old recognised Jesus, who brings in the new. Luke shows that the story of Jesus was confirmed by two prophets, Simeon and Anna, who spoke of Jesus under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We have this marvellous story of Simeon to whom it had been revealed "that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord." Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and spoke the beautiful words which we know as the The Nunc Dimittis Luke 2:29. For me it has to be in the King James Version

*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

Simeon says that God is setting him free as a slave is granted liberty. He is now free to die (for the Spirit's revelation to him is now fulfilled), and Israel is free of bondage. God has saved Israel, as he promised to "all peoples". God's salvation is for Gentiles as well as Israel. The old could pass away because the new had come and the future for us all would be safe in his hands.

But, Simeon finishes with some disturbing words. This marvellous salvation through Jesus had a dark side. Not everyone will take kindly to Jesus, there will be a falling as well as a arising of many in Israel. Jesus will be a sign that will be spoken against, he will cause a crisis in Israel. Decisions will have to be made for him or against him. The sword of Jesus will divide, discriminate, and judge the thoughts, attitudes, and relationships of all people. Mary the mother of Jesus will go through the same crisis, everyone must decide what to do with Jesus. Simeon recognised something special in Jesus and he knew that he had indeed seen the Lord's Christ, and that young or old he could depart in peace, for the eyes of faith had seen God's salvation: perhaps

not the salvation he was expecting, the vindication of a particular people: but something bigger and better, the salvation which God had prepared before the face of all people.

SERMON STARTER

The readings share this theme: an unexpected visit by the Lord challenges comfortable ritual practices:

- Malachi predicts a sudden and painful (as hot as a metalworker's fire; as caustic as lye) reform for lax priests.
- Simeon welcomes a more peaceful transition for himself, a retirement from Temple service and eventual death, since what he had been awaiting is now fulfilled.
- Hebrews is about seeing in Jesus a superior substitute for rituals, and their supporting institutions, from which people have been abruptly cut off.

The question for our congregation: How would a sudden, unexpected visit from the Lord challenge the practices in which we have grown comfortable? In religious life, it is certainly easy to become complacent with arrangements and practices once established. This applies at the congregational level to our Sunday rituals, to our congregational governance, and to the presence we exercise in our larger communities. If the Lord came today for an unannounced inspection, would we pass muster in the area of vigorous worship, parish and diocesan self-administration, zealous mission and witness to the rest of the world?

The question for each individual: Are we as faithful when life presents us new challenges as we are habitual when things go along steadily.

Just as the priest Jesus needed to experience temptation, our devotions and rituals need to be grounded in life's messy and ambiguous experiences.

The priests in question today are all of us, not just the ordained ministers, of course.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Presentation

By Archbishop Tutu in Southwark Cathedral

<http://www.jmm.org.au/articles/12039.htm>

Collect commentary

Excellent explanation of intent and background of the collect for today - by
The Prayer Book Society

http://www.pbs.org.uk/bcp/commentary_detail.php?CommentaryID=14

CHILDREN

Ministry to Children

Basic Bible lesson with simple activities on story of Simeon and Anna.

<http://ministry-to-children.com/baby-jesus-presented-in-the-temple-lesson/>

A special baby

<http://thechildrens-sermon.com/luke2.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

I will sing I will sing

Come on and celebrate

Faithful vigil ended

When we walk with the Lord

I want to walk with Jesus Christ

In His Temple Now Behold Him

(May be sung to "Angels from the Realms of Glory")

O God of God, O Light of Light

Who Is the King of Glory

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

REFRAIN

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has pow'r to save us.

Make us your living voice. REFRAIN

3. Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed. REFRAIN

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stone.

REFRAIN

5. Many the gifts, many the people,

many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another, making your kingdom come. REFRAIN

Come on and celebrate

His gift of love, we will celebrate

The Son of God who loved us

And gave us life.

We'll shout Your praise, O King,

You give us joy nothing else can bring,

We'll give to You our offering

In celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate,

Celebrate,

Celebrate and sing,

Celebrate and sing to the King.

Come on and celebrate,

Celebrate,

Celebrate and sing,

Celebrate and sing to the King.

The light of Christ has come into the world;

the light of Christ has come into the world.

1 All men must be born again to see the Kingdom of God;

the water and the Spirit bring new life in God's love.

Chorus

2 God gave up His only Son out of love for the world;

so that all men who believe in Him will live for ever.

Chorus

3 The light of God has come to us so that we might have salvation;

from the darkness of our sins we walk into glory with Christ Jesus.

Chorus

1 Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;

ponder nothing earthly-minded, for with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.

2 King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture-in the Body and the Blood-
he will give to all the faithful his own self for heavenly food.

3 Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth from the realms of endless day,
that the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away.

4 At his feet the six-winged Seraph; cherubim with sleepless eye
veil their faces to the Presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Lord most high.

*Liturgy of St James, Anonymous Greek, Sigesato pasa sarx broteia
translated*

Gerard Moultrie (1829-85). Tune Picardy

I want to walk with Jesus Christ all the days I live of this life on earth;

to give to Him complete control of body and of soul.

Follow Him, follow Him, yield your life to Him

He has conquered death, He is King of Kings;

accept the joy which He gives to those

who yield their lives to Him

I want to learn to speak to Him, to pray to Him, confess my sin,
to open my life and let Him in, for joy will then be mine.

I want to learn to speak of Him - my life must show that He lives in me;
my deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak all of His love for me.

I want to learn to read His word, for this is how I know the way,
to live my life as pleases Him, in holiness and joy.

O Holy Spirit of the Lord, enter now into this heart of mine;
take full control of my selfish will and make me wholly Thine!