

Easter: Interpreting The Lessons Of The Church Year

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE **PASCHAL CANDLE** VERSANTITY
 BY JONATHAN TEIXEIRA FOR THE FOCUS BLOG

That candle in the front of the Church isn't just really big, it's also really special. Let's take a look.

THE FLAME
 symbolizes the light of Christ. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:9) The lit candle also recalls the pillar of fire and cloud that the Israelites followed in the desert.

THE CANDLE FOLLOWER
 This candle burns evenly and prevents wax from dripping, and is used on many candles in the church and has no particular symbolism.

THE CANDLE
 must be at least 2 1/2 beeswax. This is because beeswax is precious stuff (it takes a lot of bees to make it) and the sacraments are precious and serious things. It also brings God's creation into the celebration.

DECORATIONS
 other than those mentioned below can be very elaborate, quite simple, or even nonexistent. The elements listed below can be presented in a variety of ways. The candle at left is one example.

ALPHA & OMEGA
 are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and are used to symbolize Christ as the "beginning and the end." (Revelation 22:13)

THE CROSS
 of Christ, the symbol of Christianity. Signifies that this is the paschal candle, and it's all about Jesus.

THE YEAR
 reminds us that Jesus is king of all time, even this year He's with us, right here, right now.

5 GRAINS OF INCENSE
 (often formed into wax balls) are inserted into the candle, symbolizing the 5 wounds of Christ.

THE TYPICAL PASCHAL CANDLE
 is about 4 1/2 pounds. The cathedral in Salisbury, England is said to have had a candle measuring 36 feet tall in the Middle Ages.

The paschal candle is blessed and lit for the first time at the Easter Vigil. The deacon carries it into the dark church, stopping three times to sing "That be our light," to which the people respond, "Thanks be to God!" It is the candle from which all others are lit that night, and it is also used to bless the baptismal font.

The paschal candle is lit for all liturgies during the Easter season as well as at baptisms and funerals all year round. The unused portions of paschal candles are often melted down to make new ones.

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