



Introduction

In the Church's calendar, Candlemas, or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, is celebrated on February 2nd, or on the nearest Sunday. On this day, Christians remember the occasion (the fortieth day after Jesus was born) when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to 'present him' before God (Luke 2.22-40). St. Luke relates how, after Mary and Joseph had done all that was necessary under the Law of Moses, two faithful people, Simeon and Anna, gave testimony as to who this child really was. Simeon said that Jesus would be 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel'. His words make 'light' a predominant theme for worship at Candlemas.

Preparation

You will need to gather different 'light sources' as follows:

- A torch
- A birthday cake with candles (and matches)
- A night-light (the dim glow kind of light that young children might have in their rooms at nighttime) and an extension cable if needed
- A flashing light (the sort that you might carry in the car)

You will need a basket or box to hold these items and a table on which to place them as you talk about each one.

Be aware of the size of your visual aids relative to the size of your building. If the actual articles would be too small, consider using pictures projected on to a screen through an overhead projector or a power point presentation.

Some cautionary health and safety notes:

- take care not to leave the matches unattended;
- make sure you don't get the 'relighting' cake candles by mistake, unless you want to use that image as part of the presentation, and then think in advance how you will dispose of them. (I speak from experience!)
- if you have a trailing cable, tape it down, and be aware of where the flex is as you move around.

Development

1. Talk briefly about some of the details in St. Luke's account of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, leading up to the words of Simeon which declare that Jesus would be a light to the whole world. We talk of Jesus as the 'Light of the World'. Explain that you are going to think some more about the meaning of that phrase, and how Jesus is or can be the Light for individuals and for the whole world. You have some items in the basket/box that will help.



2. From your basket/box, bring out the torch. A torch helps to show us the way to go when it is dark. Ask for one or two personal 'stories' of times when torches have been used 'to show the way'. Make the connection with the way in which Jesus, both through his example and teaching, and through his risen presence is like the light of a torch, showing the way God wants people to be and to live.

3. Bring out the birthday cake and candles. Light the candles. Talk about birthday celebrations. Ask if anyone has had a birthday recently. Talk about the mood of joy that surrounds birthday celebrations. Jesus can also bring joy into people's lives, it's a deep joy that comes from knowing what Jesus has done through his life, death and resurrection.

4. Bring out the nightlight and switch it on. Ask if anyone has one of these and what it is used for. It's a light that gives comfort and reassurance in the darkness. But it's not just at night time when we might need comfort and reassurance. We all have sad and difficult times, and, in a similar way, Jesus brings comfort, reassurance, and hope in those sad and difficult moments.

5. For Christians, Jesus is like a light that shows us the way, a light that brings deep joy into our lives, a light that brings comfort, reassurance and hope. But it's not the whole picture. Bring out the flashing light and talk about a flashing light as a warning light. Jesus' light is also a warning light, a challenging light, a light that warns people that we have to be ready to change. The world is not as God wants it to be: we are not the people God wants us to be. Jesus' light challenges us, warns us that we have to be ready to change, and then work with him to help make our world more like the kingdom of God.