

This was the Peace so looked forward to by Simeon, and now, in this Peace will he sleep. Now, O Lord, as he says in his Canticle, thou dost dismiss thy servant, according to thy word, in Peace! His soul, quitting its bond of the flesh, will now hasten to the bosom of Abraham, and bear to the elect, who rest there, the tidings that Peace has appeared on the earth, and will soon open heaven. Anna has some years still to pass on earth; as the Evangelist tells us, she has to go and announce the fulfilment of the promises to such of the Jews as were spiritually minded, and looked for the Redemption of Israel. The divine seed is sown; the Shepherds, the Magi, Simeon, and Anna, have all been its sowers; it will spring up in due time; and when Jesus has spent his thirty years of hidden life in Nazareth, and shall come for the harvest time, he will say to his Disciples: Lift up your eyes, and see the countries, for they are white already for the harvest: pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he send labourers into his harvest.

Simeon gives back to Mary the Child she is going to offer to the Lord. The two Doves are presented to the Priest, who sacrifices them on the Altar; the price for the ransom is paid; the whole law is satisfied; and, after having paid her homage to her Creator in this sacred place, where she spent her early years, Mary, with Jesus fast pressed to her bosom, and her faithful Joseph by her side, leaves the Temple.

Such is the mystery of this fortieth day, which closes, by this admirable Feast of the Purification, the holy season of Christmas. Several learned writers, among whom we may mention Henschenius and Pope Benedict the Fourteenth, are of the opinion that this Solemnity was instituted by the Apostles themselves. This much is certain, that it was a long-established Feast already in the fifth century.

The Greek Church and the Church of Milan count this Feast among those of our Lord; but the Church of Rome has always considered it as a Feast of the Blessed Virgin. It is true, it is our Saviour who is this day offered in the Temple; but this offering is the consequence of our Lady's Purification. The most ancient of the Western Martyrologies and Calendars call it The Purification. The honour thus paid by the Church to the Mother, tends to the greater glory of her Divine Son, for He is the Author and the End of all those prerogatives which we revere and honour in Mary.



## February 2021 Calendar

1	St Ignatius of Antioch.	8am
<b>2</b>	<b>Candlemas (Purification of the BVM)</b>	<b>11am</b>
3	Feria	8am
4	St Andrew Corsini	8am & 11am
5	St Agatha (First Friday)	8am
6	St Titus (First Saturday)	11am
<b>7</b>	<b>Sexagesima Sunday</b> <b>Bristol: 9am Mass &amp; 11am Mass</b> <b>Taunton: 11am;</b>	
8	St John of Matha	8am
9	St Cyril of Alexandria	8am
10	St Scholastica	8am
11	Apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes	8am & 11am
12	Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order	8am
13	BVM on Saturday	8am & 11am
<b>14</b>	<b>Quinquagesima Sunday</b> <b>Bristol: 9am Mass &amp; 11am Mass</b> <b>Taunton: 11am; Holnest: 4pm</b>	
15	Feria	8am
16	Feria	8am
<b>17</b>	<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	<b>11am</b>
18	Feria	8am & 11am
19	Feria	8am
20	Feria	8am & 11am
<b>21</b>	<b>1st Sunday of Lent</b> <b>Bristol: 9am Mass &amp; 11am Mass</b> <b>Taunton: 11am; Holnest: 4pm</b>	
22	Chair of St Peter	8am
23	Feria	8am
24	St Matthias	8am
25	Feria	8am & 11am
26	Ember Friday	8am
27	Ember Saturday	8am & 11am
<b>28</b>	<b>2nd Sunday of Lent</b> <b>Bristol: 9am Mass &amp; 11am Mass</b> <b>Taunton: 11am; Holnest: 4pm</b>	



## THE CLOISTER

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Dear Faithful,

During this lockdown it is a great moment to spend some time contemplating the stability of the church as opposed to the instability of the world: *'Stat crux, dum volvitur orbis'*, – *'whilst the world goes around'* (with its worldly worries cares and oddities), *'the Cross stands'* and stays, as a symbol of stability and sanity! The church of Christ is immaculate and indefectible in herself, although not necessarily and quite rarely in the members of the church. The stability of the church is reflected very clearly in the yearly cycle of the liturgy, which is also stable, unchanging and constant in bringing to us the mysteries of Our Lord's birth, life, holiness, miracles, teaching and the Redemption He offers to us. These scenes represented to us in the liturgy are the scenes which will be an anchor to us through the vicissitudes of this life, this vale of tears. as we call it imploringly to the mother of God. The Mass, the sacraments and the liturgy offer a light in the darkness, a message of hope and joy and the promise of an eternity of happiness together with God our Creator in Heaven. Who can fail to be uplifted by the scenes of Our Lord's life and the words of guidance, encouragement and hope given by His teaching whilst here upon the earth?

