

HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH METCALFE, ON.
FEBRUARY 6, 2022
Let The Light Shine
Candlemas Sunday
Reverend Michael Fleming

Fr. Michael: As we gather this day in our homes and celebrate the gift of Candlemas, we acknowledge that our parish and the places where we dwell lie on the unceded territory of the Ashanabee Algonquin peoples.

People: **May we dwell together in peace, harmony and in the light of true reconciliation.**

Fr. Michael: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Sisters and brothers in the Lord, forty days ago, we celebrated the birth of Jesus. Now we remember the day when he was presented in the Temple, following the traditions of his faith when he was presented and offered to God and shown to God's people. In their old age, Simeon and Anna recognized the infant as their and our Lord. Today, we celebrate the joy we feel knowing that Jesus came among us as gift from God and remembering that he said, "Be not afraid – I will come again." Almighty God, whose Son Jesus was presented in the Temple and acclaimed to be the Light of the world. Grant that in him we may be presented to you and may be used in the world to reflect your love and your glory; through Jesus Christ, the Light of the World who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and always. Amen

Lord Jesus, light of all nations and the glory of all the children of God; make your home among us and present us pure and holy to your heavenly Father, your God and our God. Amen

Fr. Michael: The Lord is the strength of my life.

People: **The Lord is my light and my salvation.**

Fr. Michael: Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

People: **A light which no darkness can ever overcome.**

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

(from Germinate The Arthur Rank Centre adapted by RMF)

Fr. Michael: Since the Fourth Century, the Christian Church has celebrated the presentation of Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem. This, the ritual of the Redemption of the First-born, was a standard practice of the Jewish community wherein the firstborn male child in a family was dedicated before the Lord some forty days following his circumcision and was also the recognition that the mother was now officially "purified" from her labour and childbirth. Our gospel for today tells the story of the encounter between the infant Jesus and two servants of the Temple, Anna and Simeon and over the centuries, to this remembrance was added the blessing of candles of the year. While we are unable to do that this year because of COVID restrictions, we will light a few candles as symbols of this tradition which has been practiced in the Church since about the sixth century on February 2.

We will light EIGHT candles as symbols of our dedication and commitment to our Lord Jesus as the Light of the world.

Fr. Michael: We are in the light, the love and the glory of the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

People: **May all our lights together become one flame that warms the world to Christ**

Fr. Michael: We light this first candle to represent the Paschal Candle in our sacred space at Holy Trinity which reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the world for all the people of the world. Christ is our Light.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord.**

Fr. Michael: We light the candle of HOPE to remind us that Jesus scatters the darkness of the world which surrounds us.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord.**

Fr. Michael: We light the candle of LOVE to remind us that Jesus is the light that shows us the way to the Father.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord.**

Fr. Michael: We light this candle of TRUTH to remind us that Jesus is the light that leads us to eternal life.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord.**

Fr. Michael: We light this candle of WONDER to remind us that the Good News is that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord.**

Fr. Michael: We light the candle of WITNESS to iterate that Jesus said that WE are the light of the world and that we are to let our light shine before others.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord.**

Fr. Michael: We light the candle of SERVICE to impel us to be a serving community, sharing our light and faith for healing, reconciliation and peace wherever we go.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord.**

Fr. Michael: We light this candle in our homes and will bear them to our spiritual home at Holy Trinity to be lit together when we are able as sign and symbol of our unity as the light of Christ. May our collective light burst through the darkness and cause the Dance of Life to begin once again.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord.**

Fr. Michael: God our Father, whose Son was revealed to Anna and Simeon as the light of all 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. Let the flame of your love never be quenched in our hearts, O Lord. Let the flame of your love brighten our souls and illuminate our path, and let the majesty of your glory be our joy, our life and our strength, now and forever. Amen.

Fr. Michael: O God, who in the working of creation, commanded the light to shine out into the darkness; we pray that the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ may shine into the hearts of all your children, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and disbelief and revealing to them the knowledge of your glory in the face and heart of Jesus. Amen

Fr. Michael: Christ is our Light.

