



BRADFORD CATHEDRAL



What is Candlemas?

Upper KS2-KS5





WHAT IS CANDLEMAS?



- On February 2nd each year, the Christian Church marks the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, also known as Candlemas, although many churches celebrate Candlemas on the Sunday closest to this date.
- In the Church year, the season of celebration that begins at Christmas actually ends with the Feast of the Presentation, Candlemas, and that is the time when lots of churches and cathedrals, like ours, will turn off or take down their star in the tower.



In pre-Christian times there was also a festival, at this point midway through winter- halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Some people lit candles to scare away evil spirits on the long, dark winter nights.

The Feast of the Presentation recalls the presentation of the baby Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem by his parents, Mary and Joseph. In obedience to Jewish law, Mary went to the Temple to be purified 40 days after the birth of her son and- as it was also the law that every firstborn male was designated as “holy to the Lord”- Mary and Joseph also took Jesus to be presented to God, along with a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two young pigeons.

This tells us that they were not well off, as the sacrifice for those who could afford it was a lamb and a turtle dove or a young pigeon, but those who were poor brought only two doves or two young pigeons.



Featured image: *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple* by Fra Angelico, 1442.





WHAT IS CANDLEMAS?



You can read the passage in Luke's Gospel, Chapter 2:22–38. **See the separate resource for this.**

What is the origin of the name, “Candlemas”?

In the Bible passage, an old man called Simeon, who is present in the Temple, refers to Jesus as “a light” and Christians also refer to Jesus as He described himself, as “the Light of the World”.

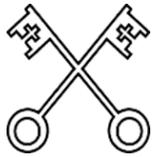


By the middle of the 5th century the custom of observing the festival with lighted candles had been introduced, and it also became the customary day in the year when all the candles in the church for the coming year were blessed. The name Candlemas developed from this.

Why is Candlemas celebrated on February 2nd?

As Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the temple **40 days** after his birth, Candlemas is celebrated 40 days after Christians celebrate Christmas. The earliest reference to the festival is from Jerusalem, where in the late 4th century a Western pilgrim attended its celebration and wrote of it.





WHAT IS CANDLEMAS?



What is the link between Candlemas and Christmas decorations?

As mentioned earlier, the feast of Candlemas marks the end of the Church's joyful season that begins at Christmas and **in former times Candlemas eve was the date upon which all Christmas decorations and greenery were taken down**. Some people still celebrate this tradition and some people would like to bring it back as a tradition.



There are numerous poems and carols that celebrate Candlemas.

In "Ceremony upon Candlemas Eve" the mid-17th century English poet Robert Herrick (1591-1674) wrote:

*"Down with the rosemary, and so
Down with the bays and mistletoe ;
Down with the holly, ivy, all,
Wherewith ye dress'd the Christmas
Hall."*

What is the link between Candlemas and snowdrops?



Another name for snowdrops is 'Candlemas Bells', on account of the fact that they often bloom early in the year.

There was an old superstition that they shouldn't be brought into a house before Candlemas.

