

Dear Padre,

What is the value of lighting a candle in church?

Lighting candles is one of many customs that can be found in most of the world's religions. Lit candles, in church or at home, in front of a picture or statue of a favorite saint, serve a symbolic function. The light of the candle represents our desire that our prayer may be constant, as St. Paul urged (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The candle burns while we go about our daily tasks, symbolizing our desire to be at prayer with God. Similarly, Tibetan Buddhists spin prayer wheels and believe that as long as the wheels spin, a prayer is offered. Candles give light and banish the darkness. For Catholics they symbolize the light of Christ, by whose death and resurrection we are saved.

Lighting a candle isn't a required act. You can pray without lighting candles, without statues, without anything but your faith in God. However, we Catholics love our symbols. We like to engage all of our senses in our prayer experience: beautiful churches, colored light, incense, great music and, yes, candles.

One extreme position to avoid is lighting a candle hoping it will cause something else to happen, like the sudden cure of a loved one or relief from financial ruin. We are to avoid all appearance of using candles as if they have an untapped, magical power. Nevertheless, lighting a candle as a part of our prayer is a comforting custom and most things (and people?) look lovelier by candlelight. ●

Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR / DearPadre.org



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Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.

MONDAY

March 6
Lenten Weekday
Dn 9:4b-10
Lk 6:36-38

TUESDAY

March 7
Lenten Weekday
Is 1:10, 16-20
Mt 23:1-12

WEDNESDAY

March 8
Lenten Weekday
Jer 18:18-20
Mt 20:17-28

THURSDAY

March 9
Lenten Weekday
Jer 17:5-10
Lk 16:19-31

FRIDAY

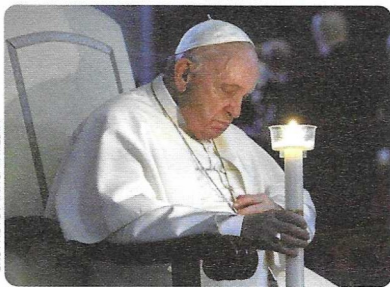
March 10
Lenten Weekday
Gn 37:3-4,
12-13a, 17-28
Mt 21:33-43,
45-46

SATURDAY

March 11
Lenten Weekday
Mi 7:14-15,
18-20
Lk 15:1-3,
11-32

SUNDAY

March 12
*Third Sunday
of Lent*
Ex 17:3-7
Rom 5:1-2, 5-8
Jn 4:5-42



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A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace. For in the words of León Bloy,... "The only great tragedy in life is not to become a saint."

GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE (ON THE CALL TO HOLINESS
IN TODAY'S WORLD), MARCH 19, 2018