

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

LIGHTS

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Presentation 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.

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's account of Simeon's prophecy is *lights*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Luke 2: 29-32; for reflection throughout the week)

Simeon said, '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.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

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

Begin to explore how Luke describes the infant Jesus' encounter with Simeon and Anna 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 is the significance of this event taking place in the temple in Jerusalem?
- What is the significance of the three references to the Holy Spirit guiding Simeon?
- What are the key themes in Simeon's canticle?
- What do you make of Simeon's prophecy to Mary?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore how Luke is announcing a key theme of his Gospel in Simeon's canticle.

- Luke 24: 46-47
- Acts 13: 47
- Acts 26: 23

Explore how Simeon's canticle is rooted in Isaiah.

- Isaiah 42: 6
- Isaiah 45: 25
- Isaiah 46: 13
- Isaiah 49: 6
- Isaiah 52: 10
- Isaiah 60: 30

PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (YEAR A) Sunday 1 February 2026

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Luke's account of the infant Jesus' encounter with Simeon and Anna in the temple by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Presentation of Christ in the temple
- Light to the nations
- Recordings of the *Nunc Dimittis*

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's account of Simeon's prophecy is *lights*. Draw on your own experience of lights. For example:

- Have you experienced (or seen on film) *son et lumiere*?
- Have you experienced light changing your perspective on things?
- What has been your most memorable experience of light?

What have you learned about the power of light?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Simeon's canticle or by the image of lights.

- Create a collage of contemporary light fittings and lamps.
- Create a poster illustrating the Feast of Candlemas, celebrating the Presentation of Christ in the temple.
- Illuminate a manuscript of Simeon's canticle, *Nunc Dimittis*.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Simeon in the temple or the image of lights.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

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.

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.



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