

The meaning of Candlemas

WHILE wondering what to say about the Feast of the Purification, I came by chance on a characteristically witty passage from Mgr Ronald Knox:-

If you will look up in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the name of that old pagan festival which was called the Lupercalia, you will find it stated that in A.D. 494 this festival was “changed into the feast of the Purification”. That’s the sort of statement that always enchants me, because it’s so typical of all the bogus stuff that is written nowadays about the history of religion. At the Lupercalia a band of young men sacrificed a goat and a dog, smeared the blood on their foreheads, and then ran round the city hitting everyone they met with leather thongs. So in A.D. 494 Pope Gelasius thought there wasn’t much point in that, and “changed it” into the feast of Candlemas. You can imagine the old-fashioned people in Rome saying, “Of course it’s not quite the same as the old thing, but it’s the same sort of thing, anyhow”.

In fact, as Mgr Knox goes on to tell us, the feast of Candlemas was first celebrated in the East, and was not brought to Rome until the year 687. So if it is not an adaptation of a pagan Roman festival, what is it?

It is, of course, a commemoration of what our Lady did, forty days after the nativity, when she came with the child Jesus into the Temple. By this one act she fulfilled two separate obligations of the Law of Moses. The first was the duty to present every first-born child to God in the Temple. This was done to recall how the first-born of the Israelites were preserved in Egypt when the first-born of the Egyptians perished. Our Lord was the first-born, because the only child of His mother. He was also the first-born in a more mystical sense. St Paul calls Him ‘the first born of every creature’ (Col 1:15). This does not mean, as the Arians claimed, that He was Himself created; it means that He is first, because uncreated, and the whole of creation is second in respect to Him. Christ is, so to speak, the ‘elder brother’ of the whole universe, begotten in eternity, not made in time.

Secondly our Lady fulfilled the mother’s duty of coming to the Temple to make an offering for her own purification after the birth of *any* child. The Law laid down that in the case of a male child, this purification was to be made on the fortieth day after birth. St Thomas Aquinas tells us that the Blessed Virgin, who had conceived and borne her Son in a miraculous way, was not strictly subject to this commandment. Yet, he says, she wished to fulfil it for the same reasons that Jesus fulfilled the commands of the Law: from humility and obedience, to show approval of the Law, and to remove all occasion of calumny from those around her. She obeyed the Law not so much because it applied to her, as from love of the Lawgiver (Chesterton speaks in one of his poems about *the shining irony of Candlemas*).

These two Old Testament laws, namely the offering of the first-born child and the purification of the mother after every birth, explain why Mary went to the Temple forty days after Christmas. Our custom of going in procession with candles on this day also recalls the double meaning of Candlemas. We hold candles just as she held the Light of the world in her arms as she walked through the streets of Jerusalem. And we hold candles because we desire that this same Light will enter our souls and purify them of all stains of sin and make them holy.

Candlemas, then, is not some winter-tide festival with a Christian veneer: it is Christian through and through.

Fr Thomas, OP

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year C

31 January 2010

The Newsletter of HOLY CROSS PRIORY CHURCH, LEICESTER

Serving Leicester’s Catholics since AD 1247



Sunday Masses	This week	Mass Intentions	Next week
6:00pm Vigil	Fr Isidore	Holy Souls	Fr Fabian
8:00am	Fr Fabian	<i>Pro populo</i>	Fr Isidore
9:30am Family	Fr Peter	Margaret O’Reilly, RIP	Fr Duncan
11:00am Solemn	Fr Leon	Holy Souls	Fr Peter
12:30pm Old rite	Fr Thomas	Holy Souls	Fr Thomas
5:00pm Students	Fr Peter	Mass for students in the Lady Chapel	Fr Peter
7:00pm	Fr Duncan	Naeve Forey (intention)	Fr Duncan

OTHER SUNDAY SERVICES	6:00pm Rosary	30 January	Confessions	6 February
9:00am Lauds	6:20pm Compline	Fr Leon	10:30 - 11:30am	Fr Fabian
5:45pm Vespers	6:40pm Benediction	Fr Peter	5:00 - 6:00pm	Fr Peter

The Holy Cross SVP Conference would like to say a big thank you to all our parishioners for the successful response to our Christmas Star Appeal. The Parish was able to donate a grand total of 130 gifts! Thanks again for your amazing generosity.

