

# St James Parish Newsletter

31<sup>st</sup> January 2021



## Our Mission Statement

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...and your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22:37-38

## Sunday Podcasts

of each Sunday Morning Service are available after the service on YouTube.

## A time to speak

Parish Podcast on the YouTube channel.

The address for both is at the bottom of the page. This week I am pleased to welcome the Rev Stuart Bell as our guest preacher.

## Candlemas at St. David's

Members of St David's invite you to a Zoom celebration of Candlemas with the singing of Taizé chants at 7pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February. Please email Jennifer Burrige at [jburrige@me.com](mailto:jburrige@me.com) if you are interested so she can send you the link.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

Following advice from several sources - including conversations with colleagues, the Bench of Bishops and the Welsh Government - we will not be going back to live worship in St James until at least the first week in March. By then we will have a better idea of how things stand and can make an informed decision about returning.

This Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, we will be celebrating Candlemas, also known as the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The actual day of the feast is 2<sup>nd</sup> February, but as with all feast days you can celebrate them on the nearest Sunday. And Candlemas is one of my favourites.

It commemorates the ritual purification of Mary, 40 days after the birth of her son Jesus. This day also marks the ritual presentation of the baby Jesus to God in the Temple at Jerusalem.

The Gospel of Luke says that Jesus was met by Anna and Simeon. Simeon held the baby Jesus and called him a Light to the Gentiles (the world) which is a quote from the prophet Isaiah 49:6:

*"I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."*

Ritual purification stems back to a Jewish tradition that women were considered unclean after the birth of a child. For 40 days for a boy, and 60 days for a girl, women weren't allowed to worship in the temple. At the end of this time, women were brought to the Temple or Synagogue to be purified. After the ceremony women were allowed to take part in religious services again.

The festival is called Candlemas because this was the day that all the Church's candles for the year were blessed. On Candlemas night, many people place lighted candles in their windows at home. And any Christmas decorations not taken down by Twelfth Night, 5<sup>th</sup> January, should be left up until Candlemas Day and then taken down.

Personally I love the idea of one continual celebration taking you through the darkness and dreariness of January all the way to February, when the days lengthen more and more and we are within shouting distance of Spring.

Let me end with this beautiful and insightful reflection on lighting candles by St Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022):

*"The candles which you light reveal to you the intelligible light. Just as the church, that house of great beauty, is full of light from many candles, so the house of your soul, which is more precious than that church, should be illumined and full of light in a noetic sense – that is to say, that within you all the spiritual virtues should burn with divine fire... The multitude of burning lamps signify the illumined thoughts which should shine within you like lamps, so that there should be no dark thought in the house of your soul, but that all should be aflame and shining with the light of the Holy spirit".*

God bless and keep safe,

Mark

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS AVAILABLE ON THE PARISH WEBSITE:  
[www.stjameswanssea.org.uk](http://www.stjameswanssea.org.uk)**

**St. James Sunday Services on YouTube are available here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoNVEa6r8mEr\\_KnOkSv6qQA/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoNVEa6r8mEr_KnOkSv6qQA/)  
The Vicar's New blog can be found here: [sonofzebedee.blogspot.com](http://sonofzebedee.blogspot.com)**

## Five Questions

1. **What is your name?** Noel Evans
2. **Where were you born?** Glasfryn, Felinfoel Road, Llanelli.
3. **What is your earliest memory of Church?** In Llanelli Town Centre all the places of worship were tightly bunched together. On Sunday evenings the Salvation Army Band would play at the entrance to the market from about 5.15 before the evening services started. I vividly recall standing, listening with my mother, whilst my father was in the "Cwrdd Gweddi" (Prayer Meeting) before evening worship. One evening I slipped away and marched behind the bass drum back to their nearby Citadel. By the time my mother caught up I was inside. The thrill of the band and the songsters (tambourines, streamers and all) are with me for ever! I believe my dad had something to say to my mam later!
4. **What is your favourite verse of Scripture?** Hebrews 13 v. 8
5. **Why?** It for me sums up what the Christian faith is all about and reminds me of a line in an old chorus " All may change but Jesus never - glory to His name."

## Twelve Ways to knowing God

Eternal life is knowing God (Jn 17:3). But there are other ways to know there is a God.

1. The final, complete, definitive way, is **Christ**, God himself in human flesh. All the other 'ways' are only realised in and through this way. But they can help point us in the right direction.
  2. His **church** is his body, so we know God also through the church.
  3. The **Scriptures** are the church's book. Like Christ, "The Word of God."
  4. Scripture also says we can know God **in nature** (Romans 1). This is what is called 'natural' knowledge. How can anyone who lives by the sea, or a little river, be an atheist. If they thought deeply about what they experience in nature.
  5. **Art** also reveals God. I know three ex-atheists who say, "There is the music of Bach, therefore there must be a God."
  6. **Conscience** is the voice of God convicting us of right and wrong.
  7. **Reason**, reflecting on nature, art, or conscience, can help you know there is a God by good philosophical arguments.
  8. **Experience**, life, your story, can also reveal God. You can see the hand of Providence there.
  9. The **collective experience** of the race, embodied in history and tradition, expressed in literature, also reveals God. You can know God through others' stories, through great literature.
  10. The **saints** reveal God. They are advertisements, mirrors, little Christs. They are perhaps the most effective of all means of convincing and converting people.
  11. Our ordinary daily experience of **doing God's will**, will reveal God. God becomes clearer to see when the eye of the heart is purified:  
*"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."*
  12. **Prayer** meets God—ordinary prayer. You learn more of God from a few minutes of prayerful repentance than through a lifetime in a library.
- All these point towards God but it is only through Christ can you truly know him.

## Epiphany 4/Candlemas/ The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

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 for ever. Amen.

## Readings

Malachi 3: 1 - 5;  
Psalm 24;  
Hebrews 2: 14- end;  
Luke 2: 22- 40

## Quick quotes

"Jesus did not come to make God's love possible, but to make it visible".

"Christianity helps us face the music when we don't know the tune".

Phillips Brooks.

## A blessing for Candlemas

May Almighty God, who today revealed to Simeon the light which enlightens the nations, fill your hearts with the light of faith. Amen.

May Jesus Christ, who was this day presented in the temple, present you before Almighty God with pure and clean hearts. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit who guided Simeon to the temple to see God's salvation, guide you in the path of goodness and bring you to the Light that shines for ever. Amen.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

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## Contact information

For all contributions to the newsletter please email the Vicar, Mark, at:  
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