

St Francis Weekly News for THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY/CANDLEMAS

31st January 2021



This newsletter may have come to you by email or through your letterbox, if you received it on paper but are happy to receive an email in future please email deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com If you know anybody else who would like this delivered or emailed please contact Deborah or Revd Janet: revdjanetwyer@outlook.com

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

CHURCH REMAINS CLOSED FOR WORSHIP

In order to keep everyone safe the church remains closed for Sunday worship. However, we continue to broadcast the service via the St Francis YouTube channel. To find us, simply search 'St Francis Heartsease' and our YouTube channel will appear in your search results.

If you would like assistance in respect of joining our YouTube worship channel or would like further information about how the restriction affects you, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Vicar: The Revd Janet Wyer 07368 832294

CANDLEMAS

This week we celebrate the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, always traditionally known as 'Candlemas'. The Presentation is always celebrated on February 2nd, but it is normal to 'transfer' it to a Sunday, and so this year we will be keeping it on Sunday 31st. The Candlemas service was one of the biggest occasions in the days of old as it involves blessing candles to bring light, hope and grace into people's houses at a time when candles were the only source of light at night. This is one of the most beautiful of festivals in the church calendar, and it celebrates the moment when the baby Jesus is recognised by the Temple priest Simeon as being 'The Light of the World'.



We will be blessing candles this Sunday too, and if you would like one for your home please do pop in to the church to collect one free of charge.

Revd Winnie, Brother Eeyore and Piglet decided to test out a few candles for Candlemas.



They enjoyed them so much that they think they will light them occasionally over the coming week, particularly on these dark nights when they are really cheery and full of hope.

ASSISTANCE DURING WINTER LOCKDOWN

We extend our deep gratitude to those who have once again been contributing non-perishable foods and goods to St Francis Free Food. This means that we have a small stock of food and toiletries that we can pass on to those who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you or someone you know is in need of a helping hand in respect of feeding themselves or their family.

24/7 answerphone: 01603 431259

Please leave your name and a contact number and we will return your call as soon as possible alternatively you may come to the church any weekday morning 10am – 12pm, there is always someone on the premises at this time.

A LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

One of our YouTubers writes:

What a welcome surprise it was to hear that the team at Francis were going online.

Online services that I could watch from my home here in Australia, what a brilliant idea, some rare positive news, as a result of the global pandemic and the ingenuity of the team at St Francis.

Growing up in Norwich and attending the Heartsease comprehensive, (as it was back then in the 70s) I have lots of fond memories of the Heartsease estate, including Clancy Road chip shop (is it still there?). That was a regular lunchtime haunt during school lunch hours and the many friends and family that lived on the estate back then.

And then many years later attending the Saint Francis lunch club and visiting residents of the Heartsease estate in their homes in my role as an advisor for Age Concern Norwich.

I'm really enjoying the services and the feeling of being reconnected to my roots, it's been a welcome and comforting experience at this difficult time of involuntary isolation to hear the occasional Norwich accent and feel a part of the congregation.

Thank you for your dedication, you now have a global congregation!

Best wishes

Richard Symon

NEXT DOOR @ST FRANCIS & HEARTSEASE COMMUNITY MONEY ADVICE CENTRE [HCMAC]

It was with great excitement that we were able to announce the launch of our very own Money Advice Centre for the Heartsease Community.

We have already had an encouraging uptake of our services, and although we are not as yet able to meet clients face to face we look to the day when we can welcome them through the door of our dedicated office in Next Door @St Francis.

Next Door@ St Francis is also all ready and waiting for the go ahead to open up once more as a place of welcome and hospitality.

As we start to plan for that day, we will be seeking to recruit volunteers to run the community café that we hope will provide a happy meeting place for all the lovely Heartsease folk who we miss very much!

If you would like to be involved in either the Café or the Community Money Advice Centre please send your details to: vicar@stfrancisheartsease.co.uk

Now open
We have trained debt advisers
We can also help you before you get into debt
Please call 07765739987 and leave your name & number
Or email heartseasecmacentre@outlook.com

CONGRATULATIONS

Many of you will remember Angela Stewart who was our Parish nurse and a Lay reader at St Francis. This week we heard the exciting news that Angela is to become Parish Nursing Co-Ordinator for the Eastern Region.

