



## Why have burning tapers or candles?

Some Lodges are suppressing the use of burning tapers or candles in favour of modern battery or electrically operated ones.

Why should the tradition of using real flames be maintained?

## **Why have burning tapers or candles?**

The ceremonial use of lights probably has a double origin: in a very non-natural symbolism, and in the adaptation of certain pagan and Jewish rites and customs of which the symbolic meaning was later adopted by Christian Churches.

Light is everywhere; the symbol of joy and of life-giving power, as darkness is of death and destruction. The naked flame is an impressive element in worship has been used in many religions. It still has its place in two at least of the great religions of the world. The Parsis adore fire as the visible expression of Ahura Mazda, the eternal principle of light and righteousness; the Brahmans worship it as divine and omniscient. The Hindu festival of Diwali (Diyawali, from diya, light), when temples and houses are illuminated with countless lamps, is held every November to celebrate Lakhshmi, the goddess of prosperity.

In the ritual of the Jewish temple fire and light played a conspicuous part. In the Holy of Holies was a cloud of light (shekinali), symbolical of the presence of Yahweh, and before it stood the candlestick with six branches, on each of which and on the central stem was a lamp eternally burning; while in the forecourt was an altar on which the sacred fire was never allowed to go out. Similarly the Jewish synagogues have each their eternal lamp.

Candle burning goes as far back as the ancient Egyptians. They were not used by the Egyptians just for light, they also used them in forms of prayer and ritual. From ancient times all the way up to the present time candles are widely used in the practice of prayer and ritual. When you enter many churches there are candles burning on the Altar and it is certainly not because the congregation needs some light.

We see candles at weddings when they are lit to ensure a long happy marriage. They are even burned at funerals in honour of the dead.

Candles have a special energy and power to them; a power that many are not aware of.

People light candles for prayer and that's fine. Some think when a candle is lit to help bring a little love into your life then it is considered spell casting and therefore evil or even black magic. Of course that is not the case. A spell is simply an intention that is put out into the universe. Whether it be a simple prayer at bed time or lighting a candle at church for your sick Auntie, it is still a spell. Even though your own thoughts can create your own future, some even believe that candles bring more of a charge to that intent. The same goes for burning candles for a specific intent, which should always be positive.

People burn candles in the room just to bring a nice change to the atmosphere, and it also claimed that the actual colour of the candles also have a lot to do with the energy they will attract. I have heard people relate black candles to evil or dark magic, which is not necessarily true of course. Black is actually a good colour of candle to burn to help get rid of negative energy or for a banishing.

Blue candles, like the ones we use, are said to be linked to such things as peace, healing, truth, friendship, and hope. And strangely enough, a blue candle is linked to a day of the week, which in fact is Thursday!

Some people also believe in blessing their candles and even burning the candles on specific days of the week and during different phases of the moon. Apparently, if you pay attention to the moon phases when doing a candle prayer; if you are looking to gain something such as love, or a new job or career, you should do so during the waxing moon.

And if you're trying to get rid of something, like a habit or illness, then you should do this during the waning moon. I've never tried it ... not yet anyway!

Now, I'm sort of a contemplative type of person, and sometimes during Lodge meetings my mind can drift and I can find myself sitting there deep in thought. One time a long while ago, at a meeting during our 1<sup>st</sup> degree, I was particularly focused and, somehow, drawn to our three burning tapers or candles. The three "lesser lights", as we refer to them, symbolically, have multiple meanings attached to them; for instance, in most jurisdictions of Freemasonry, they refer to Sun, the Moon, and the RWM.

Now I know that, sadly, not all jurisdictions use real burning candles anymore, so for some, what I'm about to say would be nothing more than some ramblings due to the differences between Lodges and Grand Lodges. But for us, at least, I hope that what I'm about to say makes some sort of sense worthy of consideration.

