

**The Rectorial Benefice of the East Vale  
Morning Prayer  
Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 | Candlemas**

**Hymn**

**We hail thy presence glorious,  
O Christ our great high priest,  
O'er sin and death victorious,  
At thy thanksgiving feast:  
As thou art interceding  
For us in heaven above,  
Thy Church on earth is pleading  
Thy perfect work of love.**

**Through thee in every nation  
Thine own their hearts upraise,  
Offering one pure oblation,  
One sacrifice of praise:  
With thee in blest communion  
The living and the dead  
Are joined in closest union,  
One body with one head.**

**O living Bread from heaven,  
Jesu, our Saviour good,  
Who thine own self hast given  
To be our souls' true food;  
For us thy body broken  
Hung on the cross of shame:  
This bread, its hallowed token,  
We break in thy dear name.**

**O stream of love unending,  
Poured from the one true vine,  
With our weak nature blending  
The strength of life divine;  
Our thankful faith confessing  
In thy life-blood outpoured,  
We drink this cup of blessing  
And praise thy name, O Lord.**

**The Collect**

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 forever.  
**Amen.**

**First Reading**

*(Malachi 3.1-5)*

A reading from the book of the prophet Malachi.

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly

come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. Either: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. Or: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Responsorial Psalm*

*(24. [1-6] 7-10)*

**R/ Lift up your heads, O gates; be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.**

The earth is the Lord's and all that fills it: the compass of the world and all who dwell there'in. For he has founded it up on the seas: and set it firm upon the rivers of the deep. **R/**

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord: or who can rise up in his holy place?' Those who have clean hands and a pure heart: who have not lifted up their soul to an idol, nor sworn an oath to a lie; **R/**

They shall receive a blessing from the Lord: a just reward from the God of their salvation. Such is the company of those who seek him: of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob. **R/**

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. **R/**

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. **R/**

**Second Reading**

*(Hebrews 2.14-18)*

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, Jesus himself likewise shared the same things, so that through

death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested. Either: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. Or: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

This is the word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God**

*The Gospel*

*(Luke 2.22-40)*

**Alleluia! Alleluia!**  
**Give thanks to the risen Lord.**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia!**  
**Give praise to his name.**

**God has proclaimed the just reward:**  
**'Life for all men, alleluia!'**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia!...**

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Listen to the gospel of Christ according to Luke.  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every first-born male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.' Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner

thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Come, let us praise the living God,**  
**joyfully sing to our Saviour.**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia!...**

*The Homily*

*Fr David*

There are countless occasions in our lives that cause us to look backward and to look forward, they're often times of celebration and sorrow. These are occasions when we recollect and reflect on what has been and the road we've already travelled to a particular point, and to look ahead to the road yet untraveled and wonder how the journey might shape up. Weddings and funerals are two particular examples of occasions where we might look back at the road we've travelled with a particular person and how the road ahead might look with or without them.

This feast of Candlemas, the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, is one that invites us to look backward and forward. Backward in that, we are now just under 40 days from Christmas and for some Christians the Christmas season ends with this feast, because we commemorate one of the stories related to Jesus' infancy. However, this feast sits almost halfway between Christmas and Easter, so the words of Simeon invite us to look forward as he declares to Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' As we prepare to begin the season of Lent we, like Mary, prepare to walk with Jesus the way of the cross and we are invited today to turn our gaze from the crib to the cross. I suppose, if happy and sad occasions remind us of the paths we have travelled with other people, then Candlemas is a time for us to contemplate the path we have travelled with God from Christmas and the path we will travel with God to Easter.

Simeon was an old man when he experienced the promise God had revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. He had waited expectantly and trustfully for many years for its fulfilment. Likewise, it is possible that we will spend our whole lives trusting that the promises God has made to us in Jesus Christ will be fulfilled, that we will inherit eternal life and that Jesus will come again. Are we waiting as trustfully and living as expectantly as Simeon did? It's a long time to wait trusting in a promise.

But it's accounts like these in scripture of the fulfilment of God's promises that encourage us in our faith and inspire us to persevere in trusting that his promises to us will come to fulfilment. Simeon and Anna were blessed with this encounter with Jesus because they too had kept their promises to God, by leading devout lives. In the same way, we need to uphold our end of the bargain by remaining faithful and true to the promises made at our baptism, leading devout lives of faithfulness to God, serving him as Anna did, night and day.

Mary and Joseph are also key players in this scene, and it's easy to forget how they too are upholding their commitments to the Lord by presenting Jesus to him in the temple and offering sacrifice for Mary's ritual purification in accordance with the law. They are two more examples of fidelity and trust, who experienced the fulfilment of God's promises.

As we prepare to begin the season of lent, let us give some serious consideration to how we will keep this season that is intended to help us draw closer to the Lord. Lent is designed to help us think about how we respond to God and how we remain faithful to him. It is another time where we are invited to look backward and forward, to consider how our journey with God has looked and how it could look. Lent is a call to repentance, to prayer and fasting, to study and self-examination. If we don't already try to observe a holy lent, will this be the year that we attempt to make more of an effort to engage more meaningfully and deepen our faith?

