

Burning votive candles are a common sight in most Catholic churches. These candles are seen as an offering that indicates we are seeking some favour from the Lord or the saint before which the votive is placed. Vigil lights are another type of candles burned, and these are typically accompanied by prayers of attention or waiting... *(Continued next week)*

- Bernard Kellett

Entrance antiphon: Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long. O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of mercy to all who call to you.

First Reading: Jeremiah 20: 7-9

Responsorial Psalm: 62. Response: For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.

Second Reading: Romans 12: 1-2

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us. Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew: 16: 21-27

Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: How great is the goodness, Lord, that you keep for those who fear you.

“On it Aaron shall burn fragrant incense. Morning after morning, when he prepares the lamps, and again in the evening twilight, when he lights the lamps, he shall burn incense. Throughout your generations this shall be the established incense offering before the Lord.” (Exodus 30:7-8)



Twenty second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A, 2023 Weekly Reflection: Why are prayer candles used in Church? (Part-1)

Candles play an important role in the Catholic Church and their origins go back centuries.

The symbolism of light has long been used in religious practice, as well as the general usage of candles. In Judaism, a perpetual light was kept burning in the Temple and synagogues to show the presence of God. Candles were also used in Roman pagan culture for religious and military processions, showing the divine favour and presence of the gods.

Christians adapted the use of lit candles for Mass, liturgical processions, evening prayer ceremonies, funeral processions, and to show reverence to the Blessed Sacrament. It is also likely that candles or oil lamps were burned at the tombs of saints, particularly martyrs.

In the Catholic church, light has always had a special significance because it represents Christ. We know that Jesus called himself the light of the world. In addition, St. John's Gospel connects Christ with imagery of light in **John 1:4** "in him was life; and the life was the light of men". We can understand why, therefore, during the Sacrament of Baptism, the priest presents a candle, which was lit from the Pascal candle, and tells the newly baptised to receive the light of Christ. Also at Easter, the Pascal candle is lit as a sign of the risen light of Christ. It cannot be put out, and shines into the world as a symbol of hope and love.

In churches today, we light candles before a statue or sacred image of our lord or a saint. The light signifies our prayer, which is offered in faith, entering the light of God. It also shows reverence and our desire to remain present in prayer even as we continue with our day.