In this month on the 2nd of February, we commemorate the beautiful scene in the life of Our Lord of the presentation in the temple and the purification of Our Lady. This is a very ancient feast and Dom Gueranger in his 'Liturgical year' has given us an excellent explanation of the it. We reproduce here some to his thoughts which are beautiful, uplifting and thought provoking.

If we follow the liturgy, we follow the pattern of Our Lord's life. If we follow Our Lord's life, we will be inspired to be like Him, and this is where holiness truly lies - in being like Our Lord and imitating Him. He is the first born of all creatures and our role model in all things. Let us contemplate Him and imitate Him and find both our stability in an uncertain world and the true meaning of life in Him.

God Bless, Fr. John McLaughlin

**Dom Granger on the Blessing of the Candles:**

To give uniformity to the three great Blessings of the year, the Church prescribes for that of the Candles the same colour for the vestments of the sacred Ministers, as is used in the two other Blessings of the Ashes and Palms—namely Purple. Thus, this solemn function, which is inseparable from the day on which our Lady's Purification took place, may be gone through every year on the 2nd of February without changing the colour prescribed for the three Sundays of Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima

The mystery of today's ceremony has frequently been explained by liturgists, dating from the 7th century. According to St. Ivo of Chartres, the wax, which is formed from the juice of flowers by the bee (which has always been considered as the emblem of virginity), signifies the virginal flesh of the Divine Infant, who diminished not, either by his conception or his birth, the spotless purity of his Blessed Mother. The same holy Bishop would have us see, in the flame of our Candle, a symbol of Jesus, who came to enlighten our darkness. St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking on the same mystery, bids us consider three things in the blessed Candle: the Wax, the Wick, and the Flame. The Wax, he says, which is the production of the virginal bee, is the Flesh of Our Lord; the Wick, which is within, is his Soul; the Flame, which burns on the top, is his Divinity.

Formerly, the Faithful looked upon it as an honour to be permitted to bring their wax tapers to the Church, on this Feast of the Purification, that they might be blessed together with those, which were to be borne in the procession by the Priests and sacred Ministers; and the same custom is still observed in some congregations. It would be well if Pastors were to encourage this practice, retaining it where it exists, or establishing it where it is not known. There has been such a systematic effort made to destroy or, at least, to impoverish the exterior rites and practices of religion, that we find, throughout the world, thousands of Christians who have been insensibly made strangers to those admirable sentiments of faith, which the Church alone, in her Liturgy, can give to the body of the Faithful. Thus, we shall be telling many what they have never heard before, when we inform them, that the Church blesses the Candles today, not only to be carried in the Procession, which forms part of the ceremony, but, also, for the use of the Faithful, since they draw, upon such as use them with respect, whether on sea or on land, (as the Church says in the Prayer), special blessings from heaven. These blessed Candles ought, also, to be lit near the bed of the dying Christian, as a symbol of the immortality merited for us by Christ, and of the protection of our Blessed Lady.

**Dom Gueranger on Candlemas:**

The Forty Days of Mary's Purification are now completed, and she must go up to the Temple, there to offer to God her Child Jesus. Before following the Son and his Mother in this their mysterious journey, let us spend our last few moments at Bethlehem, in lovingly pondering over the mysteries at which we are going to assist.

The Law commanded that a woman who had given birth to a son should not approach the Tabernacle for the term of forty days, after which time she was to offer up a lamb as a holocaust, and a turtledove as a sin offering. But if she were poor, and could not provide a lamb, she was to offer, in its stead, a second turtledove.

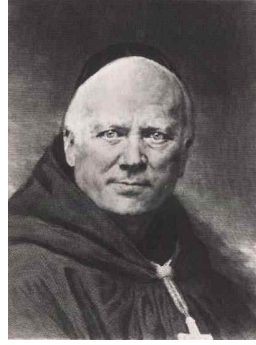
By another ordinance of the Law, every first-born son was to be considered as belonging to God, and was to be redeemed by five sicles, each sicle weighing, according to the standard of the Temple, twenty obols.

Mary was a Daughter of Israel – she had given birth to Jesus – he was her First-born Son. Could such a Mother, and such a Son, be included in the Laws we have just quoted? Was it becoming that Mary should observe them?

If she considered the spirit of these legal enactments, and why God required the ceremony of Purification, it was evident that she was not bound to them. They, for whom these Laws had been made, were espoused to men; – Mary was the chaste Spouse of the Holy Ghost, a Virgin in conceiving, and a Virgin in giving Birth to, her Son; her purity had ever been spotless as that of the Angels – but it received an incalculable increase by her carrying the God of all sanctity in her womb and bringing him into this world. Moreover, when she reflected upon her Child being the Creator and sovereign Lord of all things – how could she suppose that he was to be submitted to the humiliation of being ransomed as a slave, whose life and person are not his own?

