

Romans 12: 1 – 5; Luke 2: 22 – 40

### 'Candlemas'

#### Introduction ...

What do the people of God look like?

- Did you know that an average Anglican is an African black woman in her 30's?
- Although ... the vast majority of Church of England congregations are a long way from this international average: many with no children or young people and predominantly white.

What could the people of God look like?

- Perhaps the scene we just heard about from Luke's gospel could help us to think about this:

#### The people not named ...

There were many people in the Temple that day – and although Jewish, probably from many different parts of the world – come to the Temple on pilgrimage. Yet some were still drawn in to what was going on – especially by Anna.

More obviously, we have a:

#### Young couple ...

We have a young couple.

And I think it's interesting to notice that the older people in the scene helped this young couple rather than *vice versa*. Their role was to give of their spiritual and emotional maturity.

Imagine the stress on Mary and Joseph:

- First child
- Away from home
- And aware that there was something very special about that baby ... unless of course, they'd somehow imagined it ... yes – a lot of unusual things before and around his birth ... but now a baby with all the usual needs and demands of a new-born.

#### Simeon ...

Then we have Simeon ... we're not told he was elderly, though we perhaps picture him as such ... but maybe he was around grandparent age. He was alert to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and so was in the right place at the right time. A role model for each of us in this way.

He recognises Jesus ... takes him in his arms (I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt about that!!) and – having recognised the significance of this baby – he praises God.

**PTO**

A wonderful affirmation to Mary and Joseph that Jesus was indeed the Saviour who had been promised to Israel.

Simeon also gives a blessing to Joseph and Mary and then goes on to warn of difficulty and danger ahead.

Perhaps there were times when Mary, especially, looked back and these words became a strength to her to endure and persevere in the times of difficulty and heartbreak that came later.

### **Anna ...**

And then we have Anna. Great-grandparent age. Again giving affirmation to Mary and Joseph about this baby – and telling others too. Once more a role model for each of us in this way.

### **Jesus ...**

In the midst of all this – a baby. Welcome in the Temple. Of course, any baby in a gathering will often ‘steal the show’ ... but let’s look beyond that to the sense in which all the characters in today’s passage were focused in on Jesus.

### **What do the people of God look like?**

From today’s passage:

All ages, from different nations

Responsive to the Holy Spirit

Focussed on Jesus.

### **For us ...**

A reminder of our calling

- To welcome, to reach out, to care for all ages
- To be open to and act on the Holy Spirit’s guidance
- And to be focussed on Jesus

I’m going to finish with a poem by Denise Levertov (1923 – 1997) **(See next page)**

## *Candlemas*

**With certitude**

**Simeon opened**

**ancient arms**

**to infant light.**

**Decades**

**before the cross, the tomb**

**and the new life,**

**he knew**

**new life.**

**What depth**

**of faith he drew on,**

**turning illumined**

**towards deep night.**

**Amen.**