

A few words from the Vicar

*If Candlemas Day be fair and bright
Winter will have another fight.
If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain,
Winter will not come again.*

Well it's official! We've just been through the coldest December since records began in 1910. If there's any truth in the old rhyme, let's hope that Candlemas Day (2nd February) is absolutely foul; otherwise we'll be in for some really atrocious weather over the next few weeks.

Traditionally Candlemas marks the midpoint of Winter and, as well as the weather, has folklore associations with bad luck and death. For example, sailors would refuse to set sail on 2nd February because they believed any voyage beginning on Candlemas Day would end in disaster.

Another tradition holds that anyone who hears a funeral bell tolling on Candlemas Day will soon hear of the death of a close friend or relative; each toll of the bell representing a day that will pass before the unfortunate news is learned.

None of this bears any relationship to the true meaning of Candlemas.

Candlemas is the day in the Church's calendar when we recall Jesus' presentation by his parents at the Temple in Jerusalem. At the Temple the Holy Family met an elderly man named Simeon who declared the infant Jesus to be the light of the world (Luke 2:22-32).

In Medieval times churches held a special Communion service at Candlemas. During the service priests would bless the supply of beeswax candles that were to be used in Church during the rest of the year (hence 'Candle Mass') and a supply of blessed candles would be given to needy folk.

Imagine the world as it was then without electricity or light pollution, when the night was truly dark. In such a world the warm glow of candlelight is a tangible reminder of that greater light which, for and beyond all time, radiates from the figure of Jesus; a tangible reminder that Jesus is the light of the world and His love shines even in those dark places we see in the world around us. And to those receiving candles at Candlemas, those who otherwise would have been in darkness, the candle burning bright on dark nights would be a tangible reminder that Jesus loved them.

These days some churches celebrate Candlemas with a candlelit procession. When individuals in the procession hold a lighted candle, this is a tangible reminder that, as Christians, we are called to burn brightly with God's love in the midst of this sometimes dark world. It is a tangible reminder that, if Jesus is the light of the world, then we His disciples are called to illuminate the world with His love.

Every Blessing *Dave*



Presentation of Christ at the Temple by Hans Holbein the Elder, 1500-1501