Angela promises she will tell us more when she has had time to get to know what the new role entails.

Congratulations, Angela and may you know God's blessing in your new role.

ECO CHURCH LIFESTYLE SURVEY



Please find our survey (mentioned in last week's newsletter) with this newsletter, to help us move forward in our exciting Eco Church journey.

Some words of explanation are on the survey. If as a household you would like a further copy, you should find a number of spare ones on the table just inside the church front door. This is where the cardboard box marked 'Eco Surveys' for completed surveys will also be.

Thank you for participating. You will be helping the church in its journey to becoming better at caring for creation.

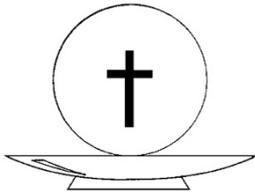
Thanks very much

Sue

WINTER LOCKDOWN

Please note that the Church is not open for Sunday Worship.

However, the church is available for individual prayer every weekday 10.30am – 11.30am.



If you would like to spend some time in the church or would like to make enquiries about receiving the sacrament please do feel free to contact Revd Janet - 07368 832294

If you would like to join in with Sunday Worship we continue to broadcast via the St Francis YouTube channel. Just search for 'St Francis Heartsease YouTube'!

THE BELLS ARE STILL RINGING!

Well, one is anyway...

With another lockdown and the reality that many people are again having to shield; St Francis is once again ringing out the reminder that the community is being held in prayer throughout the day and that God's love is with us always.

If you hear the bell – it means that prayers are being said for you; and please remember that no matter what is happening in our lives we are all precious in God's eyes and we are never alone.

Incidentally, each ring should total 33 tolls of the bell [3 x 11] which is the number of years Jesus was with us on earth. It is a reminder that he is with us still in spirit and his blessing is always upon and around us.

HOME GROUP

Many thanks to Jim Green who is offering folk the opportunity to get together via a Zoom Room every fortnight on a Wednesday evening.

The forthcoming dates are:

February 10, 24

March 10, 24

As before the times are 7- 8pm, and the format is very simple: chat, catch up with each other, read a Bible passage, pray for each other.

Please email Jim and he will forward on the zoom link address:

jimpiecrust@gmail.com

NEIGHBOURHOOD NOTICE BOARD

If you have a notice you would like included under the noticeboard – please email your piece to revdjanetwyer@outlook.com or deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com

PASTORAL CARE MATTERS

The lock down and the doom and gloom that seems to relentlessly stream out of the media might be too much for some of us to cope with - in all sorts of ways. Please remember you are not alone, if you would like a chat, or if you need some assistance of any kind please do not hesitate to get in touch. We are very happy to talk with you if that would be helpful.

If you live on the Heartsease we are also able to offer help if you or someone you know needs support with emergency basic food provision. Our contact details are as follows:

Revd Janet: 07368 832294

Fr Tracy: 07834 845623

24/7 Answerphone: 01603 431259
[checked daily]

There is also someone available in church weekday mornings if you would refer to talk to someone face to face.



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Childline: 0800 1111

Samaritans: 116 123

Domestic Violence Hotline: 0808 2000 247

[If you hear a neighbour in distress please do not hesitate to call this number or 999; you could save a life]

Mind: 0300 123 3393

Age UK: 0800 169 6565

Norfolk Assistance Scheme: **01603 223392**

CURATE'S CORNER



I've had a few conversations with several people lately about how quickly the time is going, and yes, doesn't it just seem to fly by! This year, the feeling will be exaggerated by the fact that Easter Sunday is quite early, falling as it does on April 4th. I believe March 22nd is the earliest date it can possibly be. As I write, this means that this Sunday, January 31st, as well as being Candlemas, is *Septuagesima*, or the beginning of what used to be called *Shrovetide*.

Septuagesima is the third Sunday, *Sexagesima* the second, and *Quinquagesima* the last before the beginning of Lent. *Quinquagesima*, or Shrove Sunday, is also the last Sunday immediately before Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday – which is defined as the first day of Lent...

After all this confusion, you'll be relieved to know that the names of the 'gesimas', as they were known, have largely disappeared from use since the liturgical changes introduced in the wake of the Roman Catholic Vatican II revisions of the 1960s, and very few people will refer nowadays to the pre-Lenten season of Shrovetide. And I think that might be a shame.

