

Did You Know? An Anglican Glossary



“And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.” Luke 2:22

The Feast of the Purification, (or Candlemas when candles were blessed in the church) is “a feast of Our Lord, therefore, if it falls on a Sunday (even in Lent) it has precedence.” E. C. R. Lamburn, *The Parson’s Handbook*.

The Churching of Women

The ancient rite of purification of a woman after childbirth was retained in the post-Reformation English church in the first Prayer Book (1549) and continues today as a rite of thanksgiving. You can find it in your BCP ahead of the Psalter.

“The Woman, at the usual time after her delivery, shall come into the Church decently appareled, and there shall kneel down in some convenient place, as hath been accustomed, or as the Ordinary shall direct: And then the Minister shall say unto her: Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his goodness, to give you safe deliverance, and to preserve you in the great danger of Child-birth; you shall therefore give hearty thanks unto God, and say, (Psalm 116).

A rubric also calls for the woman to hold a lighted candle in her right hand “in memory of Simeon’s prophecy.” (E.C.R. Lamburn) In earlier times she was to wear a white veil or “churching cloth.” The verger was expected to keep a linen cloth on hand.