

"Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask that you bless us as we celebrate His presentation at the Temple. Help us to always remember His light in our lives and to follow His teachings. Amen."

Dear Faithful,

As a college student and young adult, I loved to celebrate **Groundhog Day**. Although I'm an avid winter enthusiast, it was about the time of February that my heart would long for Spring, with its longer days of sunlight and the many colors of new life. I would celebrate by getting up early enough to receive the news from Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania about weather (pun intended) Phil had seen his shadow. Then I would call all my friends, hopefully waking them up, and tell the news, good or bad.

This folklore about animals predicting the coming of Spring amazed me and made me wonder what the history was. I learned that it was always connected to the Catholic Feast of Candlemas Day. This Feast used to be the conclusion of the Christmas season due to the scripture connected with the day from the Gospel of Luke: ***When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, (40 days after the birth of Jesus) Mary and Joseph took Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...***

According to the Old Farmer's Almanac, a bear brought the forecast to the people of France and England, while those in Germany looked to a badger for a sign. In the 1800s, German immigrants to Pennsylvania brought their Candlemas legends with them. Finding no badgers but lots of groundhogs, they adapted the New World species to fit the lore. I think it is more likely that they could not find anyone who would hold up a badger for a photo opportunity. Badgers are not known for being friendly.

These days I am not as fanatical about what Phil says about the weather, but I love celebrating Candlemas Day. It celebrates the day when the light of Christ, literally, entered the temple the first time. And God's promise to Simeon was fulfilled, that he would see the **Savior** of all humankind. It is customary on Candlemas Day to bless candles - the candles that will be used throughout the liturgical year, and candles that are given to the congregation to take home. I call this a part of a **Spiritual Emergency Preparedness Kit (SEPK)**. Candlelight is an outward and visible sign of Christ who illumines our heart and soul.

We will be blessing candles at the Newman Center on February 2nd at the 5:15pm Mass and at our 9pm student Mass. If you bring a candle for your **SEPK**, we will bless it for you.

And if you see a fanatic outside on Feb. 2nd trying to catch a badger, (or groundhog), do not approach them. Simply say: "Put down the Badger!"



Fr. Jeff Belger
Priest Director

P.S. Tell Us About You! We invite you to stay updated on the ministry programs and services of the Newman Center. Please take a moment to provide or update your contact information via our secure site: [Click Here](#)

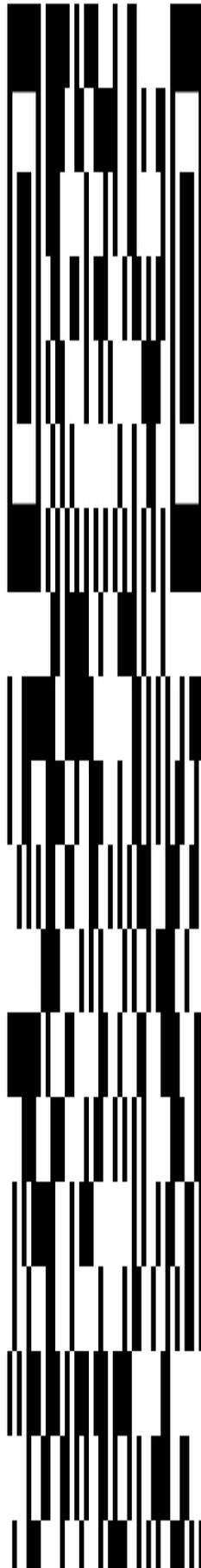
5 Things to Do Before Prayers for Candlemas

Candlemas is an exciting time for many people as it marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring. For those who celebrate it, there are a few things that need to be done in order to prepare for the holiday. Here are five things to do before Candlemas:

1. Clean your house from top to bottom. This will ensure that you are starting the new season with a clean slate.
2. Make sure you have enough candles. Candlemas is all about lighting up the dark days of winter, so make sure you have plenty of candles on hand.
3. Decorate your home with greenery. This will symbolize new growth and life blossoming after the long winter months.
4. Prepare your favorite feast. Candlemas is a time to celebrate and enjoy good food, so make sure you have a feast fit for a king or queen!
5. Finally, don't forget to pray! Candlemas is first and foremost a religious holiday, so take some time to reflect on your blessings and give thanks to God.

Excerpt from: [Today Prayers website](#).

Become a Newman Center monthly giving partner today via our online giving page. Visit the website at www.iowacatholic.org, or scan the QR code below.





NEWMAN

104 E. Jefferson Street
Iowa City, IA 52245
