

WHAT IS CANDLEMAS?

On **February 2nd** the Church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. This feast is the culmination of three great celebrations. Christmas, the first of the three, celebrates the birth of the Redeemer. The second - the Epiphany - rightly commemorates the revelation that redemption is open to all of humanity; and finally, the **Feast of the Presentation** is meant to remind us of the cost of that Redemption; namely, that Jesus Christ needed to be offered-up (i.e., presented) to God as a willing Victim for the atonement of sins.

This particular feast day has been fittingly chosen by the Church as the occasion to solemnly bless candles, hence it is often called **Candlemas**. The blessing of candles is performed on this day because within the Gospel narrative we encounter **Simeon the Just** who, upon seeing the Christ child, prophetically declares that He is One that is to bring "**light**" to the nations (cf. Lk 2:32).

Candles and lamps of various kinds have been used in the Church since the first Christians worshipped in the Roman **catacombs**. The practice of solemnly blessing these candles became more prominent in the 11th century—particularly when they adorned not only chandeliers and sconces but the altars themselves.

Ever since then, the **lay faithful** would piously bring their own candles to the Church on this feast day to have them blessed and sanctified for **home** use.



Blessed candles are a wonderful **sacramental** for use in the home and are highly encouraged by Holy Mother Church:

- **Blessed candles are an aid in prayer.** They set a most fitting spiritual ambiance and remind all that Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
- **Blessed candles enkindle faith in God's protective care.** When used during inclement weather and electrical outages they remind us to put our trust in God's protection.
- **Blessed candles ward off demons.** Evil spirits – who are prowling about seeking the ruin of souls – are rightfully fearful of God and items that have been imbued with His power and flee from their presence.

BLESSING OF CANDLES

RITE + BLESSING



Priest: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R./ Amen.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

R./ And with your Spirit.

*(Here one can read an appropriate passage of Scripture, such as **Matt. 4:13-17**, **Luke 2:27-33**, **John 1:6-10**, or **Ephesians 5:8-10**)*

Priest: Let us pray...

God of power, who enlightens the world,
And dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin,
As we remember the Virgin Mother of your Son,
Let the ✠ light of these candles
illuminate our hearts and minds,
That they may reflect always the splendor of Christ,
Who is Lord, for ever and ever.

R./ Amen.

(Here the priest sprinkles the candles three times with holy water)



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