Light Bearers Ministries UK – Event – A Light In The Heart Of Leicester. Light Bearers Ministries UK, will be holding a hand crafted cards and biscuits stall in Blackfriars Hall **TODAY, SUNDAY**, after the 9.30am and 11am Masses. Please do come along and join us in Bearing the light of Christ’s friendship in the much needy world of today.

Entrance Antiphon:	Save us, Lord our God, and gather us together from the nations, that we may proclaim your holy name and glory in your praise.
1st Reading:	Jeremiah 1: 4-5. 17-19
Psalm Response:	My mouth will tell of your salvation, Lord. (Ps 71)
2nd Reading:	1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:13
Alleluia:	<u>At 11:00</u> – I will adore before your holy temple; I thank you. <u>Otherwise</u> – The Lord has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives.
Gospel:	Luke 4: 21-30
Communion Antiphon:	<u>Either</u> – Let your face shine on your servant, and save me by your love. Lord, keep me from shame, for I have called to you. <u>Or (but not at 11:00)</u> – Happy are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs! Happy are the lowly; they shall inherit the land.

MONEY MATTERS: Last Weekend's collections – Offertory Collection £1293.26; SVP £15.49; Friends of Holy Cross £10.79; Holy Souls £11.85; Crib restoration £4.58. The McNabb Appeal fund still stands at £5171.97. Last week's collection for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti came to £923.17.

This week there is a retiring collection for sick and retired priests of the diocese.

Very many thanks for your continuing generosity.

First Friday Coffee Morning: This coming Friday, at 10:30am in the Church Hall. Tea & scones or coffee & cake, a chance to chat with other weekday Mass-goers and members of the Community; and, of course, a raffle. Money raised goes towards the care and maintenance of the church fabric. Volunteers welcome.

Aquinas, Thomists and the problem of paganism: The Aquinas Lecture 2010 will be held at Blackfriars, Oxford, on Wednesday 3 February at 5pm, and be given by John Marenbon of Trinity College, Cambridge. See noticeboard.

Churches Together in Leicester City Centre will meet at the Salvation Army, Kildare Street, at 12:30pm on Thursday. All are welcome.

God's Extravagant Love. There will be a day celebrating 800 years of Franciscan life in the Church on Saturday 27 February at the church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Rednal, near Birmingham. All are welcome. Tel: 0115 950 1064 and see noticeboard.

GOSPEL CHOIR – Would you like to sing gospel songs, meet new people and have a lot of fun? Feel free to join us on Tuesday evenings in St. Clement's Hall (next door to the church). Newcomers are always very welcome. For more details call Jeff on 243 1289.

Churches Together in Leicester City Centre present a Lent course with a difference. They invite you to come and reflect on what the Bible says on issues raised through the film *Chocolat*. The film will be screened at Phoenix Square on 18 February at 8pm, and then there will be a five-week Lent Course up to 25 March. See noticeboard for details.

The **Women's World Day of Prayer Annual Service** will be held at St Margaret's Church, St Margaret's Way, on Friday 5 March at 10:30am. Over 3 million people world wide will be praying using a service prepared by Christian women in Cameroon. All are welcome. See noticeboard.

Two events to take place at Holy Cross Centre:

- Saturday March 13 – Evening of Music and Reflection for Lent
- Saturday April 24 – Karaoke

Both events begin at 7pm. Please note the dates and look out for further information nearer the time. Jeff Henry is arranging these events and he is particularly keen that many groups/individuals take part, so do let him know (after the 9:30 Mass) if you wish to play/read/sing at the Lent evening, and bring your singing voice to the karaoke!



Today's Gospel: Elijah is sent to a widow at Zarepath.