People: **Illuminate and guide us, O Lord. Alleluia!**

Fr. Michael: Lord God, you are the source of everlasting light. Your Son, our beloved Jesus Christ was presented in the Temple forty days after his birth. He was recognized 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 days and make your name known as we worship you as our Lord and Saviour and so come through your grace to eternal life. Amen

Fr. Michael: Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your Word has been fulfilled.

Reader: My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared before the face of all people.

Fr. Michael: a light to reveal you to the nations, and the glory of your people Israel.

Reader: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen

Reader: The First Reading: Malachi 3: 1-4

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap.

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Heavenly Father, thank you for your goodness and grace towards all people. Thank you that you have told us the end from the very beginning through faithful servants like Malachi; thank you for fulfilling your promises to your people Israel and that your precious promises to your Church are all “yes’ and “amen” in Jesus.

Psalm 84

Fr. Michael: How lovely are all the places of your dwelling, El Shaddai. My souls faints with longing for the beauty of your presence; my whole being shouts for joy to you, O Living God.

Reader: **Even the sparrow finds a home in your presence and the swallow finds a place to build her nest for herself where she may lay her young – on your very altars, El Shaddai. Blessed are all the creatures who dwell in your presence, always singing your praise.**

Fr. Michael: And blessed are the men and women who find their strength in you, whose hearts are your houses of worship. As they go through the valley of weeping, they turn it into a place of wellsprings. Blessings shower upon them like the Spring rain. Because they are able to see your holiness everywhere, they go onward from strength to strength.

Reader: **A day in your presence, O God, is better than a thousand far from you. I would rather serve you in small and humble ways than live in luxury and power among the wicked.**

Fr. Michael: You are a God of grace and glory, shielding and enlightening us . You hold nothing from those who act justly. El Shaddai, blessed is the one who relies on you
(from Swallow’s Nest by Marchienne Vroon Trienstra adapted by RMF)

Reader: the Second Reading: Hebrews 2: 14-18

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their

lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Holy Gospel

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the blessed St. Luke (Luke 2:22-40)

People: **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord", and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on

him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Fr. Michael: The Gospel of Christ.

People: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Homily - YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

It was the summer of 74 at the end of my first year in seminary and I had been hired by the diocese and the Ottawa Board of Education to develop a curriculum on Religious Education to be used in the elementary schools under the Board's jurisdiction. I was instructed that it was not to be sectarian but deal with all world religions. As I began to look carefully at the major world religions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and a few

of the lesser known faiths like Bahai and Taoism, I asked myself a simple question- what do all these expressions of faith have in common, if anything? The more I delved, the clearer the answer became – there are certain symbols and images which seem to be common as ways of expressing faith ideas and helping proponents of that faith tell their story. It was a great summer and at the end of August, I gave the completed programme to the Board where it went “poof”, never to see (as far as I know) the light of day. Why that happened remains a mystery to me, but the good thing is that the work I did then became the impetus and foundation for my Master’s thesis which was to look at the past, present and future of Religious Education in the Public School System of Ontario.

What I did discover was the presence of universal symbols and the one which was most prevalent was that of LIGHT. In the Judeo-Christian story, from first to last, there is light . From the opening words in Genesis, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was formless and void and darkness was over the face of the deep and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light’, and there was light. God saw that the light was good and God divided the light from the darkness”...to the ending of the Revelation to John which reads, “ They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night, and they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. They will reign for ever and ever.”

Today, we celebrate and remember the encounter between Anna and Simeon and the infant Jesus in the Temple. As I mentioned at the time when we lit the candles at the beginning of our service today, by the sixth century, the Church had decided that this would be a good day to bring the candles to be used in the coming year to the community to be blessed to honour the witness of Anna and of Simeon, and named this Sunday, CANDLEMAS.

