
The Cathedral Observes the Feast of the Presentation!

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by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral*
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The feast day has gone by many different names, but the Christian Church has long observed the holy character of February 2, roughly forty days after Christmas. It is the Feast of the Presentation. Tradition says that the holy family of Jesus presented the child in the temple, for the first time, forty days after his birth (thus, around 40 days after December 25).

According to the Gospel of Luke, there were prophets in the temple, waiting for the child. Old Simeon broke out in song, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for these eyes of mine have seen the savior!" Old Anna, a widow, joined him in praise.

Since then, many traditions have blossomed. Candles have come to be used in Christian churches for this event, especially in the northern hemisphere when winter is at its deepest this time of year. So, the popular name, Candlemas, has also been given to this feast.

It is a glorious feast, coming as it does in the middle of winter, when we wonder about whether spring will come again, about whether things will grow. We wonder, too, about the growth of a savior, and about the growth of our salvation. The Lucan passage describing the event says that, "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40). At the Feast of the Presentation, we marvel at the growth of all children!

Again this year, the Cathedral of St. Philip will observe this feast on the Sunday after February 2, which is this Sunday, February 4! At all our services, the Cathedral will be observing the Feast of the Presentation. Further, following another old tradition, we will use this day to bless all the candles of the Cathedral!

Here in Atlanta, we continue a new feature of Candlemas. Bring your own candles! We invite you to bring your own household candles! Bring whatever candles from home that you want to bring, and we will bless those candles, too!

At various points throughout our lives, each of us presents ourselves to God. This Sunday, we present ourselves again, in the "temple," in our glorious cathedral space. We will be welcoming light in the world, and we will be presenting ourselves in the temple of God! And, in the deepest part of winter, we will be encouraging the growth of light. Saint Paul, too, talked about presentation; he said, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).

Yes, I realize that some people, yearning for light and the end of winter this week, will be depending upon ... a groundhog! Others may be depending upon the Super Bowl to provide excitement. Those events are fine. But, that will not be us in the Christian Church. We will be depending upon, and celebrating, the Light of Christ this week! On February 2, and on February 4! We will light candles. We will bring the Light of Christ to the world!



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