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Dear Friends,

### The presentation of Christ in the Temple

**“When the time came ....they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord”**

Can you believe that it is already 40 days since Christmas? Where is the time going, I ask myself! Candlemas is officially 2<sup>nd</sup> February which signifies much, including the end of the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany. Although many of us take down our Christmas lights 12 days after the day, if you are anything like me, can't abide the dust and want to clean up, now is officially the right time to take down your lights.

I remember in the first lockdown people commenting that time seemed to pass slowly, but it feels to me as if this year is already moving with momentum. We experience this when we hear the news and the speed at which the vaccination programme is being rolled out to protect people and the NHS; it's like a race against time. Time passes quickly as you get older, they say.

This month is generally an expensive one in our household as my sons, George and William, were both due to be born on 28<sup>th</sup> January, six years apart. George arrived late and William early; nothing has changed there! So their birthdays fall within a week of each other. William has just turned 17yrs of age and he said he is very thankful that it's not his 18<sup>th</sup>. It would have been a little disappointing partying in lockdown with just your mother.

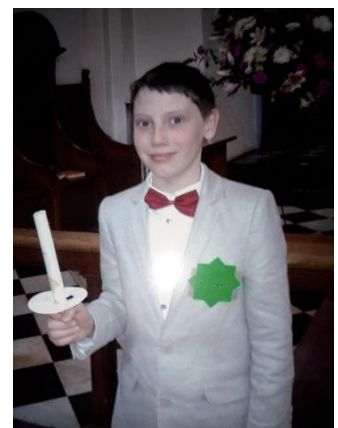
There are many celebrations in life or rites of passage and it's difficult at the moment with so many of these on hold particularly Baptisms and confirmations.

Most parents have their infants baptised when they are still very young. At baptism they are joined with Christ his body and so become part of the Church Family. You know, of course, it's where Godparents make a verbal commitment on behalf of the infant until they are old enough to speak for themselves at their confirmation. We are truly blessed in our Parishes as we have 24 candidates waiting to be confirmed. They are young, so it must feel as if time is passing slowly for them.

You may remember the service involves candidates being presented to the Bishop, signed by the oil of chrism, having hands laid upon them, and they receive an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to strengthen them in life ahead. Obviously, we cannot confirm at present but it isn't easy for all those young candidates who have been waiting for what seems an age for their confirmation service. So, please, do today include our young confirmation candidates in your prayers.

Confirmation is an important part of our journey of faith. Do you remember your confirmation? I know I remember mine and William remembers his. Will and I chatted about this over his birthday dinner on Tuesday. He remembers the Bishop speaking with him, receiving a bible and his late grandmother's gold cross, but mostly he remembers Bampy eating four slices of confirmation cake then complaining of stomach ache afterwards!

William was confirmed in 2014 along with 11 other classmates from St Fagans Church School. They had all undergone confirmation preparation, had attended a rehearsal on the Friday, then a confirmation sleepover on the Saturday before the service on the Sunday. Will and the others were all ready to make their own personal commitment to Christ even if they were a little blurry-eyed from lack of sleep.



It had been arranged that Bishop David Wilbourne was going to confirm William, I am sure many of you remember Bishop David, a real character, a down to earth northerner who spoke his mind – which often got him into bother with the bench!

So the day came, and I was on duty to serve that day as MC (Master of Ceremonies). My job was to make sure everything and everyone were where they should be so things ran smoothly. As always, the tension was building before a big service.



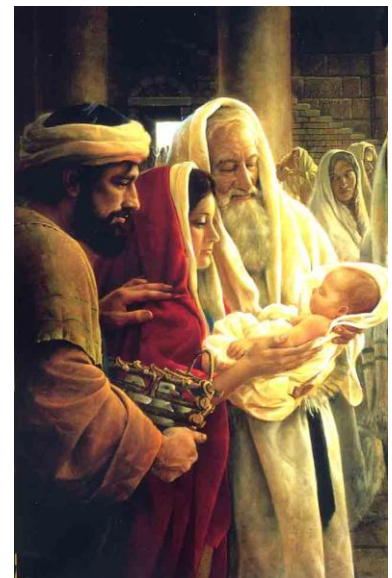
As you can imagine, the vestry was full of clerics and there was much church banter, which I managed to block out by visiting the ladies' room where I sat quietly and prayed for the candidates and my son. Thankfully, the service went extremely well. I spoke briefly to Will and my family afterwards and, as soon as the coast was clear (i.e. all the clerics had changed and were eating cake), I snuck into the vestry and there was Bishop David sat writing. He said he really enjoyed confirmations because it was a time when young people could dedicate themselves to Christ; words one would expect from a Bishop. He then told me this story. "I used to go into the congregation before every confirmation", he said, "and meet all the mothers. I would explain to them that they were now handing over their child completely into the hands of God. I was met with floods of tears and emotion so in my wisdom I decided to abandon this practice." I laughed. Bishop David then turned to me and said, "Today, Belinda, you have presented your Son William to God". I cried, Bishop David hugged me and we both looked at each other and smiled. The joy was overwhelming. A moment that I will never forget.

Both our services today focus on the presentation of Christ in the Temple. I am sure you will remember the story from Luke's Gospel which conjures up a beautiful intergenerational picture of family in our minds.

In our story today, both parents take Jesus to the temple; this happens 40 days after childbirth. Here the parents can be purified and there's redemption of the first born in line with tradition and the Exodus story.

Simeon, a devout servant of the Lord, has waited in the temple all his life for this moment and when he holds the child, he knows he holds the future of Salvation of all People, and so he can at last approach death in peace. Simeon speaks those beautiful words of the Nunc Dimittis which have been part of our liturgy of evening prayer, Compline, and funerals for decades.

Waiting can be difficult but eventually the time will be right. So, to all the families out there waiting for the confirmations to happen, and all our candidates, rest assured that the time will come, the time when you will be able to present yourself to the Lord. There will be celebration, cake, gifts, tears of joy but, most importantly, memories will be made that will remain with us always.



Love in Christ

Belinda

