
Holy Hacks: January 31

By the Rev. Julia Mitchener

This coming Sunday is a big day. Not only is it Super Bowl Sunday, it's also Groundhog Day and Candlemas. What's that, you say—*Candlemas*? Yes, *Candlemas*!

Candlemas—also known as the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord—is a day celebrated by Christians each year on February 2. It recalls the story of Jesus being brought to the temple by his parents forty days after his birth, in keeping with Jewish custom (Luke 2: 22-40). While the Holy Family was in the temple, two elderly prophets, Anna and Simeon, saw Jesus and blessed him. Simeon declared the Christ Child to be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.”

Candlemas seems to have originated around the 5th century. Christians bore witness to the light of Christ by processing through the streets and bringing candles to church to be blessed. Through the ages, *Candlemas* has also come to serve as a reminder that the darkness and cold of winter will not last forever. Spring and Easter are coming, and this “lightens” our often heavy hearts.

Christians around the world today observe *Candlemas* in various ways. In Mexico, there are processions and dances in the streets, after which families share a meal of tamales. In Luxembourg, children carry lanterns and go from house to house, wishing people health and happiness and singing traditional songs. Often, they receive candy in return.

How might we observe *Candlemas* in our own families? Here are some ideas for a simple celebration:

- Eat crepes or even just regular pancakes. This is a French tradition. Crepes, with their round shape and golden color, point to the Second Coming of Christ as “the Sun of Righteousness.”
- Make beeswax candles using a kit purchased from a craft store. Even young children can join in this fun activity. As you work, talk about how the candles you are creating represent Jesus, the “light [that] shines in the darkness.” Enjoy the glow of the candles during a meal this weekend, then save them to use on special occasions throughout the year.
- Even if you don't get the chance to make your own, gather some candles and eat dinner by candlelight. Children love doing this—it makes everything look magical!
- Bring your little ones to church. During Children's Chapel at the 8:45 Eucharist, we'll be learning more about *Candlemas* and experiencing some of its wonder.
- Enjoy a fire in the fireplace on Sunday night. It's the perfect accompaniment to the Super Bowl. Some people even build bonfires for *Candlemas*!