

THOUGH MANY, WE ARE ONE

UNIT 6

CHRIST IS RISEN

Lesson 3

The Paschal Candle

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Lesson Overview

Students will learn about the Paschal Candle, its significance, the common symbols upon it, as well as how it is blessed each year at the Easter Vigil.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Religious Education:

Grade 4 - CL3.3: Distinguish between 'sacramentals' and 'sacraments' and use symbols, words, gesture, prayer and music as sacramentals in the creation of a sacred space and ritual celebrations that focus on the seasons of the liturgical year. [CCC nos. 1167-1179; 1168-1171]

Grade 5 - CL3.1: Identify and examine a selection of the scripture passages in the New Testament which reveal the divinity of Jesus (e.g. Epiphany, miracles, transfiguration, resurrection) and explain using examples, how images, signs and symbols in the Liturgical year convey this important truth of faith for Christians. [CCC nos. 1153-1162]

Grade 6 - CL3.2: Describe various ways Christ's death and Resurrection are expressed in both the sacraments of Initiation and the liturgical rites and symbols of the Easter Triduum (e.g. through symbols - Darkness / Light, Fire, the Paschal Candle, empty tabernacle; through word and song - Exultat, Scripture Readings; through sacramentals - incense, water, oils, cross). [CCC nos. 1127-1130]

ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS & CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

The Catholic Social Teachings evident in this lesson include:

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations evident in this lesson include:

CGE2a: Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values

CGE3c: Thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems

CGE5g: Achieves excellence, originality, and integrity in one's own work and supports these qualities in the work of others

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GUIDING QUESTIONS (coming out of the Big Idea)

Big Idea:

The Liturgical seasons are marked by specific rituals, prayers, signs, images and colours which have developed throughout the Tradition of the Church and which have become part of our experience of faith in Christ as expressed in the yearly life of the Church.

- When is the Paschal Candle used throughout the year?
- Why is the Paschal Candle significant to the Easter Vigil?

LEARNING GOALS

At the end of this lesson, students will know, understand and/or be able to:

- Describe what the Paschal Candle is used for
- Describe the common symbols found on the Paschal Candle
- Summarize the Solemn Beginning of the Easter Vigil

Success Criteria, based on the Learning Goals, can be co-constructed as a class in language meaningful to students. The success criteria help students understand what to look for during the learning and what it looks like once they have learned. They identify the significant aspects of student performance that are assessed and/or evaluated (i.e., the “look-fors”) in relation to curriculum expectations.

INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS AND CONTEXT

Terminology:

- Paschal Candle
- Alpha
- Omega
- Incense
- Taper

Materials:

- Pen or Pencil
- Handouts

Internet Resources:

- Reel to Reel: Paschal Candles:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YG7J26Pqd9w>
- Blessing the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y89dINGKNvA>

Resources: (see attached Appendices)

- Photo – Paschal Candle (*Appendix 1*)
- Reel to Reel Question Sheet (*Appendix 2*)
- Reel to Reel Answer Key (*Appendix 3*)
- An Illustrated Guide to the Paschal Candle (*Appendix 4*)
- Origin and Use of the Paschal Candle [for teacher information] (*Appendix 5*)
- Roman Missal: The Easter Vigil, First Part (*Appendix 6 – as separate attachment*)

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MINDS ON

- Establishing a positive learning environment
- Connecting to prior learning and/or experiences
- Setting the context for learning

Ask students if they know what the biggest candle in any Catholic church is called (the Paschal/Easter Candle). Share the photo (*Appendix 1*) with the students. Do they know what it represents?

Ask students if they have seen it in use (baptisms/funerals/Easter).

Ask if they can name any symbols that are found on the candle (answers will be confirmed by watching the video). A hint for the students is that they would have seen this candle near the altar or baptismal font during their church tour.

ACTION

- Introducing new learning or extending/reinforcing prior learning
- Providing opportunities for practice and application of learning (guided → independent)

Introduce the [Reel to Reel: Paschal Candles video](#) to the students. The video features a priest from Massachusetts who makes his own Paschal Candles. The clip teaches about how a Paschal Candle is made, the symbols that are found upon it, its uses, and additional useful information. Before viewing the clip, review the questions on the handout (*Appendix 2*), and inform students that they are to complete as many questions as they can while watching the video. All answers will be discussed afterwards.

