

Candles

When the people of Israel offered worship, in the Old Testament they did so amid the flicker of many lights. “So Solomon made... the lamp stands of pure gold, five on south side and five on the north, before the inner sanctuary” (1 Kings 7:48-49). So important were these candelabras that the main one, the Temple menorah, became the most recognizable symbol of all Judaism. In the New Testament, we find St. Paul preaching in a crowded room. St. Luke notes that ‘there were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered’ (Acts 20:8) Lights are so important, that St. John warns us in the book of Revelation, that if the Church is falling slack in its devotion, God will remove its lamp stand (Revelation 2:5).

The lamp was itself a symbol of Jesus Christ, who consistently spoke of His gospel and even of Himself in terms of light; “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). As such, during the Easter Vigil liturgy, the priest holds aloft the paschal candle and proclaims, “Christ our Light” three times!

St. Jerome, who is probably the greatest scholar in the ancient world, states; ‘whenever the Gospel is to be read the candles are to be lighted...’. Additionally St. Jerome also stated, ‘Your Word is a lamp unto my feet’ (Psalm 119:05).

Finally, we have all noticed that a lamp is constantly lit next to the Tabernacle; signifying HIS presence! This comes not only from Scripture (John 8:12), but from Tradition as well. As you will note from the sketch below, according to Jewish Traditions, the Priest of the Temple maintained a lit Menorah next to the veil, covering the Ark of the Covenant! The same is true today in Mother Church.

- Signs of Life by Scott Hahn