Today, we remember the meeting of the old and the new. Simeon was an old old man who had once been a beloved priest of the Temple, one who had been faithful to Torah and who had been the celebrant at so many of the great festivals and rituals associated with the Holy Mount and the very heart of the Jewish faith. Anna, his wife, was just as old and had spent her life helping women who came. as did Mary this day, to undergo the ritual purification after childbirth and to enact the Redemption of the First-born. Because of their faithful service, Anna and Simeon were granted a living place within the confines of the Temple until their days were over. It was Anna who greeted the new mothers as they arrived in the Court of the Women, who brought them to the sacred baths or mikvah, who prayed over and with the women as they entered the waters of purification and who declared that they were now, in the eyes of the faith, ritually clean. Simeon carried the infant Jesus in his arms as the ritual of dedication of the firstborn son took place and the words of Exodus prescribed, “ After the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you as he promised to you and to your forebearers, you are to give over to the Lord the first offspring of the womb. All the firstborn males belong to him.” It was Simeon who, as the ceremony took place, was overwhelmed by the light of truth and, looking into the eyes of the infant who lay in his arms, had a revelation and said, “Lord, now let this your servant die in peace, for I have seen the salvation which you have promised to all the people. A light to enlighten the Gentiles and the hope of your children Israel” as he new saw that the young child in his arms was not the son

of a carpenter from Nazareth, but the long-promised and long-awaited Messiah, the Son of the Living God. For Simeon the long journey of his life now could end for him with peace, because he had seen the met the Light of the world.

And so, we celebrate Candlemas and focus on the powerfilled symbol of light. As we do this, we need to remember something that Jesus said so long ago which has flashed through time and space and meets us in this here and now, After he returned from his encounter with the totality of darkness and evil in the wilderness after his baptism, Jesus began to walk a new path – the highway of the Lord through the desert places of the world and of the heart, healing and teaching and dancing and weeping and laughing with all who had ears to hear him. Word of his mighty work for Yahweh spread and when it became known that he would be passing through the area near the Sea of Galilee, a large crowd of men, women and children, Jew and Gentile, slave and free waited for him. Some came to be healed, some to be blessed and some probably came just so they could say later in life, “I was there: I saw him”. Seeing the crowd, Jesus sat and began to share with them the keys and conditions for participating in the blessed and glorious peaceable kingdom his Father promised. He opened his heart and his mouth and said, “Blessed are the pure in spirit...” and proceeded to articulate how those on the side of the hill could be inheritors of the kingdom of light and love. He spoken of all the blessedness which would come by walking in the light: he employed all the power of that symbol, reminding them that they were the children of the Light of Creation; that the God of light was in their midst, surrounding them with power and the possibilities of miracles abounding; he spoke to them of their call to be “the good guys”, aligned with the Voice and power of the God of light and to dance in the gifting of Yahweh; of walking down the roadway which was flooded with the light of God’s hope for the world, eating and drinking of the wisdom and enlightenment which flowed with utter and total abandon from the heart of creation; that they were the bearers of the hope and the truth of God to the world and ended with this wondrous statement- after describing in general those who could inherit this kingdom of light, Jesus now looked his audience in the eye and said, “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then buries it under a basket but puts it on a lampstand where it gives light to everyone and everything in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven.”

Today, let us affirm that: WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD...WE ARE NAMED AS THE BLESSED OF THE FATHER IF THROUGH OUR WORDS AND DEEDS, THE LIGHT OF GOD’S LOVE AND TRUTH SHINES IN THE DARKNESS; WE ARE THE LIGHT WHEN WE SHINE THE FLAME OF JUSTICE BEFORE THE FACES OF EVIL THAT TRY TO CONVINCING US THAT THE WAYS OF DARKNESS ARE THE WAYS THINGS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.

And let us remember just one other thing he said, “You are going to have the light just a little longer. Walk while you have the light. The one who walks in the dark does not know where they are going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become children of the Light.”