**Differentiated Instruction: Some students may use assistive technology or a scribe for written tasks.*

After viewing the clip, have students share their answers in small groups. Any answers that they have missed can be recorded during the sharing session. Discuss the responses with the entire class.

Ask if anyone has ever attended the Easter Vigil. If yes, ask the student(s) to describe their experience. Explain that at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday, the entire church is dark and then a fire is lit and blessed. This fire is then used to light the Easter candle, also called the Paschal Candle and that it is carried into the church to symbolize the light of Christ that dispels the darkness. Inform the students that they will get an opportunity to witness a Paschal Candle being prepared for the very first time. Introduce the video clip [Blessing the Paschal Candle](#) which shows this happening. *Note: Appendix 6, The text of the Easter Vigil, may be helpful in following along with this video clip.*

After having watched the clip, ask students to describe what they saw (prayers, blessing of the fire, preparation of the candle, symbols that they may have recognized on the Paschal Candle). What other symbols can they identify in the video? Fire – the Light of Christ; Incense – Christ opening the gates of heaven; white vestments – Easter/feast day.

It can be added that once the candle is brought inside, all of the parishioners light their tapers from the Easter candle to celebrate the resurrection of Christ.

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CONSOLIDATION

- Providing opportunities for consolidation and reflection
- Helping students demonstrate what they have learned

Share An Illustrated Guide to the Paschal Candle (*Appendix 4*) with the students to summarize the lesson. Inform students that they will be making their own version of the Paschal Candle in the next lesson.

Each student will be able to take home this candle to display/use throughout the Easter season.

CONTINUED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Further extensions to this lesson might include:

- While the students are in groups, consider playing the following songs:
- Here I am to Worship (Chris Tomlin): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vx936NVJC5M>
- Marvelous Light (The Remnant): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwgflL4pKI>
- You Are the Light (Josh Blakesley): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsowbf2KSs4>
- Go Light Your World (Chris Rice): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsM5lt9tCFo>
- Ask students to describe the Paschal Candle in their own parish. Each candle can be different. Does it contain the elements described in the video? What is similar/different? Did they know that the candle is replaced each year?

APPENDIX 1

Photo: Paschal Candle



APPENDIX 2

Name: _____

Reel to Reel Video: Paschal Candles

1. What do the 5 black marks represent in the candle?
2. What goes into the candle before the black marks?
3. What is in the centre of the candle?
4. What does the Alpha above the cross mean?
5. What does the Omega below the cross mean?
6. What does the date remind us?
7. When is the new candle lit for the first time?
8. When do we light the Paschal candle?
9. What does the candle symbolize?

APPENDIX 3

Name: ANSWER KEY

Reel to Reel Video: Paschal Candles

1. What do the 5 black marks represent in the candle?

The 5 black marks represent the wounds of Christ on the cross.

2. What goes into the candle before the black marks? Why?

5 grains of incense go into the candle first, to symbolize Christ opening the gates of heaven for us.

3. What is in the centre of the candle?

A large cross is in the centre of the candle.

4. What does the Alpha above the cross mean?

Alpha means that the word of God was always present to us.

5. What does the Omega below the cross mean?

Omega means that there is no end to God's word.

6. What does the date remind us?

The date reminds us when the Word became flesh (when Jesus was born/came to Earth).

7. When is the new candle lit for the first time?

The new candle is lit for the first time on Easter Saturday evening, at the Easter Vigil.

8. When do we light the Paschal candle?

We light the Paschal candle at all Masses during Easter and at all baptisms and funerals throughout the year.

9. What does the candle symbolize?

The candle symbolizes Christ, who is the Light of the World. It reminds us that he leads us to eternal life, by keeping the darkness away from our lives.

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE PASCHAL CANDLE

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 1:4-5) 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 PASHCAL 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. FOCUS - The Fellowship of Catholic University Students launches college students into lifelong Catholic mission. Learn more at focus.org. You can find Jonathan on twitter @jonteixeira and at the blog he writes with his wife Amanda at truegoodandbeautiful.net.

Teacher Appendix: Origin and Use of the Paschal Candle

The following may prove useful to gain a familiarity with the Tradition of the Paschal Candle.