Shrovetide was historically associated with merry-making; often games were played, such as the annual Royal Shrovetide Football still played on Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday in the town of Ashbourne, near Derby; the game has no resemblance to modern football, being more like a manic Rugby game with any number of players, sometimes hundreds, and runs for most of the two days. This is a survivor of what was once a widespread tradition throughout England in the middle ages.

I'm not suggesting a return to this mediaeval frivolity, but I'm thinking that an awareness of *Septuagesima* Sunday and the beginning of Shrovetide helps to flag up the coming season of Lent. It's a chance for preparation, and gives us all time to stop and reflect about what we might do during the weeks approaching the greatest of all

feasts in the Christian year: the Resurrection of the Lord, Easter Sunday.

The term 'shrove' itself comes from the verb to 'shrive', which means to hear, on the part of a priest, the confession of a penitent; this stems from an ancient custom to confess sins and receive absolution before the beginning of Lent. I expect queues at churches would have formed on Shrove Sunday through to Tuesday afternoon – before the big pancake feast.

Lent was always traditionally a time of fasting, and that's why Shrove Tuesday is also known as pancake day. Making pancakes was simply an opportunity to use up any remaining ingredients that could not to be eaten in Lent, such as milk and eggs. In other parts of the world, Shrove Tuesday is called *Mardi Gras*, which is French for Fat Tuesday: eat well and party before the penitential season!

So, may I wish everyone a happy Shrovetide! Hopefully we can share some ideas for things we can do in Lent.

Every blessing

Fr Tracy

FOR OUR PRAYERS

We pray for those who are in need of prayer at this time: Huggy; Megan; Denise H; Christine; John P; Scott; Stephen C; Margaret T; David & Cynthia S; Maegan; Tom; Riley & his mum and family; Jeanette, David & Grace; Paula; Pete; Fr Brian; Hazel; Ben; Frazer.

We continue to pray for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Doreen; Rosemary; Sheila; John; Joy; Shirley.

We remember with love Heather McGhee and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends.

A PRAYER FOR THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or feeling
isolated. In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Church of St Francis
Heartsease**

**Heavenly Father
We ask your blessing upon us.
Hold the Heartsease Community,
and all the world,
in your arms of love.
Be with us.
Give us your strength,
peace, and healing grace.
Watch over us,
protect us from harm;
and keep in safety
all those who care for the sick
and attend to our needs,
in Jesus name we pray.
Amen**



For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

PSALM 24:7-10

PRAYERS FOR CANDLEMAS

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.

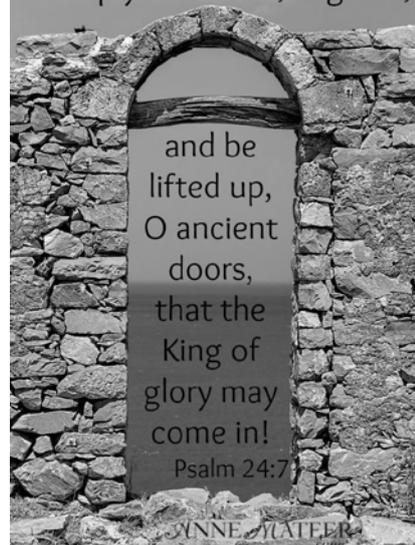
Lord, you fulfilled the hope of Simeon and Anna,
who lived to welcome the Messiah:
may we, who have received these gifts beyond words,
prepare to meet Christ Jesus when he comes to bring us to eternal life;
for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
Amen.

READINGS FOR CANDLEMAS

MALACHI 3:1-5

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

Lift up your heads, O gates,

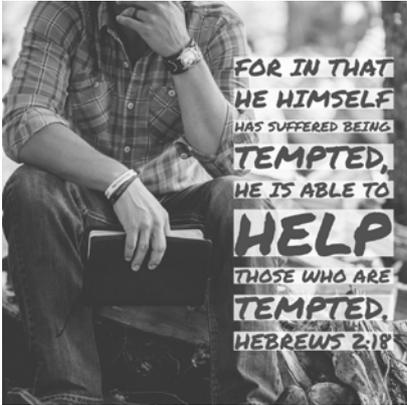


Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is the King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?

