Candlemas Carol  
(Simeon’s Song)  

Christmastide, Epiphany  
SATB with Organ Accompaniment

Candlemas commemorates the presentation of the Christ child in the temple, as recorded in Luke 2:22–39. The feast day is celebrated on February 2—forty days after Jesus’s birth, in accordance with Jewish law (Leviticus 12:1–4). This carol is particularly suitable for Candlemas day and the associated Sunday, and might also be sung at any time during the seasons of Christmastide and Epiphany.

Marian’s lyric portrays devout Simeon as he holds the infant Jesus in his arms, with Mary and Joseph looking on in amazement. Simeon speaks the beautiful Nunc Dimittis—the Latin title for his prayer beginning “Now you dismiss your servant in peace....”

There are countless musical settings of the Nunc Dimittis, consisting of Simeon’s prayer to God (Luke 2:28–32). Marian’s lyric is unusual in that it embraces also the second half of Simeon’s utterance (Luke 2:33–35)—largely neglected in music of the church—where his haunting words addressed to Mary foreshadow future suffering for the holy family.

The anthem’s tune is the Catalanian Carol of the Birds. My arrangement here adapts a solo setting of the carol’s traditional words with accompaniment by the late Walter Ehret (The International Book of Christmas Carols, Walton Music, 1980). This choral version is by Mr. Ehret’s kind permission.

The haunting character of this carol relates to its embracing of varying minor modes. The opening phrase (mss. 1–3) establishes the song’s basic tonality of harmonic minor, defined by the B-flat and C-sharp, yet immediately a C-natural evokes aeolian mode (mss. 3–5). The central phrases of the carol are in harmonic minor, and the song closes with a phrase in aeolian (mss.18–22). Mr. Ehret’s harmonies marvelously enrich the melody’s modal complexity.

Albert Blackwell  
January 10, 2012
With quiet intensity

The par-ents of our Lord brought Je-sus when a babe for bless-ing to Je-

ru-sa-lem. There Sim-e-on the pure stood at the Tem-ple door to

*Permission to arrange this piece given by Walter Ehret.

Free Anthems for Church Choirs, © 2012 by Albert Blackwell, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.
welcome in the Savior. There Sim-e-on the pure stood

at the Temple door to welcome in the Savior.
2. The old man took the babe, and prais-ing God he cried, “I am pre-pared for dy-ing. These fail-ing eyes have seen a light for all the world. Sal-
va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a

va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a va-tion here is ly-ing." "These fail-ing eyes have seen a
3. And then he turned to say to Mary much amazed, "There's sorrow in the making. Your boy comes as a sign. He will be sore opposed. Your boy comes as a sign. He will be sore opposed. Your
"Your boy comes as a sign. He heart he will be breaking."

will be sore opposed. Your heart he will be breaking."
4. The parents of our Lord brought Jesus when a babe for blessing to Jerusalem. There Simon the pure stood at the Temple door to
wel-come in the Sa-vior. "These fail-ing eyes have seen a
light for all the world. Sal-va-tion here is ly-ing."

These fail-ing eyes have seen a
light for all the world. Sal-va-tion here is ly-ing.

These fail-ing eyes have seen a
light for all the world. Sal-va-tion here is ly-ing.