Amen

Fr. Michael: As we gather around this Candlemas light, let us affirm the faith of our baptism wherein we received the Light of Christ as we say,

People: **We believe in one God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen**

Reader: God of every valley, we confess to you that many of us are still in valleys – valleys of chronic depression, valleys of physical and emotional illness, valleys of divorce and domestic violence, valleys of unemployment and underemployment, valleys of racial oppression and ethnic warfare, valleys of homelessness and incarceration. We confess that there are many parts of our lives that need to be lifted up. Your prophet Malachi reminded us of our need for purification, our need for your aggressive attention to our shortcomings and brokenness. Come, refining God and mold us into a people willing to partner with you to usher in your kingdom where the low and the mighty are brought together.

Fr. Michael: **Hear us and guide us, Lord of Light and Love.**

Reader: God of every mountain, we also confess that many of us are on mountains - mountains of racial privilege, mountains of disproportionate financial wealth, mountains of stigmatizing mental illness, mountains of consumerism, mountains of apathy, ignorance or stubbornness. We confess that there are many parts of our lives that need to be “taken down a notch”. Your prophet John the Baptist came from the wilderness proclaiming a baptism for the repentance of sin.

Help us to listen to the voice of any prophet that turns us to you and away from our sinfulness. Help us to welcome your levelling kingdom whether we are in valleys or on mountains or both.

Fr. Michael: **Hear us and guide us, Lord of Light and Love.**

Reader: God of the plains in which we dwell, be with all your children, whatever the strength of their faith or the health of their bodies. Guide us along right pathways and lead us home into your Light and your Love. Be present today, Lord, with those for whom we pray including St. James, Otter Lake and all who minister there, as well as for all Regional Deans in our diocese. In our Companion Diocese of Jerusalem, we pray for Christ Church, Nazareth, Israel. We pray for all in our parish family especially Marjorie, Irene, Howard, Kirsten, Roy, Zachariah, Jeanette, and Cheryl. Help us to realize that peace never happens on its own. Give us wisdom to accept that the pursuit of your peace which passes all understanding requires that some things need to be brought down and that other things need to be raised up. No matter the status of our lives, help us to welcome you into our lives as we continue to wait on your Child, our Hope and our Salvation.

Fr. Michael: **May God, Father, Son and Spirit like a mother hen shelter us beneath her wings and give us peace, love and hope this day and always. Amen**

Fr. Michael: Jesus not only gifted his community with the love and grace of His Father, he also gifted his Church with prayer. As the inheritors of Jesus' truth, we pray

Reader: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Fr. Michael: O day of God, draw nigh in beauty and power; come with your timeless judgment now to match our present hour. Bring to our troubled minds, uncertain and afraid, the quiet of a steadfast faith, the calm of a call obeyed. Bring justice to our land, that all may dwell secure, and finely build for days to come foundations that endure.

Bring to our world of strife your sovereign word of peace, that war may haunt the world no more and desolation cease. O day of God, draw nigh as at creation's birth, let there be light again and set your judgments in the earth. Amen

(R.B.Y.Scott from Swallow's Nest)

Reader: Let the flame of your love never be quenched in our hearts, O Lord. Waking or sleeping, living or dying, let us delight and dance in your presence. Let the flame of your love brighten our souls and illuminate our path and let the majesty of your glory be our joy, our life and our strength now and forever. Amen

(Johannes Arndt, 1555-1621)

Fr. Michael: Let us all hasten to meet Christ, we who honour and venerate the divine mystery that we celebrate today. Everyone should be eager to join the procession today; let no one refuse to carry the 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 your eternal light. Our candles show how bright our soul should be when we go to meet Christ.

The God – bearer, the most pure Virgin Mary, 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 One True Light as we hasten to meet Him.

(Sophronius of Jerusalem 560 -638)

Fr. Michael: Go in the peace of Christ, the love of God and the Light of the Holy Spirit. Be light to someone's darkness this week and dwell with them in the warmth, love and joy of the kingdom which is coming among us. And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be among us and dwell within you this week and always. Amen

Announcements, and Celebrations

Holy Trinity Vestry Meeting - February 20 - more details next week

Worship follows the Holy Eucharist in the Book of Alternative Services.

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