

2nd February is the Christian festival of Candlemass. In the life of Jesus it marked a significant milestone - the ritual purification of his mother Mary after childbirth, his presentation for circumcision, and as a first born Jewish male infant his dedication to God in the Temple, by the sacrifice of a pair of doves. Candlemass In the Christian calendar is so called because the new candles manufactured from the wax made by bees in the previous year were blessed ready for service in the church during the coming year. This is a changeover moment, turning last year's wax into this year's source of light. Candlemass is also the traditional time to take down the Christmas decorations. A turning point.

Candlemass comes roughly halfway between the Winter solstice, the end of the growing darkness (chosen by the early church as the date for Christmas), and the Spring equinox when there is finally more light than darkness after the long Winter when, during the Jewish festival of Passover, the lambs were sacrificed and when the Lamb of God, the Saviour of all mankind, suffered death on the cross but rose victorious from the grave three days later - EASTER. Easter is the crowning glory and the absolute highlight of the Christian year.

So this is an in between moment when we turn our gaze from the Bethlehem birth behind us to the Easter cross and the empty tomb before us. It is a time when some people start to think about preparing for the 40 day fast of Lent, starting next month and running up to Easter. A change of focus and a time of preparation.

Try making a candle from a strip of beeswax warmed in the hands and wrapped around a simple wick. Keep it until Easter Sunday and light it to represent the Light of The World bursting victorious and invincible from the tomb.