

# Candlemas

Pastoral Letter and Prayer Resource

26<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Rev Julia Monaghan

## Do you have a secret?

The other day my spiritual director asked, “Julia, do you have a secret?”

Well, I looked at her and thought, I have so many, where do I begin? There are those dream, desires and ambitions that seem too big to be possible, that I’ve never told a soul. And then there are those things that I’ve done or left undone that would bring fear, shame or embarrassment - an anxiety of what would people think of me, if they only knew. We fear the light of investigation, of being found out, of being seen in a bad light.

BUT, there is another light, a softer light, that’s found in the gospel reading for the feast of Candlemas, celebrated this weekend (2<sup>nd</sup> Feb). It’s what the old prophet Simeon calls, “*a light for revelation.*”

The light of disclosure is what others, or we ourselves, use against us. **The light of revelation is what Jesus uses for us.**



# Read the story: Luke 2: 22 - 35

<sup>22</sup> 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 <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup> and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; <sup>[a]</sup> this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>[b]</sup> <sup>27</sup> Guided by the Spirit, Simeon <sup>[c]</sup> came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup> Simeon <sup>[d]</sup> took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup> “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;

<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup> And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being  
said about him. <sup>34</sup> 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 <sup>35</sup> **so that the inner  
thoughts of many will be revealed**—and a sword will pierce your own  
soul too.”

## The light of revelation

The light of revelation, is the light by which we walk in peace; the light by which we experience healing, hope and more life; the light the darkness can not overcome. That's what's happening to Simeon in the gospel reading, as he takes the Christ child in his arms and talks about going in peace, seeing salvation, and a light for revelation.

His inner thoughts have been revealed, not to the world but to himself. He faces the dark silence of his life, that he would die never knowing God's peace and hope; opens his heart and lets his heart's desire be known. That same light for revelation can be found in the story of the woman at the well (John 4), where she says to her friends, *"Come, and see a man who told me everything I have ever done."*



This wonderful, hopeful, healing story provides a prayer opportunity for us in this coming week.

You will need:

**tea lights lit** – enough to make a circle  
**small stones** – could be from the garden

You are invited to find a quiet, safe place and take some deep centering breaths. Begin by reciting the prayer “Almighty God, to you all hearts are open....”

When ready, take a stone in your hand and ask yourself the question

***“Do I have a secret?”***

Maybe it’s something too painful to speak about. Maybe it’s a dream you’ve never shared. I don’t need to know your secret but you do. What if you held your secret in the *light of revelation*, what would you see? The light is as gentle as a newborn, which would not investigate or accuse or disclose something to you. Instead, it will reveal something to you. As it does, place your stone in the circle of tea lights.

God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden;  
cleanse the thoughts of my heart with the gift of your grace,  
that I may perfectly love you and worthily praise you;  
*The Cloud of Unknowing*

### **Psalm 35: 7 – 9**

How precious is your steadfast love. O God!  
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.  
They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them  
drink from the river of your delights.  
For with you is the fountain of life;  
in your light we see light.

### **Sing the Faith: 512**

Stupendous height of heavenly love,  
Charles Wesley

Eternal God  
Grant to us this day and every day  
Such readiness and delight in following Christ,  
That whether our lives are short or long  
We shall have lived abundantly.

**A New Zealand Prayer Book**

## Snowdrop Sunday

And finally use some of the prayers and readings to conclude your prayer time. If you would like to create something more permanent for the week, that ministers hope to you, plant a bowl of wonderful snowdrops. They are known as the Candlemas Bell, and have been carried into church by children since Medieval Times, as a sign that new life will come.....it will!

### The Blessing

Lord we praise you for, the courage of Mary,  
the quiet strength of Joseph,  
the openness of Simeon,  
The self dedication of Anna,  
and the light of the Christ child,  
that reveals love, wholeness and peace.

Make us bearers of your light. Amen



Amen