

# February

The seasonal canticle for February is the *Nunc Dimittis*, from the first words of the Latin translation meaning “You now dismiss”. It is Simeon’s song to God after receiving the child Jesus in his arms. We sing the same in the historic liturgy of the Divine Service after we have received Jesus’ Body and Blood from the altar into our mouths.

February continues the reading of the Pentateuch. “Pentateuch” is the term, from the Greek meaning “five-vesseled”, used as early as the 3rd century to refer to the first five books of the Bible (Genesis-Deuteronomy). As noted previously, the content of these five books are held to have been passed from generation to generation by the faithful believers until they were written down by Moses (most probably during the 40 year wanderings in the desert, around 1446-1406 B.C.). We reject higher critical claims of four different authors (named “J”, “E”, “D”, and “P”).

The book of Exodus, which we begin on the first of this month, tells of God’s delivering His people from slavery in Egypt. Their “exit” or “departure” gives the book its name. Moses, the Passover, the Seven Feasts, the Exodus itself, the Manna and Water in the desert, the Tabernacle, and the High Priest are shadows of the greater grace to come in Christ Jesus (see especially how the author of Hebrews “preaches” on Exodus). Note well that the people of Israel are to be freed from bondage in Egypt in order to worship God, just as we are freed from our slavery to sin to do the same—to worship God.

In the middle of the month, we take up Leviticus, in which God through Moses proscribes how He is to be worshiped. God also gives details relating to the Levites, for which the book is named. These detailed regulations were likely given during the year Israel camped at Mt. Sinai as described in Exodus. God’s grace is again clear in pictures of Christ: the five offerings, the high priest, and the seven feasts. Those offerings and feasts no longer pertain to us, but the priestly office does. The work of the Old Testament priesthood was directed both toward God and toward His people and the world; today all baptized people are priests in their offering of praise to God, and pastors continue to represent the people to God and be God’s priests to the world.

The final five days of February, we read half of the book of Numbers, which continues Exodus’ historical narrative with the people’s preparations to move from Sinai to Canaan. Chapters 1 and 26 include census lists of the people, giving this book its name. In February we read far enough into the book to see the people’s lack of faith in and rebellion against God, costing them the Promised Land for a period of 40 years. If it were up to us and our complying with the law to win salvation, we would lose it for all eternity. Thanks be to God for the free gift of His Gospel of grace through faith.

Remember that though a good portion of the content of the Pentateuch consists of laws of one sort, there is still Gospel, the good news of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, to be found in these books. Similarly, the Old Testament as a whole must not be regarded as “law” in comparison to the New Testament as “Gospel”. In both Old and New Testaments one can find examples of both the law, the teaching of the Bible that shows us we are sinners, and the Gospel, the teaching of the Bible that tells us what Jesus Christ has done about our sin.

1	Luke 2:29-32 Exodus 1-3
2	Psalms 59 Exodus 4-6
3	Psalms 60 Exodus 7-9
4	Psalms 61 Exodus 10-12
5	Psalms 62 Exodus 13-15
6	Psalms 63 Exodus 16-18
7	Psalms 64 Exodus 19-21
8	Psalms 65 Exodus 22-24
9	Psalms 66 Exodus 25-27
10	Psalms 67 Exodus 28-30
11	Psalms 68 Exodus 31-33
12	Psalms 69 Exodus 34-36
13	Psalms 70 Exodus 37-38
14	Psalms 71 Exodus 39-40
15	Psalms 72 Leviticus 1-3
16	Psalms 73 Leviticus 4-6
17	Psalms 74 Leviticus 7-9
18	Psalms 75 Leviticus 10-12
19	Psalms 76 Leviticus 13-15
20	Psalms 77 Leviticus 16-18
21	Psalms 78 Leviticus 19-21
22	Psalms 79 Leviticus 22-24
23	Psalms 80 Leviticus 25-27
24	Psalms 81 Numbers 1-3
25	Psalms 82 Numbers 4-6
26	Psalms 83 Numbers 7-9
27	Psalms 84 Numbers 10-12
28	Luke 2:29-32 Numbers 13-15