And yet, the Holy Ghost revealed to Mary, that she must comply with both these Laws. She, the holy Mother of God, must go to the Temple like other Hebrew mothers, as though she had lost something which needed restoring by a legal sacrifice. He, that is the Son of God and Son of Man, must be treated in all things as though, he were a servant, and be ransomed in common with the poorest Jewish boy. Mary adores the will of God and embraces it with her whole heart. The Son of God was not to be made known to the world but by gradual revelations. For thirty years, he leads a hidden life in the insignificant village of Nazareth; and during all that time, men took him to be the son of Joseph. It was only in his thirtieth year that John the Baptist announced him, and then only in mysterious words, to the Jews, who flocked to the Jordan, there to receive from the Prophet the baptism of penance.

Our Lord himself gave the next revelation—the testimony of his wonderful works and miracles. Then came the humiliations of his Passion and Death, followed by his glorious Resurrection, which testified to the truth of his prophecies, proved the infinite merits of his Sacrifice, and, in a word, proclaimed his Divinity. The earth has possessed its



God and its Saviour for three-and-thirty years, and men, with a few exceptions, knew it not. The Shepherds of Bethlehem knew it; but they were not told, as were afterwards the Fishermen of Gennesaret, to go and preach the Word to the furthest parts of the world. The Magi, too, knew it; they came to Jerusalem and spoke of it, and the City was in a commotion; but all was soon forgotten, and the Three Kings went back quietly to the East. These two events (which would, at a future day, be celebrated by the Church as events

of most important interest to mankind), were lost upon the world, and the only ones that appreciated them were a few true Israelites who had been living in expectation of a Messiah, who was to be poor and humble, and was to save the world. The majority of the Jews would not even listen to the Messiah's having been born; for Jesus was born at Bethlehem, and the Prophets had distinctly foretold that the Messiah was to be called a Nazarene.

The same Divine plan – which had required that Mary should be espoused to Joseph, in order that her fruitful Virginity might not seem strange in the eyes of the people – now obliged her to come, like other Israelite mothers, to offer the sacrifice of Purification, for the Birth of the Son, whom she had conceived by the operation of the power of the Holy Ghost, but who was to be presented in the Temple as the Son of Mary, the Spouse of Joseph. Thus it is, that Infinite Wisdom delights in showing that his thoughts are not our thoughts, and in disconcerting our notions; he claims the submissiveness of our confidence, until the time come that he has fixed for withdrawing the veil and showing himself to our astonished view.

The Divine Will was dear to Mary in this as in every circumstance of her life. The Holy Virgin knew, that by seeking this external rite of Purification, she was in no wise risking the honour of her Child or failing in the respect due to her own Virginity. She was in the Temple of Jerusalem what she was in the house of Nazareth, when she received the Archangel's visit – she was the Handmaid of the Lord. (Luke 1:38) She obeyed the Law, because she seemed to come under the Law. Her God and her Son submitted to the ransom as humbly as the poorest Hebrew would have to do; he had already obeyed the edict of the emperor Augustus, in the general census; he was to be obedient even unto death, even to the death of the Cross. The Mother and the Child, both humbled themselves in the Purification, and man's pride received, on that day, one of the greatest lessons ever given it.

What a journey was this of Mary and Joseph, from Bethlehem to Jerusalem! The Divine Babe is in his Mother's arms – she had him on her heart the whole way. Heaven, and earth, and all nature, are sanctified by the gracious presence of their merciful Creator. Men look at this Mother as she passes along the road with her sweet Jesus; some are struck with her appearance, others pass her by as not worth a look; but of the whole crowd, there was not one that knew he had been so close to the God, who had come to save him.

Joseph is carrying the humble offering, which the Mother is to give to the Priest. They are too poor to buy a lamb – besides, their Jesus is the Lamb of God, who taketh away

the sins of the world. The Law required that a Turtledove, should be offered in the place of a lamb, when the Mother was poor. Innocent birds; emblems of purity, fidelity, and simplicity! Joseph has also provided the five Sicles, the ransom to be given for the First-born Son – Mary's only Son, who has vouchsafed to make us his brethren, and, by adopting our nature, to render us partakers of his.

At length, the Holy Family enters Jerusalem. The name of this holy City signifies Vision of Peace; and Jesus comes to bring her Peace. Let us consider the names of the three places in which our Redeemer began, continued, and ended his life on earth. He is conceived at Nazareth, which signifies a Flower; and Jesus is, as he tells us in the Cantic of canticles, the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valley, by whose fragrance we are refreshed. He is born at Bethlehem, the House of Bread; for he is the nourishment of our souls. He dies on the Cross in Jerusalem, and by his Blood he restores peace between heaven and earth, peace between men, peace within our own souls; and on this day of his Mother's Purification, we shall find him giving us the pledge of this peace.

