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## *The Super Bowl, Groundhog Day, Candlemas, and the Feast of the Presentation*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

I am glad that the Super Bowl occurred on the Eve of the Feast of the Presentation. I am also glad that Groundhog Day is always on the Feast of the Presentation, or Candlemas, or the Purification of the Virgin, or whatever name our ancient and beautiful church gives to February 2. I actually believe that all these events have something in common. They are ways that our community, our civilization, hopes for life and light in the midst of winter.

Let's start with the Super Bowl this year, definitely one of the most thrilling games that I can remember. I was fortunate to watch it with members of my family who really love football, as I do. We were evenly divided about who we were rooting for, but we all wanted a great game. And it was a great game. Even with "recession commercials," the game gave us some spark, some energy, in the middle of winter.

February 2 is always in the middle of winter (at least in the Northern Hemisphere). The day falls almost exactly midway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Though winter "begins," officially, on December 21, it is rarely as cold then as it is in the middle of winter-about February 2. Thus, our ancestors realized and devised all sorts of mid-winter feasts and festivals to remind them that spring was coming.

Christians began to observe this mid-winter day as "the Purification," or "Candlemas," or now-"the Feast of the Presentation." According to tradition, the young child Jesus was to be presented in the Temple 40 days after his birth; other traditions called this same day the "Purification of the Virgin." However, the tradition of "Candlemas" came closest to recognizing what is going on in our natural world. Whether they called it "Presentation" or "Purification," Christians lit candles on this day. At the Cathedral's Evensong this past Sunday, we lit candles and walked in procession. We were walking toward the light, even in the deep mid-winter.

Something in our human condition will always long and lean for light. We yearn for its energy, especially when we miss it the most-in the bleak midwinter. Somehow or another, our secular Groundhog Day is also associated with the longing for this light. We are wondering just how long it will be before spring comes. Will the groundhog see his shadow or not? Is there sunshine today-too early-or not?

I have no idea whether all the bellwether groundhogs across the United States saw their shadows or not. And, no matter who actually won the Super Bowl (congratulations to Pittsburgh!), all of our country was strangely warmed on Sunday night and on Monday. Even in Kentucky, covered in ice, people paying attention heard a promise on the Feast of the Presentation, Candlemas. The promise is that spring is coming.

It is wintertime now, but the world has turned toward spring. Yes, there will be more cold snaps. There may even be an ice storm. But the earth has now turned around the sun toward spring. I hope we can say the same about our own lives today.

Perhaps our health is bad right now. Perhaps our economy is bleak right now. But God has turned us toward light, toward health.

I encourage us, then, to present ourselves to this God of Light. Like the Virgin Mary and her husband, Joseph, present yourselves and your offspring to God in the holy temple. Go to that place which has preserved and proclaimed light even during the darkest times. Light your candles. May our lights bring forth more light, the Light of the World!

Sam Candler signature



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