



The Presentation of Christ in the Temple also known as **Candlemas**

Forty days after the birth, it was the Jewish custom to take the child to the Temple. Joseph and Mary did this, as described in Luke 2: 22-40. For Jesus, in our calendar, this takes us to February 2nd. By tradition, we call this Candlemas.

The old man Simeon holds the baby in his arms and recites the famous prayer, "The Song of Simeon". This canticle came down through the Roman Catholic church as the Latin verse, beginning *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine...* It is commonly known as the "Nunc Dimittis" and is used in the daily Evensong of the Anglican Prayer Book, as well as the *Compline* night prayer of the Catholic Church. The Holy Spirit had promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

Surprisingly, while the Temple was presided over by the High Priest - and only one of the tribe of Levi (a Levite), descended from Aaron, was allowed to do this, amongst all the other exclusively Jewish traditions - Simeon spoke of embracing the Gentiles, the non-Jews!

The hymn, "Lord, now let your servant go his way in peace" is a 20th century version of Simeon's Song. Here are the words in case you would like to sing along with this recording from Geoff and Tricia Stokes.

Hymn: Lord, now let your servant

Lord, now let your servant
go his way in peace -
your great love has brought me
joy that will not cease.

For my eyes have seen him
promised from of old -
saviour of all people,
shepherd of one fold.

Light of revelation
to the Gentiles shown,
light of Israel's glory
to the world made known.

After Nunc Dimitis , James Edward Seddon (1915 - 1983)
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