Well, while sitting there and letting my mind wander that evening, I found myself staring at them and became mesmerised by them flickering in the gloom. Now, this is not entirely special, because for thousands of years many cultures have used candles as objects of meditation to do exactly as I had just done, without even thinking about it. I found myself sort of mulling over how funny it was that, in a large part the symbolism of our candles (or at least what parts are explained in our ritual), our burning tapers didn't seem to have much in common with any physical attribute of the candle itself and began to think about what I might find as some kind of physical symbolism.

Now, I don't normally have "visions" or "revelations", and I don't want this to sound overly dramatic, but I sensed a strange

feeling come over me and three particular examples came to me, almost simultaneously and quite instantly.

I really did feel like this was some idea that was being shared with me. I know that there is a fine line between “vision” and “hallucination” and I assure you I had not had not even had my favourite Dram yet!

But I just can't describe the feeling that came over me that made this more than just an idea that popped into my head. It was more of a “happening” that was “telling” me there was a connection that I should make regarding these candles I was staring at.

Anyway it sort of felt spooky!

Ok, so, enough drama, let me just get to the point!

Three things came to me nearly simultaneously. Three amazing, (in my humble opinion), mysterious and physical attributes of the candle and its flame that relate to each of us in our QUEST to bring LIGHT to the world.

1. The first of these amazing physically symbolic attributes of the candle is found in the act of using one flame to light another. Doesn't it seem symbolically important that when flame is used to light another, the original flame is in no way diminished by this action? A candle **LOSES NOTHING** in lighting another candle.

An old Chinese philosopher once explained, “If I have an apple and you have a different apple and we exchange apples, we each still only have one apple. **HOWEVER**, if I have a wise lesson and you have a different wise lesson and we exchange lessons, do we not both then have **TWO** wise lessons?”

Mathew 5:15 "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." Many times though, for reasons such as shyness, fear of ridicule,<sup>5</sup> or whatever we hide our light. We should remember this example so that we boldly, and freely, share our Light, our Wisdom, or our current understanding of the Craft with others never fearing that our candle will be in any way diminished.

So I'd say to you Brethren, think of yourself as a Light Bearer or one who has had a wise lesson bestowed upon you by our Craft. You are a single candle with a burning flame. That burning flame represents the Light of Wisdom and we are instructed to share that light.

2. This sharing of Light or Wisdom brings us to the second part, which is the coming together of Light Bearers for the common goal or common good.

Think about what physically takes place when two or more separate burning candle's wicks come close enough together. Do they interfere with each other? Are they in anyway envious, jealous or do they push each other away in any manner? NO, in fact they immediately, seamlessly, and selflessly come together as ONE in performance and action. So my Brethren should WE so selflessly come together in our performance and execution of our common goals, our actions for the common good.

3. The last thing that came to me was more of a singular aspect of the flame itself. Flames have from Time Immemorial been a nearly mystical thing to man. They are hypnotic in their unceasing performances. Think about this for a moment, how the flame always burns in an upright manner. No matter how you adjust, move, or position the candle stick, the flame

always points to the heavens as if it is yearning to be re-integrated with a Divine Flame from above.

Should we as Freemasons not be similar? Are we not taught in our wise lessons, to walk uprightly in our several stations, and to be ever striving for betterment to make ourselves "Living Stones for that house not made with hands eternal IN THE HEAVENS?"

The material world and "rat-race" of life is certainly always trying to affect our metaphorical candlestick, pushing us one way, turning us another, but if we keep that symbolism of the Flame in mind, we find that it IS possible to remain focused on the higher, to ascend as we are meant to, to "keep all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions in accordance with our professions as Masons" regardless of those many outside distractions and influences.

During this piece of research, I came across a wee prayer, which, with a little modification, seemed quite appropriate to our own setting here in the Lodge:

"In the name of the light, who is the Great Architect of the Universe, may the light of this candle remove all fear, negativity and doubt. May this candle attract wisdom and positive energy to my Brethren in Freemasonry, for the highest good of all and for the good of the universe. So mote it."

My Brethren, I hope you find these thoughts Enlightening?

And, perhaps, during our next 1<sup>st</sup> degree you will look upon the Burning Tapers or Candles in a different Light!