

## EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

# LIGHTS

### EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

#### *Introducing the Gospel*

##### *Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Luke 2: 22-40)*

Luke's account of Jesus' infancy takes Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem for the ceremony of the purification of the mother forty days after the birth. In the temple the Holy Spirit inspires Simeon and Anna to prophesy about the infant Jesus' future. In verse 32 Simeon speaks of Jesus as a light bringing God's salvation to the Gentiles as well as to the Jewish people.

Our image to stimulate reflection on the Presentation of Christ in the Temple is *lights*.

#### *Extracts from the Gospel passage (Luke 2: 29-32; for reflection throughout the week)*

Simeon took the child 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.'

#### *Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you bring light in darkness  
and hope in despair.  
Send your light into our lives,  
so we may live to praise your name;  
through time and through eternity.  
Amen.

### READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

**Luke 2: 22-40**

**Jesus Is Presented in the Temple**

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn 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.

**The Return to Nazareth**

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.

## PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (YEAR B) Sunday 28 January 2024

### **ENGAGING WITH THE THEME**

#### *Dwelling with the text (Luke 2: 22-40)*

Begin exploring Luke's account of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

#### *Thinking and talking*

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you notice about the role of the Holy Spirit in Luke's narrative?
- How do you understand Luke's balance between Simeon and Anna?
- What do you make of Simeon's emphasis on Jesus as a light for revelation to the Gentiles?
- What do you make of Simeon's emphasis on Jesus for glory to God's people Israel?
- What does this passage say for us today?

#### *Using your Bible*

Explore the central activity of the Holy Spirit in Luke's birth narrative:

- Luke 1: 15
- Luke 1: 35

Explore the roots for Luke's narrative in the Old Testament law:

- Leviticus 12

Explore the image of light in the Old Testament prophets:

- Isaiah 42: 6
- Isaiah 49: 6
- Isaiah 60: 3

#### *Exploring online*

## PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (YEAR B) Sunday 28 January 2024

Widen your exploration of Luke's account of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- The origins of the Festival of Candlemas
- Images of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple
- Images of lights

### *Drawing on experience*

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's account of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple is *lights*. Draw on your experience of lights. For example:

- Your experiences of participating in Candlemas services
- Your experiences of light
- Your experiences of seeing something in a new light

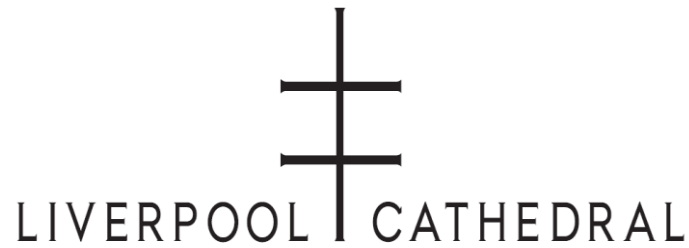
What have you learned about lights?

### *Creating and making*

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Luke's account of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple or the image of lights.

- Make a display of lights.
- Make a collage of images of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.
- Make a poster about the power of light.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the Presentation of Christ in the Temple or the image of lights.

PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (YEAR B) Sunday 28 January 2024



## **EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to [smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com](mailto:smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com).

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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