The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory.

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and shall be for ever.
Amen.

HEBREWS 2:14-18



Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

LUKE 2:22-40



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.

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.

REFLECTION FOR CANDLEMAS

This last week has been a dark one in many ways. It has been cold and icy, and literally dark with short cloudy days. We have seen some sad things. Internationally, we saw Holocaust memorial day on Wednesday; a time when we are forced to contemplate the full horror of what can happen when prejudice, ignorance and brutality are allowed to gain the upper hand and spin wildly out of control. Nationally, this week we reached the point when we realised that the number of Covid 19 victims had gone over 100,000. Locally, again on Wednesday, we had a sad funeral for one of the younger members of our parish; yet another

reminder of how darkness can intrude into our lives in more ways than just the weather; or the early hours of nightfall.

At the same time I've been fascinated by the responses to these things, how much similarity and synchronicity there has been across these events. People lit candles for the holocaust victims. People lit candles for the Covid 19 victims. People lit candles in memory of one of our young. People lit thousands and thousands of candles, often in the same place; I saw one church on Sky News that had literally carpeted the entire nave floor with burning tea-lights; I don't know where that church was, but it was an amazing sight. One woman in Germany constructed a giant cross in her yard out of burning candles; that too was very beautiful and was intended to be in honour of Covid victims, but it was also a symbol of defiance in the face of a German government that has closed all the churches.

It seems to be a natural human response to heartbreak and loss to light candles; it seems to be something carried deeply in our souls, like a once forgotten but newly found postcard, on which is pictured a glimpse of eternity.

And so it's a fitting thing that all this has happened just before we celebrate the feast of the Presentation in the Temple, or the Purification of Blessed Mary, or Candlemas, whatever you prefer to call it.

We hear the story in this week's Gospel reading, of how Mary and her child Jesus attend the temple for the purification rite, and the child is seen by the elderly Simeon and the prophet Anna. Simeon says some words that we now call the 'Nunc Dimittis', words which are said every day at the evening prayer office in many denominations, according to the custom in the early church. It is also said at the end of funerals:

"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
For my eyes have seen Your salvation
Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel."

It is this acknowledgement of the Messiah as the 'light of revelation' that gives us the tradition of Candlemas, a time when we bless candles. Because candles are the sign of that light in the Christian tradition. When we light a candle in church, we light

it to remind us of this great light of Christ. Whether people know it or not, when they light candles, as they have in huge numbers this last week, they are doing so to remind themselves of a greater good, a greater hope, a power much greater than us, a power to bring about change. Change which is greatly needed.

Everything in life is holy. All of the world is a sacrament, a sign of God's creative power and joy in that creation. A candle is a tiny sacramental sign of God's inspiration, a tiny reminder of His light, a hint of what is required of us.

We must accept death as a part of life, not something separate, never to be discussed. We must die to our egotistical selves, our pride, our malice, our indignance at the supremacy of God. This is a death *within* life preached by Jesus to Nicodemus, that we, like Nicodemus, find so hard to understand. Only by dying to our sinful selves can we seek to follow our great high priest who became like us in order to make an atoning sacrifice for our sins, and will refine us in fire and fuller's soap, if we so wish.

As we share the bread of life, whether at the altar or spiritually at home, we partake of Christ, we become one body. We should therefore be reminded that we are all responsible. Whether for reading and believing the wrong pamphlets in 1921, or writing the wrong Facebook post in 2021, all these things have consequences that echo through eternity. We must remember this. And the power of Christ lies in His ability to help us to share responsibility for making things right. In giving us the strength to put everything right by following the light of the world. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty.

I said that the world is a sacrament. As a sign of hope, it is fitting that at this time of year we see the snowdrops appearing in the grass, as if by magic, a sign of the coming sunshine. A sacrament of hope. Snowdrops are also called 'Mary's Tapers', or 'Candlemas bells', presumably because they appear at this time. They are a particular flower of this time, a symbol of purity, 'the first high C of spring'. A bowl of snowdrops on Candlemas Day was once held to give a house the 'white purification' in some parts of England. The candles that we bless were lit at night, and children were allowed to stay up until the candle had burned out.

