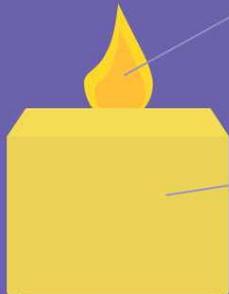


That candle in the front of the Church isn't just really big, it's also really special. Let's take a look.



**THE FLAME**

symbolizes the light of Christ. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:4-5) The lit candle also recalls the pillar of fire and cloud the Israelites followed in the desert.



**THE CANDLE FOLLOWER**

helps the candle burn evenly and prevents wax from dripping everywhere. This practical widget is used on many candles in the church and has no particular symbolism.



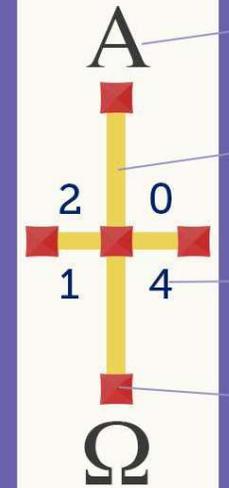
**THE CANDLE**

must be at least 51% beeswax. This is because beeswax is precious stuff (it takes a lot of bees' work to make it) and the sacraments are precious, 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 nails) are inserted into the candle, symbolizing the 5 wounds of Christ.



**THE TYPICAL PASCHAL CANDLE**

is between 3-5 feet tall, weighing between 4-10 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 "Christ 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.

This Illustrated Guide to the Paschal Candle was created by Jonathan Teixeira for the FOCUS Blog as part of LentSanity. Read more great articles and check out more Illustrated Guides at [focus.org/blog](http://focus.org/blog). FOCUS - The Fellowship of Catholic University Students launches college students into lifelong Catholic mission. Learn more at [focus.org](http://focus.org). You can find Jonathan on twitter @jonteixeira and at the blog he writes with his wife Amanda at [truegoodandbeautiful.net](http://truegoodandbeautiful.net).

<http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/an-illustrated-guide-to-the-paschal-candle.html>

**Outline of the Easter Triduum**

**HOLY THURSDAY (Mass of the Lord's Supper)**

- Entrance
- Gloria (with church bells)
- Liturgy of the Word
- The Washing of Feet
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament (Adoration)
- (Exit in silence, no dismissal)

**GOOD FRIDAY**

- (Silent entrance, prostration, prayer)
- Liturgy of the Word (Reading of the Lord's Passion)
- Solemn Intercessions
- Adoration of the Holy Cross
- Holy Communion (Our Father, distribution, prayer)
- (Exit in silence, no dismissal)

**THE EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT**

- Blessing of the Fire and Preparation of the Candle
- Procession
- The Easter Proclamation (Exsultet)
- Liturgy of the Word (OT Readings)
  - Glory to God (bells), lighting of the altar, Epistle
  - Alleluia, Gospel proclamation of the Resurrection
- Baptismal Liturgy
  - Litany, Blessing of Font, Baptisms, if any
  - Blessing of Water, Renewal of Baptismal Promises
- The Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Solemn Blessing

**Mass During the Day (Easter Morning)**

**NOTES**

- The Triduum begins with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper and ends with Evening Prayer on Easter evening.
- There is a little-known tradition of the Triduum Fast from Thursday night until after the Vigil (we fast from normal eating and from worldly activities of any kind)
- On Friday there should be one celebration. Tenebrae or vigil services and Taize prayer around the Cross are ways to engage those unable to come to the main liturgy.
- Holy Saturday is a time of quiet preparation (NOT for Easter Egg hunts!)