

Symbolism of the Candle

The Light of Faith

Huber, Raphael M., 1883-

Symbolism of the candle.

ADR 6696



Published by

THE CANDLELIGHT GUILD — 19 West 44th St., New York

Explanation of cover design

THE upright candle in the center of the pattern sends forth its rays over the whole world and emits a flame which signifies both joy and warmth. The candle is thus a symbol of the external visible works of the *Eternal Blessed Trinity*, signified by the circle which has neither beginning nor end, and by the triangle, all parts of which are perfectly equal; for light was created by God the Father as the first of His works; happiness was wrought through the salvation of the human race by the sacrifice of the Incarnate Son of God on the cross; whereas the love of the Holy Spirit was sent down upon the world on Pentecost Sunday by the Prince of Peace. Only through the full realization of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (symbolized by the dove) will permanent peace come upon this war-torn world (the lower partial sphere.) The candle, then, is the emblem of light, charity, and world-wide peace so longed for and sought after these days—but only obtainable through the operations of the Holy Spirit of the Triune God.

91150

Symbolism of the Candle

The Light of Faith



VERY REV. RAPHAEL M. HUBER,
O.F.M. CONV.

Professor of Church History

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

THE CANDLELIGHT GUILD
19 West 44th Street
New York

Published with Ecclesiastical Approval

Copyright 1951

Symbolism of the Candle

In virtue of its very nature the candle is perhaps one of the most symbolical sacramentals — next to the cross — in liturgical functions. Made from the wax of the virginal bees it has five specific functions or significations.

(1) *The candle gives light.* It thus signifies the first act of The Creator when He said: *Fiat lux*, "let there be light." The first thing we do in the morning is to pull up the shade and let light into the room. At work—at the desk, in the factory, in the home—we need light. No one can work in the dark, for as the Saviour says, "There cometh the night when no man can work." In the spiritual and supernatural sense the candle light signifies the illumination of the mind by Faith. God shows us the way and gives us the grace to follow his divine illuminations and inspirations.

(2) *The candle gives warmth.* Like the fire that warms the body, cooks our food, and forges steel into thousands of weapons, utensils and forces of locomotion, so does the candle in the liturgical sense of the word warm the heart with love and inflame the soul with affection. It is a symbol of the love of God for His creatures and,

vice versa, the creature's love for his Master. "God so loved the world that He gave us His only-begotten Son; and the Son so loved us that He gave Himself for our salvation." It inspired St. Francis of Assisi to step from the globe of the earth — as immortalized in Murillo's famous painting of the saint — to embrace the heart of His Saviour.

(3) *The candle cheers.* Where there is darkness there is usually sadness. The mortuary chapels are darkened and only the light of hope symbolized by the candles around the coffin offers any source of consolation to the deeply bereaved relatives and friends of the deceased. The candle signifies hope, resurrection, union without separation. Hence the beautiful prayer of Mother Church at the funeral service of her children: "Eternal Light grant unto them, O Lord, and let the perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace!" The candle then, when all else presages only sorrow, separation, and burial in the dark vault or grave gives hope, consolation and courage. What a beautiful function the candle performs: it inspires hope in distress, courage in defeat, victory in death —immortality.

(4) *The candle consumes itself.* The little candle consumes itself as it illumines,

warms, and cheers. It is therefore a symbol of the self-sacrifice that springs from charity than which there is no greater virtue. Born of love and perpetuated by charity—the greatest of all virtues—self sacrifice is the consummation of love. "Greater love than this hath no man," said the Saviour "than that a man lay down his life for his friends." It symbolizes the heroic patriotism that inspires the soldier on the battlefield or the sailor on the deep seas; the unfailing love of a mother for her child; the ineffable sacrifice of the God—Man on the Cross for the salvation of the world! What a beautiful symbolism the candle possesses! It consumes itself to be of service to others—a symbolism of heroism, devotion and self-sacrifice—of the soldier, of the mother, of Christ!

(5) *The candle signifies purity and chastity.* In its purest contents, it is made from the wax of the virginal bees. When a young man or young lady is invested with the habit of religious life the bishop or provincial gives them a candle in their hand. Be pure and innocent, my child, he would say, as the virginal bee that fabricated this candle. On the day of ordination the young levite offers to the bishop a candle, a symbol of his vow of

celibacy. On the altar at which the young priest celebrates his first Mass the candle burns brightly to signify his renunciation of the pomp of the world and the allurements of Satan to serve His Master *in doctrina et sanctitate*. When the young religious changes his (her) garb from that of the worldly vanity for the somber habit of religion, the officiating clergyman says to them: "Put off the old man and put on the new, who is created in justice and sanctity of truth!" The candle then is also the symbol of consummate sanctity!

The little candle, so insignificant as it might at first appear, is indeed one of the noblest of the Church's symbols. No Mass is celebrated, no sacrament (excepting penance) administered without it; no funeral is held but that the candle cheers, encourages, and guides the soul to her eternal reward. The candle gives light—it signifies Faith; it warms—it symbolizes love; it cheers—it gives hope; it consumes itself—it means sacrifice. It is made from the wax of virginal bees—it points to consummate sanctity! What a beautiful thing the candle is! Made on earth its symbolism reaches to the very throne of God. The Creator Himself becomes the creature's eternal reward because the latter practiced the virtues symbolized by the candle.



*THE CANDLELIGHT GUILD is supported
by contributions from the following:*

Cathedral Candle Co.
Emery Industries, Inc.
A. Gross Candle Co.
F. Marty & Co.
Muench-Kreuzer Candle Co.

Andrew C. Roesch, Inc.
A. I. Root Co.
St. Louis Candle & Wax Co.
Smith & Nichols, Inc.
Will & Baumer Candle Co.