Whilst Mary, the Living Ark of the Covenant, is ascending the steps, which lead up to the Temple, carrying Jesus in her arms, let us be attentive to the mystery – one of the most celebrated of the prophecies is about to be accomplished, one of the principal characters of the Messiah is about to be shown as belonging to this Infant. We have already had the other predictions fulfilled, of his being conceived of a Virgin, and born in Bethlehem; today, he shows us a further title to our adoration – he enters the Temple.

This edifice is not the magnificent Temple of Solomon, which was destroyed by fire during the Jewish captivity. It is the Second Temple, which was built after the return from Babylon, and is not comparable to the First in beauty. Before the century is out, it also is to be destroyed; and our Saviour will soon tell the Jews that not a stone shall remain on stone that shall not be thrown down. Now, the Prophet Aggeus—in order to console the Jews, who had returned from banishment, and were grieving because they were unable to raise a House to the Lord equal in splendour to that built by Solomon—addressed these words to them, which mark the time of the coming of the Messiah: "Take courage, O Zorobabel, saith the Lord; and take courage, O Jesus, the son of Josedec, the High Priest; and take courage, all ye people of the land;—for this saith the Lord of hosts: Yet one little while, and I will move the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will move all nations, and the Desired of all nations shall come; and I will fill this House with glory. Great shall be the glory of this House, more than of the first; and in this place I will give Peace, saith the Lord of hosts."

The hour is come for the fulfilment of this prophecy. The Emmanuel has left Bethlehem; he has come among the people; he is about to take possession of his Temple, and the mere fact of his entering it, will directly give it a glory, which is far above that of its predecessor. He will often visit it during his mortal life; but his coming to it to-

day, carried as he is in Mary's arms, is enough for the accomplishment of the promise, and all the shadows and figures of this Temple at once pale before the rays of the Sun of Truth and Justice. The blood of oxen and goats will, for a few years more, flow on its altar; but the Infant, who holds in his veins the Blood that is to redeem the world, is, at this moment, standing near that very altar. Amidst the Priests who are there, and amidst the crowd of Israelites who are moving to and fro in the sacred building, there are a few faithful ones, who are in expectation of the Deliverer, and they know that the time of his manifestation is at hand; – but there is not one among them all, who knows, that at that very moment, this expected Messiah is under the same roof with himself.

But this great event could not be accomplished, without a prodigy being wrought by the Eternal God, as a welcome to his Son. The Shepherds had been summoned by the Angel, and the Magi had been called by the Star, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem: this time, it is the Holy Ghost himself who sends a witness to the Infant, now in the great Temple.

There was then living in Jerusalem an old man whose life was well-nigh spent. He was a Man of desires, and his name was Simeon; his heart had longed unceasingly for the Messiah, and at last, his hope was recompensed. The Holy Ghost revealed to him that he should not see death without first seeing the rising of the Divine Light. As Mary and Joseph were ascending the steps of the Temple to take Jesus to the Altar, Simeon felt within himself the strong impulse of the Spirit of God; he leaves his house and walks towards the Temple; the ardour of his desire makes him forget the feebleness of age. He reaches the porch of God's House—and there, amidst the many mothers who had come to present their children, his inspired gaze recognizes the Virgin, of whom he had so often read in Isaias, and he presses through the crowd to the Child she is holding in her arms.

Mary, guided by the same Divine Spirit, welcomes the saintly old man, and puts into his trembling arms the dear object of her love, the Salvation of the world. Happy Simeon! figure of the ancient world, grown old in its expectation, and near its end. No sooner has he received the sweet Fruit of Life than his youth is renewed as that of the eagle, and in his person is wrought the transformation which was to be granted to the whole human race. He cannot keep silence—he must sing a Cantic—he must do as the Shepherds and Magi had done, he must give testimony: "Now," says he, "now, O Lord, thou dost dismiss thy servant in Peace, because my eyes have seen thy Salvation, which thou hast prepared—a Light that is to enlighten the Gentiles and give glory to thy people Israel." Immediately, there comes, attracted to the spot by the same Holy Ghost, the holy Anna, Phaniel's daughter, noted for her piety, and venerated by the people on account of her great age. Simeon and Anna, the representatives of the Old Testament, unite their voices, and celebrate the happy coming of the Child who is to renew the face of the earth; they give praise to the mercy of Jehovah, who, in this place, in this Second Temple, gives Peace to the world, as the Prophet Aggeus (Haggai) had foretold.

