

# CROSS AND CANDLES

If we were to look at the presbytery in different churches and chapels, we would notice that the cross is displayed in a variety of ways. The cross can stand in the middle or at the side of the altar, in front of the altar on the right or left side, a considerable distance behind the altar, or it can be placed in the middle of the altar. In some churches, you will sometimes find the cross hanging above the altar or on the wall behind it. Still other churches recognize the cross that is standing on the tabernacle as the altar cross. There are also different sizes and shapes of the cross with an array of depictions of the crucified Christ.

The general instruction of the Roman Missal, in which we find the texts and rubrics for the celebration of the Eucharist in the Roman rite, states: “On the altar or close to it, there is to be a cross adorned with a figure of Christ crucified.” (Missal #117) Further it reads, “The cross adorned with a figure of Christ crucified and perhaps carried in procession may be placed next to the altar to serve as the altar cross, in which case it must be the only cross used; otherwise it is put away in a dignified place.” (Missal #122)

## 1. The Processional Cross / Altar Cross

In the Latin Church of the first ten centuries of Christianity, the cross was not placed on the altar. In the fifth century, crosses hanging above the altar began to appear. The processional crosses, although already appearing at the end of the 5th century, began to be placed by the altar a bit later.

In the Western Church, the cross *by* the altar began to appear much earlier than the cross *on* the altar. It first appeared as early as the 5th century and it is recognized as the processional cross. Originally, the cross did not have an image of Christ on it, and it was not the object of adoration during the Eucharist. We first begin to hear about putting a cross on the altar in the 11th century.

During the Second Vatican Council the possibility of placing the cross by the altar was discussed, and after a few years it was decided that the processional cross could also be the altar cross.

During Christmas of 2020, the altar arrangement here at Sacred Heart Church was changed. Up until then, the cross displayed in the sanctuary depicted the figure of the Risen and Triumphant Christ with His arms raised up. Since the altar cross should present the suffering and crucified Christ (in accordance with Missal regulation), who offers His life for the salvation of the whole of humanity, it was thought that the crucifix we used did not display this—mainly, it did not display Christ’s open and crucified arms; thus, it failed to communicate His salvific and redemptive act.

## **2. The Liturgical Candles**

Liturgical candles have an unusual and important meaning in the celebration of the religious rite. The liturgical candles that are most commonly used are: altar candles, Advent candles, “gromnice” (believed to ensure a general protection, which translates as “thunder candles,”) paschal candle, and acolyte candles. Acolyte candles are candlesticks that are carried by the altar servers during the procession into and out of the sanctuary; they are placed on either side of the processional cross, near the altar.

At this point I would like to address two things.

- a. Up until now, two candles were lit in the presbytery of our church for the duration of the Eucharist on Sundays and other Holy days. There were also two acolyte candles that followed the processional cross. These acolyte candles posed a difficulty because when carried, they would often spill wax onto the carpet, which is of course difficult to remove. The only rational option was to change the candles to non-spill liquid, paraffin.

All of the candles in the presbytery have their own plastic casing, but every once in a while these casings need to be changed in order to hold up the flame. Unfortunately, the casings that are used during the Liturgy in our church do not last very long. After 5-6 hours, they have to be replaced with new ones. Frequent use of these candles translates into frequent purchases of casing, and the prices of these items are growing at an astronomical rate these days. Once again, the reasonable and long-term solution was to buy 6 new candles, to be refilled with paraffin at a low cost. One big container of paraffin is enough to last us half a year for all of the candles combined.

- b. Beginning this year, during the Eucharistic Adoration, the monstrance will be placed on the main altar. Liturgical regulations state that 4-6 candles are to be lit during Eucharistic Adoration. This is the same number of candles that are lit during Mass. The newly bought candles, which fall in line with liturgical norms, will be lit before the beginning of the Eucharist and will also light the altar during the adoration of Jesus in the monstrance set out for public worship.

I deeply believe that these new liturgical accessories (the processional cross and candles with their refillable paraffin casings) will serve to awaken worship in God, beautify our liturgies, as well as enliven our time spent in prayer in our beautiful house of God.

The cost of the whole liturgical kit came to \$10,200. The purchase of the processional cross comes from a private donation. As of today, we have \$4,750 left to pay. I am truly inspired by your generosity. Though I had not communicated any information about the purchase of any new religious articles up to this point, I have nevertheless been a witness to the sacrifice and support of my dear parishioners. May God Bless you for your love of our church and our whole parish family.

Fr. Adam Wroblewicz, C.R.