

## Homily for February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017

### The Feast of Candlemas

Today is the Feast of Candlemas. Although we do not enact the liturgy of the Candles here at St. Peter's, it has been a custom in the church since the 12<sup>th</sup> century to bless candles and process with them on this day.

The symbol of the candle within Catholic practice has always been an expression of our faith because candles symbolize the importance of light, patience and solidarity as we journey through this earthly life.

In today's Gospel, as Jesus is presented in the Jerusalem Temple, we hear the old man Simeon sing of Jesus that he is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel".

Light is so important and something we can so easily take for granted because we just assume that it will always be there. Think of how different our lives would be if we did not have artificial light. Think how in the winter people are affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), due in part to the increased hours of darkness. Conversely think how gleeful we can be as the day light hours increase.

How too, we can take for granted Jesus as the light of the world. But imagine what the world would be like if the Lord had not come. The fullness of God's revelation would never have been manifested, we would still be in our sins and life would be kind of like a continual November, grey and monotone. But because Jesus is the light of the World and has come we too can know that peace of which Simeon sings when he exclaimed:

*"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace... for my eyes have seen your salvation"*

Seeing the light that is Jesus gave light to Simeon's soul with the peace that ensues from such centred faith.

Candles also symbolize the importance of patience. Think of how beeswax is made. The wax is made by young bees less than 17 days old. The wax is secreted from glands that gradually atrophy as the bee ages and begins foraging. Therefore the bees must be young. The bees gorge themselves on nectar that has been stored in the colony. They rest for 24 hours while their bodies metabolize the wax. They scurry around searching for a place in the hive that needs work. The bee has eight tiny slits on her abdomen where tiny moist scales of wax emerge. Using one of her rear legs armed with spiky tongs the bee takes a flake at a time, chews it to soften it and places it on the honeycomb cell. Each added bit of wax is smoothed and polished. Then she moves to where more wax is needed.

The life lived in Jesus is purposeful and patiently lived. Think of how purposeful Mary and Joseph were in taking Jesus to the Temple forty days after his birth in fulfilment of the Mosaic Law. Think how purposeful Anna was as day by day she went to the Temple living a life of centred prayer and devotion. So too for us as we live focused because Jesus the light of the world gives a patient, purposeful and daily pattern to our lives that requires the patience of bees making honey comb.

Light, patience and finally solidarity is what I want to consider with you on this Feast of Candlemas. The only reason we have beeswax is because in the order of nature these young bees know how to work together. If they were not united in purpose we would have no honey nor candles that have that wonderful honey scent. Their solidarity produces this solid material called beeswax.

So too with us as people of faith, we see in Jesus the one that unites us. It is because our faith is more than just our individual profession but is also the Profession of the Church that we can be encouraged and inspired to keep believing in a world where there is also a united front that would dismiss the necessity of faith in the modern world.

As has always been the case, and is still today, Jesus is destined for the fall and rising of many people and is a sign that will be opposed. But such opposition can never ultimately thwart the purposes of God because to be Catholic means to be part of the whole, that movement of solidarity that brings to the world the sweet fragrance of grace and light that no wind of agnostic or atheistic skepticism can extinguish.

On this Candlemas day may we celebrate that Jesus is the Light of the World, a light that allows us to patiently and unitedly live for Jesus with a purpose like that of those young bees that provide the wax that enhance our lives with beautiful candles.