Year II	The week ahead...	Psalter Week 4
Monday:	Feria	
Tuesday:	THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD (Candlemas). <i>There will be an extra, sung, Mass in the older form at 7:30pm.</i>	
Wednesday:	St Blaise, bishop, martyr	
Thursday:	St Catherine de' Ricci, virgin, religious	
Friday:	St Agatha, virgin, martyr	
Saturday:	SS Paul Miki, subdeacon, religious, and Companions, martyrs of Japan	
WEEKDAY MASS IN LATIN. This week, Mass in the older form will be celebrated on Monday, Thursday and Friday at 8:30am, on Tuesday at 7:30pm, and on Saturday at 8:15am. All welcome, especially servers. If you would like to learn to serve this Mass, please contact Fr Thomas.		
Next Sunday – 5th Sunday per annum. Readings:		
Isaiah 6: 1-8	1 Corinthians 15: 1-11	Luke 5: 1-11

The Leicester Goan Association will have a Service of Loving Remembrance at Sacred Heart Church, Mere Road, on Friday 5 March at 6:30pm. See noticeboard.

The Christmas Crib will remain on display until the end of Christmastide, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Candlemas, on Tuesday 2 February.

Pilgrimage to Poland: 17-21 October. Fr Eddy Jarosz of St Peter's parish will be leading this pilgrimage, flying from Stansted to Krakow. Programme includes visits to Czestochowa, Auschwitz, city tour of Krakow, Lagiewniki (Basilica of the Divine Mercy) and other places of interest. Cost approx £500 (single supplement £100). Further details from Fr Eddy on 251 9802.

The British Red Cross remains in urgent need of food donations to respond to the emergency needs of destitute asylum seekers in Leicester. To help, please leave your gifts after any Mass – non perishable goods such as tinned and dried foods are mostly wanted. A full list of items may be seen on the noticeboard and in the Newsletter (3 January) on the website given for past Newsletters. Please keep giving generously to support these vulnerable people. Thank you.

Please join us in the Parish Hall after the 9:30am and 11:00am Sunday Masses for tea, coffee, fruit-juice etc. There is the opportunity for a chat with members of the Dominican Community and with parishioners. We particularly welcome newly-arrived students and other visitors to our Parish.

Noticeboards are situated in the New Walk and Wellington Street entrances and at the back of the church in the Narthex. If you don't see what you are looking for, please check the other boards.

REGULAR SERVICE TIMES
MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS
8.00 Lauds
10.00 Mass
12.30 Mass
17.45 Vespers
Old Rite Masses as announced.
Church is open from 8.00 - 18.00
WEDNESDAYS
10.30 Exposition until 12.30
11.45 Divine Mercy Chaplet, Rosary & Benediction
SATURDAYS
9.00 Lauds
10.00 Mass
10.30 Novena to Our Lady
10.30 Confessions until 11.30
12.30 Mass
17.00 Confessions until 18.00
17.45 Vespers
18.00 Vigil Mass for Sunday
Old Rite Masses as announced.
HOLIDAYS
18.00 (previous day) Vigil Mass
8.00 Lauds
10.00 Mass
12.30 Mass
17.45 Vespers
19.00 Mass
BANK HOLIDAYS (& MON TO FRI AROUND XMAS & NEW YEAR)
8.00 Lauds
12.30 Mass, after which the church is closed
SUNDAYS
8.00 Mass
9.00 Lauds
9.30 Mass (Family)
11.00 Mass (Solemn: Latin on 2 nd , 4 th and 5 th Sundays)
12.30 Mass (Old rite in Latin)
17.00 Mass (for Students, term time only)
17.45 Vespers
18.00 Rosary
18.20 Sung Latin Compline
18.40 Benediction
19.00 Mass
Leicester Royal Infirmary Catholic Chaplaincy: For urgent visits, ask ward staff to bleep the Roman Catholic Chaplain. For non-urgent visits leave message at the Priory or the LRI Chaplains' Office. Messages may not be picked up until the end of the day.
Website for past Newsletters: holycrosschoirleicester.co.uk
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