The clergy are thinking about how we can help everyone in the benefice keep a holy lent at home and online, but maybe I could also challenge us all to think about how we can make the most of lent. Lent is more than just giving up and taking up, it's about disciplines that help us draw closer to God and grow in holiness. So, if giving up chocolate has just become a habit that's more about our figure than our faith, then we need to ask ourselves what we really ought to do to make the most of lent. Lent is about devotion to God, it's about removing obstacles between us and him, and improving the quality of our relationship with him.

The gospel tells us that Simeon and Anna encountered Jesus in the temple and Simeon took the child Jesus into his arms and blessed God in gratitude for this promised

encounter. It's a tremendous sadness that for the second lent in a row many of us will not feel able to encounter Jesus in his temple, in church. I hope that when we can all return as we once did and encounter him in the Eucharist, taking him into our hands much like Simeon did, we too will have cause to bless God for such a wonderful encounter and for the fulfilment of the promise that Jesus would be with us always, until the end of time. When we meet with Jesus in the Eucharist our eyes see the salvation which God has prepared for all the nations to see, the light to lighten the gentiles. May lent instil in us a sense of longing to be reunited with Jesus in this sacramental encounter and may all our precious encounters with him give us cause continually to bless God and to remain steadfast in faith.

### ***After Homily (Taize Chant)***

***The Lord is my light, my light and salvation:  
in God I trust, in God I trust.***

***The Lord is my light, my light and salvation:  
in God I trust, in God I trust.***

### ***Hymn***

**Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us  
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;  
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,  
for we have no help but thee;  
yet possessing every blessing,  
if our God our Father be.**

**Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us:  
all our weakness thou dost know;  
thou didst tread this earth before us,  
thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
self denying, death defying,  
thou to Calvary didst go.**

**Spirit of our God, descending,  
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,  
love with every passion blending,  
pleasure that can never cloy:  
thus provided, pardoned, guided,  
nothing can our peace destroy.**

### **The Intercessions**

With confidence in the divine light revealed to the world, let us pray to the Lord...

Give to the church a prophetic voice, to proclaim the light that has come to lighten all nations. As Mary and Joseph made their offering according to the law, so may all Christian people offer their prayer and praise in thanksgiving for the revelation of Jesus as our saviour. As we pray for the church, we remember Bishops June and Karin, and in our Swedish link cycle of prayer we pray for all who work and worship in Lagunda and at Kulla, Fittja

and Holm, and all who worship at St Brides and contribute to the of life that church, especially as the feast of St Bride approaches.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let all people know the day of salvation has come and the love of God reaches to the ends of the earth. May those who administer justice understand all law and power come from God. Give grace to all who teach, that they may be guided by your wisdom and insight.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

In our families, friendships and communities make us a light to lighten the lives of others. Bless and protect the younger and older among us and give us all a renewed vision of your divine love.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Have mercy on parents whose hearts are pierced by the suffering of their children, bless those who are near to death, and strengthen those who are sick... (Names may be mentioned). May the light brought by the Son of God enlighten their darkness.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for your servants who have departed in peace and come into the glorious light of your eternal presence... (Names may be mentioned). Receive them into the salvation that was prepared for them from the beginning.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

In a time of stillness, we offer our own personal prayers and petitions...

**Merciful Father accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

### **Hymn**

**The Spirit lives to set us free,  
walk, walk in the light.  
He binds us all in unity,  
walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light, walk in the light,  
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.**

**Jesus promised life to all,  
walk, walk in the light.  
The dead were wakened by his call,  
walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light...**

**He died in pain on Calvary,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
To save the lost like you and me,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light...**

**We know his death was not the end,  
walk, walk in the light.**

**He gave his Spirit to be our friend,  
walk, walk in the light.**

**Walk in the light...**

**By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,  
walk, walk in the light;**

**The Father's kindness is revealed,  
walk, walk in the light.**

**Walk in the light...**

**The Spirit lives in you and me,  
walk, walk in the light;**

**His light will shine for all to see,  
walk, walk in the light.**

**Walk in the light...**



### **Prayers for the sick this week**

Elizabeth Thomas  
Kath Loughor  
Eunice Wood  
Catherine Brynach  
Margaret Price  
Stephen Gray  
Brendan  
Shirley Gwilliam

Betty Hicks  
Colin Bailey  
Sophie Sabit  
Helen  
Kevin Hurst  
Orla Elizabeth O'Grady  
Lorna Powell

### **Hymn Requests**

If you have any hymn requests for our Zoom worship please send them to one of the clergy team. We will do our best to put requests into our services over the next few weeks.

### **Bible Study Group**

If you would like a link to our Bible Study Group which meets on Wednesdays 6-7pm every 2 weeks starting on 20<sup>th</sup> of January, please email Rev Angela at [angelacooper03@gmail.com](mailto:angelacooper03@gmail.com). It is a very friendly informal group and is open to all.

### **Children's Saturday Club**

Just a reminder that we are still running a Children's club on Zoom every Saturday at 10am during term time. If you would like to join or know a family that might want to join, please email Rev Angela at [angelacooper03@gmail.com](mailto:angelacooper03@gmail.com)