

# LITURGY BYTES

## The Easter Candle

Candles were used at liturgy by the early Christians, which is probably no surprise to us. They used them for practical purposes, especially when praying in the catacombs. The light coming from the candles quickly became symbolic.



The candlelit ceremonies reminded Christians of Jesus' words in the Gospel of John: "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) For this reason, candles became a central part of Christian worship, and we associated them with the light of Christ.

In addition to using multiple candles for illumination, there began a tradition where a single candle was used as a direct symbol of Jesus. The most likely origin of what we know as the Easter candle, is derived from the Lucernarium, the evening office with which early Christians began the vigil for every Sunday and especially for Easter. This rite was probably inspired by the Jewish custom of lighting a lamp at the conclusion of the Sabbath. It certainly seems that the rite has roots in the beginning of Christianity. In the Lucernarium rite, the light to dispel the darkness of night was offered to Christ as the splendor of the Father. This ritual was carried out with greater solemnity at the Easter Vigil. Over time the Easter candle, also known to us as the Paschal candle, was given greater prominence and was decorated to further expound on the Paschal mystery.

Other interesting points about the wax candle include the light, the flame, the cross, the alpha and omega, the year and grains of incense.

- a) The pure wax extracted by bees from flowers symbolizes the pure flesh of Christ received from Mother Mary; b) the wick signifies the soul of Christ; c) and the flame represents His divinity.
- The light – The Roman Missal summarizes this symbolism with these words: "May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds." This connects the Easter candle to Jesus, who is the light of the world, as we read in John's Gospel.

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