

## Twelve Meanings of Candles Based on Their Properties

Candles give light. They remind us of Christ Our Savior, Who said "I am the Light of the world." (John 9:5) They also remind us that we must also shine as lights, for Christ said that we, too, are the light of the world. For He said: "You are the light of the world." And, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven". (Matt 5:14-16).

Candles give warmth. They remind us that we must also give warmth to those around us, especially those who are cold and needy – to warm them with our love.

Candles burn with fire. They remind us of the eternal fires of hell, which await us if we do not repent and do not follow God's commandments.

Candles are beautiful but dangerous. They shed a beautiful soft light in the Church makes the icons glow and that makes it so much easier to concentrate in prayer. However, if not monitored, they can also ignite the church furnishings and cause the church to burn down and all of the icons be destroyed. They teach us to be ever vigilant and careful, because lack of vigilance can bring terrible consequences.

Candles are not permanent. They remind us that our time of life here on earth is fleeting, and that every day our life grows shorter until it is extinguished. Candles call us, therefore, to repentance, for our time here on earth is not forever.

Candles are straight. They remind us that we must stand straight before the Eyes of the Lord., that our deeds must be straightforward and righteous. A candle that is not standing straight up will not burn properly. So we too must be straight in our ways, leaning neither to one side or the other.

Candles bend but do not break. A beeswax candle has the wonderful property of being able to be bent in a full circle without breaking, but can then be straightened out again. They remind us that we must be able to withstand challenges and sorrows that we face in our lives without breaking.

Though these sorrows may bend our resolve, we, through contrition and repentance, can become straight once again.

Candles can be both hard and soft. They are hard when they are cold, but become soft when they are warmed. In the same way, our hearts are hard when cold, and we must warm them with love of God and of our fellow man in order for them to be soft again.

Candles shed tears. When burning, the wax of a candle causes little drips to form and run down the candle that look like tears running down our face. They remind us that we must shed tears over our sins, and out of compassion for others.

Candles are gift of the animal world. Candles are made from beeswax, which is the product of the labor of thousands of honeybees working together. Candles remind us that we must also be industrious and not lazy, and that we must love all of God's creatures, big and small and be thankful to them when we use the fruit of their labors for our benefit.

Candles are useful but simple. Candles are not complex. They are simple in nature, but perform their task well. Especially in our age where we are surrounded by complex technology, candles remind us that the simple things are often the best. Throughout the ages, candles have made it possible to perform services in the hours when it is dark outside. They make it possible for the priest to read the prayers in his service book, for readers and chanters to be able to assist in the services. Without candles, there would have been no All-Night Vigils, no Midnight Offices, no Paschal Midnight Matins and liturgies. Candles remind us that we too must do our jobs well, to live our lives well in accordance with God's commandments, without complications.

Candles are useless without a spark. They remind us that we all are dead and useless unless we are lit with the spark of the Holy Spirit, which ignites the flame of life. Candles remind us of the Holy Spirit, Who appeared to the Disciples in the form of a flame. They remind us that we must ask the Holy Spirit to come and abide in us, and cleanse us of every impurity that our souls may be saved.