

Presentation of the Lord

The celebration of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple has distinct introductory rites with special ritual and musical requirements. Moreover, when it falls on Sunday, it takes precedence over the Sunday in Ordinary Time. The celebration requires some preparation and planning. It is worth the effort, especially when the feast falls on a Sunday. Younger members of your congregation especially will be touched by the ancient actions and symbolism.

The connection of this feast with candles comes from the eighth century and led to the feast being called "Candlemas". The procession with lighted candles and blessing of candles to take home will help parishioners to see Christ as the light of the world in the world of their own lives.

Although Christmas season officially ended at the Baptism of the Lord, this celebration is an extension of the Christmas mystery of the Incarnation. Just as the Blessed Virgin spent 40 days contemplating the Divine Fruit of her womb before going to the temple to fulfil the Law, we also explore and live out the fruit of the Incarnation in the period of Ordinary Time leading up to February 2nd. The feast points back to Christmas and leads forward to Easter.

The Introductory Rites

There are two forms for the Introductory Rites: the Procession and the Solemn Entrance. The ritual is the same except that in the first, everyone gathers outside the church for the blessing while in the second the place of blessing is in the church, people are in the pews, and the procession is simply with the ministers to the altar. The Roman Missal gives detailed instructions. Adjusting for inside or outside the church, the introductory rites look like this:

- Select a place for the blessing to take place.
- Place there the candles that will be used in the church throughout the coming year.
- All the people receive candles upon entering.
- If people have brought candles from home, invite them to place their candles where the blessing will take place.
- When it is time to begin, the candles are lit while the antiphon *Behold, our Lord* (or another suitable chant) is sung.
- After the greeting and address, the priest blesses the candles with holy water.
- The priest receives a lighted candle from the Deacon or a minister and then the Deacon (or priest if there is no deacon) announces the procession to the altar.
- The antiphon *A light for revelation* is sung or another appropriate chant.
- The Entrance chant/song of the Mass follows the antiphon for the candle procession.
- The Introductory rites and Penitential Rite are omitted. The Gloria follows the entrance hymn.

Musical Considerations

The introductory rites of this celebration invite the use of simple chant. While the candles are being lit, the short antiphon *Behold/Ecce dominus* is sung. It is followed by a short dialogue with the priest that can be sung. The procession begins with the prescribed antiphon, *A light for revelation* with two verses or another appropriate chant. The Latin antiphon is also provided and could be used with the English verses. There are also Latin verses but these need to be taken from the *Graduale Romanum*.

This chant is the Canticle of Simeon known from Night Prayer of *The Liturgy of the Hours*. Its use in this celebration is a way of introducing the congregation to this Scriptural Canticle. The choir might also consider a different setting of the Canticle of Simeon. The Entrance chant/song follows the prescribed antiphon.

[CLICK HERE](#) to:

1. Download a pdf of the music
2. Listen to the Behold/Ecce dominus
3. Listen to *A light for revelation/Lumen ad revelationem*

Checklist

- Decide which form of the Introductory Rite you will use at which weekend Masses
- Decide where to gather
- Decide which chants will be sung for the Introductory Rites – practice!
- Make sure you have candles for all the parishioners
- The week before, invite parishioners to bring candles from home for blessing
- Make any adjustments to your worship aid if needed
- Have your parish photographer take pictures during the blessing and procession for the website or social media