

The Barnabas Letter

This month we have two holy days; one is well known for the wrong reason and the other is rarely mentioned. The first of these holy days is the feast of The Presentation of our Lord. Never heard of it? Unless you grew up in a very liturgical tradition; probably not. In the Gospel according to St. Luke we hear of the Holy Family coming to the Temple. In Luke 2: 22 St. Luke tells us about the Holy Family coming to make an offering of a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons, this was the poor man's sacrifice, if you were pretty much broke this is what you offered to God as the Law of God commanded. By verse 29 we hear the aged prophet Simeon saying what has come down to us as "The Song of Simeon" or, in Latin, the "Nunc dimittis" "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel." (Luke 2: 29-32) The passage goes on to talk about the prophetess Anna, who upon coming in to the court of the Temple gave thanks to God for the redemption that the Child Jesus embodied.

This feast has largely gone unnoticed and has been largely forgotten, yet in the Middle Ages this was a big deal. The feast was referred to as "Candlemas," at that time of year the people of a parish would bring new candles to the church in order to have the priest bless them. Since Christ Jesus is the Light of the world it was considered proper that the lights used in the home should be blessed. The custom has fallen into disuse, and in a way, that's too bad, we can all use reminders that our Lord is the Light of the world.

The second holy day is St. Valentine's Day; everybody remembers this one! Woe betide; the husband or boyfriend who forgets! Yet St. Valentine was a martyr of the early church. Just exactly when this romance business began is a mystery to me.

So then, what has all of this got to do with encouragement? Well, it seems to me that we can take encouragement from both of these feasts of the church. Candlemas celebrates the Light of the world being made manifest to the world. Our Lord is our light and our salvation; whom should we fear? Our Lord is the Savior of our life, of whom then shall we be afraid? St. Valentine refused to deny his faith and was killed; yet he lives because Christ Jesus lives. I'm sure he finds this romantic stuff somewhat amusing. Still we can and should celebrate the love of men and women for each other. After all, the first miracle our Lord performed was at a wedding feast. Furthermore it was God Himself who ordained marriage and blessed it. You remember Adam and Eve, don't you?

Finally, my friends, meditate upon this, our Lord is with us in all our circumstances. Christ Jesus is with us in the midst of joy and sorrow, He holds us always in His loving care, and our Lord will never leave us nor forsake us, for we are his dear children. Therefore, we can place all our cares in the loving hands of Jesus, for we know that He truly cares for us.

Until next month, may our Lord richly bless you all.
Your brother in Christ Jesus,
Pastor D.W. Huston