

# Paschal Candle and Lumen Christi

**L** “The light of Christ.”

**C** “Thanks be to God.”

The first part of the Easter Vigil is called the Service of Light. We will talk about light, sing about light and watch as the paschal candle is dedicated, lit and brought into the church.

The paschal candle is the big candle you often see at the front of the church. It is lit during the season of Easter and sometimes at Baptisms and funerals. Today at the Easter Vigil, it may be in an unusual location — outside!

Some churches start outside with a bonfire, from which the pastor will light the paschal candle. Then, he will go through a series of motions. First, he will trace the cross, the Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet), and the year on the candle. If it is a new candle, he may press five wax nails into the candle. These nails represent Jesus’ five wounds: the crown of thorns, the two nails in his hands, the nail in his feet and the wound from the spear thrust into his side after his death.

Next, there will be a procession. The congregation will follow the paschal candle into the church. In some churches, everyone lights a candle of their own from this candle. The procession will stop three times. Each time, the pastor or an assistant will sing, “The light of Christ,” to which the congregation will respond, “Thanks be to God.” This part of the service is called “Lumen Christi,” Latin for “light of Christ.”

## Seek and Find

- ☐ The new fire
- ☐ The Alpha and Omega
- ☐ Five wax nails (hint: check the cross)
- ☐ Three crosses
- ☐ A baptismal shell

## Think About It

Why do you think fire and light play such a vital role in our churches, especially at the Easter Vigil?

*Once we were in darkness, but now we are in the light, even Jesus Christ, Our Lord.*

