

In addition to these special days, candles play a role in the blessing of ashes and palms, the dedication of churches and cemeteries, and the Mass of a newly ordained priest. They are also present at every sacrament of Penance.

-Bernard Kellett

Entrance antiphon: You are just, O Lord, and you your judgement is right; treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

First Reading: Ezekiel 33: 7-9

Responsorial Psalm: 94. Response: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your heart.

Second Reading: Romans 13: 8-10

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Your word is truth, O Lord, consecrate us in the truth. Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew: 18 15-20

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

Communion Antiphon: Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God; my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.

“He placed the lamp stand in the meeting tent, opposite the table, on the south side of the Dwelling, and he set up the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded him.” (Exodus 40:24-25)

“Every morning and evening they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the Lord. They set out the bread on the ceremonially clean table and light the lamps on the gold lampstand every evening.” (2 Chronicles 13:11a)



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

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.

Many of these candles are traditionally made from beeswax, and there is a reason for this. Worker bees who gather nectar from flowers do not play a part in the reproduction of the species. Reproduction is left to the queen bee and drone bees. The virgin worker bees dedicate their lives to the creation of this wax and represent Our lady, the virgin mother of Christ. The pure beeswax also represents Christ's pure flesh.

Altar candles have been used in Masses since at least the twelfth century. These candles remind us of the many persecuted Christians in the first centuries who secretly celebrated Mass at night or in the catacombs by candlelight. They may also be used in the entrance and recessional procession of Mass and are carried to where the Gospel is read as a sign of triumphant joy in the presence of the words of God.

Candlemas, or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and the Purification of Mary, is especially rich in symbolism as it relates to candles. When Jesus was presented in the Temple by Mary and Joseph, Simeon gave a famous prophecy about Christ being a light to Gentile nations and a sign for the Jewish people.

This led to the Church choosing this particular feast day to have a special yearly procession and blessing of candles. It is similar to the blessing of ashes and palms during lent and the Easter season.