

Tridentine Community News

May 20, 2012 – Sunday After the Ascension

The Types of Candles Found in a Church

A church where the Traditional Latin Mass is celebrated tends to be replete with candles. They all have specific names and purposes, for devotions and for the Sacred Liturgy.

The first and most prominent type are the Altar Candles. For Low Mass and other rites celebrated at the altar two candles are lit, one on each side of the central Altar Crucifix. High Masses require four or six candles to be lit, two or three on each side, respectively. For a Solemn Pontifical Mass, a seventh candle is placed on the altar as a sign of the Bishop's office.

One typically only sees the use of four candles for High Mass when only four are available, such as at the Rosary Chapel and at St. Hyacinth Church; if six are available, all six are used. Some churches will have smaller Low Mass candles in addition to the four or six High Mass candles; their smaller size serves to distinguish the lesser solemnity of the Low Mass, as well as to allow all the High Mass candles to burn out at the same rate.

The two sets of three candles are but one of numerous Trinitarian expressions in the Mass. Consider how when incensing the altar, the priest makes three sets of three swings on each side of the Altar Crucifix; the triple Kyrie; and triple Signs of the Cross during the Canon.

In the Extraordinary Form, the above are the only candles permitted at the altar during Mass. Additional devotional candles, no matter how aesthetically appealing they may be and tempting they might be to light, are not to be used.

The two acolytes, or principal altar servers, at a High Mass carry Processional Candles. These candles are used during the entrance and exit processions, and are held by the acolytes next to the priest or deacon while he is chanting the Gospel.

Up to six Torches may be used. A Torch is most properly a candle enclosed in glass. In the absence of proper Torches, Processional Candles or Low Mass Candlesticks may be used.

At High Masses when there are insufficient altar servers for Torches and at Low Masses, a Sanctus Candle may be placed on the altar. The Torches and Sanctus Candle serve the same purpose: They arrive at the Sanctus and depart after the Blessed Sacrament is reposed after Holy Communion. The Torches and the Sanctus Candle highlight the Real Presence of Christ on the altar during that portion of Holy Mass.

A Bugia (“BOO-zhee-yah”) is the candle held by the books during a Bishop's Mass. A proper Bugia has a long handle to enable the Bugia bearer to stand back from the bishop. If a proper Bugia is not available, a simpler Sanctus Candle may be used instead.

Six Requiem Candlesticks are placed around the casket at a Funeral Mass or around the catafalque at a memorial Requiem Mass. The two sets of three candles on each side of the casket or catafalque are yet another sign of the Holy Trinity.

When the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, a minimum of six candles must be on each side of the monstrance on the altar. Typically those candles are in Benediction Candelabras.

A Tenebrae Hearse is a floor-standing triangular stand holding 15 candles, used for the service of Tenebrae during the Sacred Triduum, during which one candle at a time is extinguished to signify the darkness in the world following Christ's death.

The Paschal Candle which is blessed at the Easter Vigil Mass is lit at all Masses from the Easter Vigil through the Feast of the Ascension, as a sign of the Risen Christ during the Easter season. It is extinguished after the Gospel on the Feast of the Ascension as a sign that our Lord has departed earth for heaven.

A Baptismal Candle is given to the sponsors at the end of the Sacrament of Baptism to represent the Light of Christ.

The Sanctuary Lamp is a long-lasting candle, usually enclosed in red glass, that is lit in all places where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. Sometimes the Sanctuary Lamp is an elaborate hanging fixture. Sometimes it is a wall-mounted candle. Sometimes there are multiple Sanctuary Lamps, so that one can be lit in anticipation of the other burning out. In more modest churches and chapels where there is no proper Sanctuary Lamp, red candles may be placed on the altar adjacent to the tabernacle. Such candles have temporarily replaced St. Josaphat's Sanctuary Lamp until a more secure mounting method for it can be determined.

Votive Candles are the small glass cup candles that one sees on Benediction Candelabras and on side altars and shrines. Occasionally one sees electric Votive Candles. In many cases these are required by local fire regulations. Do not jump to the conclusion that it is the choice of the parish.

Larger Devotional Candles, such as the ones by the statue of St. Anthony and the side altars at St. Josaphat, are designed to last several days. This is an appropriate time to bust a myth: The church does not profit from the \$2.00 it asks for each large devotional candle. Those candles actually cost around \$2.00 each in bulk. Quality candles are not cheap.

The Church prohibits the use of gas or oil candles; she likewise requires a certain percentage of beeswax to be used in certain candles, a topic addressed in our July 3, 2011 column. This is an example where common sense must be the First Rubric: Yes, we strive to use beeswax candles, however if we have run out and only have non-beeswax candles, or even only gas or oil candles available fifteen minutes before Mass, they will have to do. Perfection must not be the enemy of the good.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Mon. 05/21 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *St. Josaphat* (Feria [Celebrant may choose a Votive Mass])

Tue. 05/22 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *Assumption-Windsor* (Daily Mass for the Dead [Low Requiem Mass with Absolution])