There is hope. We are capable of bringing about change, the changes needed to put aside our sinful selves, our destruction of our environment, our greed for more money, food, vaccines. We are

capable of making that change together, of making ourselves worthy of the promises of Christ. Let us all pray for change, that we can learn from our mistakes; let us all pray for the world to be transformed and let's do something about it. Let's follow the light of Christ, and do something every

day, whether it's a letter, a few words, whatever. Let's all help to make that change in the name of the King of glory.

Amen.

Father Tracy



The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the law of Moses taught about being made pure. They took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. It is written in the law of the Lord: "Give every firstborn male to the Lord." Mary and Joseph also went to offer a sacrifice, as the law of the Lord says: "You must sacrifice two doves or two young pigeons."

A man named Simeon lived in Jerusalem. He was a good man and very religious. He was waiting for the time when God would help Israel. The Holy Spirit was in him. The Holy Spirit told Simeon that he would not die before he saw the Christ promised by the Lord. The Spirit led Simeon to the Temple. Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple to do what the law said they must do. Then Simeon took the baby in his arms and thanked God:

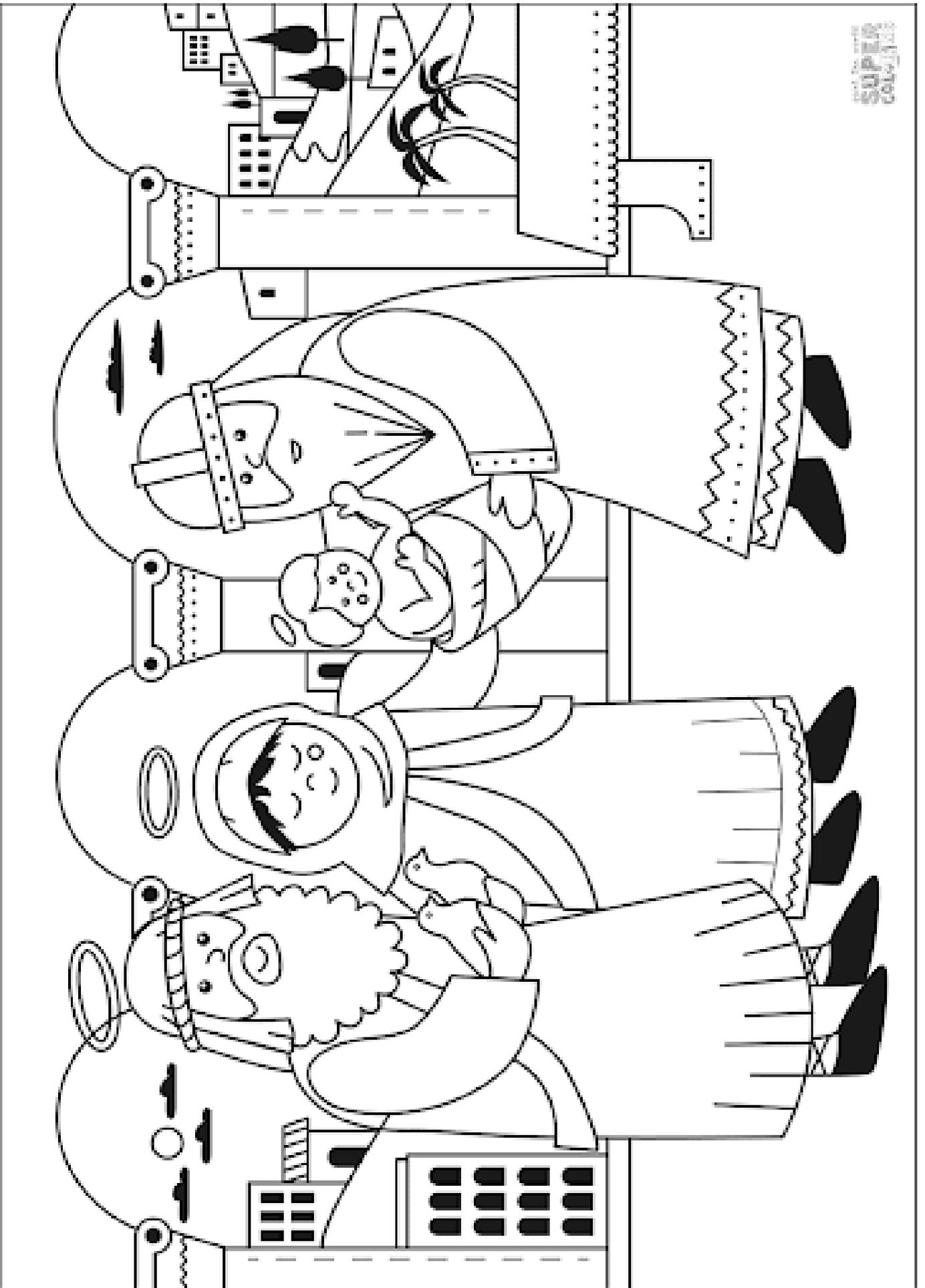
"Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant,
die in peace as you said.
I have seen your Salvation with my own eyes.
You prepared him before all people.
He is a light for the non-Jewish people to see.
He will bring honor to your people, the Israelites."

