

***Thou also shalt light my candle:  
the Lord my God shall make my  
darkness to be light. Ps. 18:28***

Anyone may light a candle on the votive stand in church. But why should such candles be lighted? What is the object? As soon as we begin to think about it, we understand what a friendly and beautiful thing light is. Light makes the world seem safe again, and our hearts glad. Our Blessed Lord tells us that He is the Light of the world. He is the Everlasting Light who is to make the world bright and glad at all times and in all places. We put lights at night at crossroads and in dark corners of the street. Why not in the corners of the church? In the coal mines the miners wear a cap in front of which is a little socket, and in the socket a light. One object of the light is to prevent the men running into each other, and stumbling. That is one reason why we should make our lights shine in churches that are dark.

There are other reasons.  
Let us remember them:

1. The lighting of candles in church is a method of prayer. We pray for some special object, and light a little candle that will burn several hours as a memorial of our petition before God. There are wise people who tell us that God does not need to be reminded of our prayer; the He does not care about such objective things. But He himself has told us differently. He said to the patriarch: "I do set my bow in the cloud...and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature." (Genesis 9:13-16)

So we believe He looks upon our votive candles and remembers our poor prayer.

2. It is also a method of thanksgiving. There is, of course, no obligation resting upon anyone to light a candle, but just as we light candles on a birthday cake, or illuminate a city when a

king or dignitary visits, so there are those who, when they have any special cause for thanksgiving, like to do something more than return verbal thanks to God. They like to illuminate the house of God with a blessed candle or two. Then, long after they have left the Church, a little light shines there as a token not only to God, but to all who enter the Church, of their love and gratitude.

*Jesus bids us shine, with a calm clear light,  
Like a little candle shining in the night.  
In a world of darkness so we must shine,  
You in your corner, and I in mine.*

3. It is a method of self-denial and alms-giving. Those who light a votive candle place some money in the box on the stand before they light it. Some would say: "what a waste of candles and money. Why not give the money to directly to the poor?" We do not care to follow that suggestion. The first person to make that suggestion was Judas over the expensive ointment poured on Jesus' feet. We know his real motivation was not love

of the poor, but love of money - he was a thief and would have kept the money himself. To him was fulfilled the word of the Wise Man: "There shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out." (Proverbs 24:20)

4. It is method by which we may be reminded of our vocation, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."  
(Matthew 5:16)

In a lighthouse, somewhere on a lonely rock, the keeper mounts the stairs to kindle the light. His is a secluded life. As in a treadmill, day by day, he pursues his monotonous round, filling the lamp, trimming the wick, polishing the reflector, kindling the light. He hears no voice of thanks or encouragement; but far out on the water there is many a sailor who watches for the gleaming of that light.

So be patient. Watch and pray. Let your light shine. In due time your reward will come. The reward is not for unusually conspicuous service, but always for faithfulness. "Well done good and faithful servant. Thou has been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

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# *The Lighting of Votive Candles*

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