Origin and Use of the Paschal Candle

ROME, 3 APRIL 2007 (ZENIT) Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy, Regina Apostolorum university.

The origin of the paschal candle is uncertain. The most likely origin is that it derived from the Lucernarium, the evening office with which early Christians began the vigil for every Sunday and especially that of Easter.

In turn, this rite is probably inspired by the Jewish custom of lighting a lamp at the conclusion of the Sabbath. The rite therefore has its roots in the very beginning of Christianity.

In the Lucernarium rite the light destined to dispel the darkness of night was offered to Christ as the splendor of the Father and indefectible light. This Sunday rite was logically carried out with greater solemnity during the Easter Vigil.

There is clear evidence that this solemn rite began no later than the second half of the fourth century. For example, the use of singing a hymn in praise of the candle and the Easter mystery is mentioned as an established custom in a letter of St. Jerome, written in 384 to Presidio, a deacon from Piacenza, Italy.

Sts. Ambrose and Augustine are also known to have composed such Easter proclamations. The poetic and solemn text of the "Exultet," or Easter proclamation now in use, originated in the fifth century but its author is unknown.

The use of the candle has varied over the centuries. Initially it was broken up after the Easter Vigil and its fragments given to the faithful. This was later transferred to the following Sunday; but from the 10th century the use prevailed of keeping it in a place of honor near the Gospel until the feast of the Ascension (now until Pentecost).

From around the 12th century the custom began of inscribing the current year on the candle as well as the dates of the principal movable feasts. The candle hence grew in size so as to merit the attribution of pillar mentioned in the "Exultet." There are cases of candles weighing about 300 pounds. The procession foreseen in the present rite requires much more moderate dimensions.

The paschal candle is usually blessed at the beginning of the Easter Vigil ceremonies and is placed on a special candlestick near the altar or ambo.

During the ceremony, five grains of incense representing Christ's wounds are inserted in the form of a cross. An alpha above the cross and an omega below (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) indicate that Christ is the beginning and end of all. The current year is traced on the four sides of the cross.

The candle remains in the presbytery during the 50 days of Easter season and is lit for all liturgical offices. After Pentecost it is left next to the baptismal font.

During the year it is lit during all baptisms and funeral services; the candle is placed next to the casket during the funeral Mass. In this way it symbolizes baptism as a death and resurrection in Christ, and also testifies to Christian certainty in the resurrection of the dead as well as to the fact that all are alive in the risen Christ.

The paschal candle may also be lit for some devotional practices, such as the fairly common custom of the faithful renewing their baptismal promises on concluding retreats and spiritual exercises.

Finally, while venerable legitimate customs might exist in some places, I am unaware of any official liturgical role for the paschal candle during the celebration of matrimony. ZE07040321

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Follow-up: Origin and Use of the Paschal Candle [4-24-2007]

Our eagle-eyed readers spotted some discrepancies in my piece on the paschal candle.

When mentioning the use of the paschal candle at funerals I should have said "may be used," as this is an option not a mandate.

I also mentioned the "blessing" of the candle in general terms whereas in fact it is the new fire, not the candle, that is blessed.

All the same, as we suggested in our column of April 11, 2006, a pastor of multiple parishes may simply bless extra candles after the Easter vigil.

One priest with several parishes asked if he may continue using paschal candles from previous years in those parishes where there has been no Easter vigil.

Each parish should have a new candle every year as a sign of each community's participation in the Easter mystery. However, if this represents a heavy economic burden and the candle receives little use during the year, then a candle with a changeable date could be used.

Finally, I mentioned that the candle is lit during all liturgical offices during the 50 days of Easter. This is not obligatory, however, and the liturgical norms would only require that candle be lit for the more solemn ceremonies; for example, for all solemnities, all Sunday Masses and all daily Masses during the Easter octave.

Provided Courtesy of:
Eternal Word Television Network
5817 Old Leeds Road
Irondale, AL 35210
www.ewtn.com

APPENDIX 6

**NOTE: APPENDIX 6 IS A SEPARATE ATTACHMENT/FILE
TO UNIT 6, LESSON 3**

Roman Missal, 3rd Edition

The Easter Vigil

First Part:

**The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil
or Lucernarium**