Jesus' father and mother were amazed at what Simeon had said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "Many in Israel will fall and many will rise because of this child. He will be a sign from God that many people will not accept. The things they think in secret will be made known. And the things that will happen will make your heart sad, too."

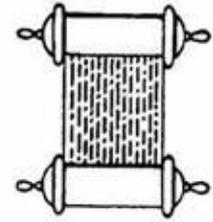
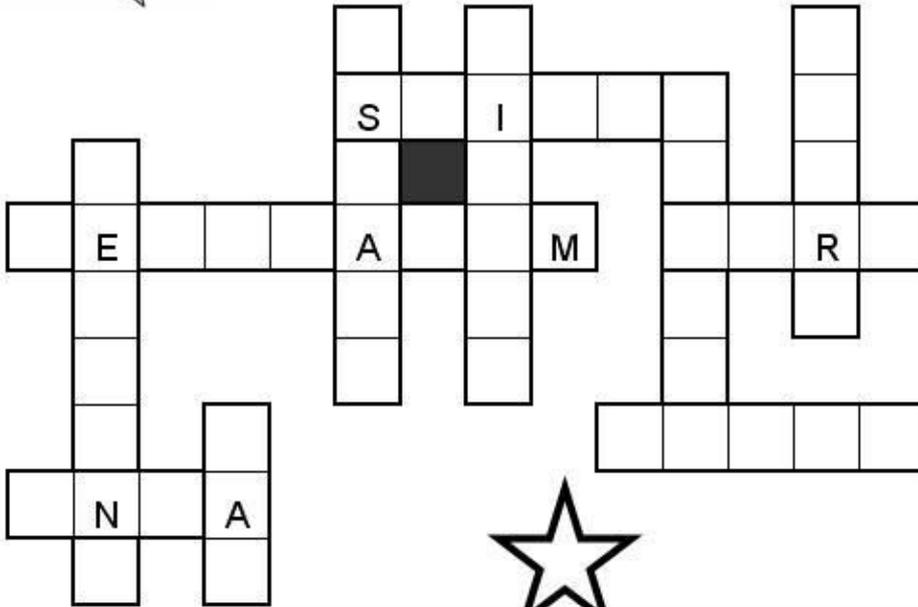
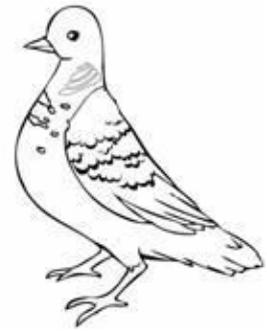
Anna, a prophetess, was there at the Temple. She was from the family of Phanuel in the tribe of Asher. Anna was very old. She had once been married for seven years. Then her husband died and she lived alone. She was now 84 years old. Anna never left the Temple. She worshiped God by going without food and praying day and night. She was standing there at that time, thanking God. She talked about Jesus to all who were waiting for God to free Jerusalem.

Joseph and Mary finished doing everything that the law of the Lord commanded. Then they went home to Nazareth, their own town in Galilee. The little child began to grow up. He became stronger and wiser, and God's blessings were with him.





Presentation of Jesus



Make all the words fit into this crossword



- Jerusalem
- Simeon
- Jesus
- Spirit
- Temple
- Servant
- Glory
- Israel
- Mary
- Anna
- Law

