

Why are Candles so Important in our Armenian Church?

*I am
the Light
of the World
John 8:12*



A candle is a "vessel" that carries a flame. However, it is the flame that is significant and carries a lot of symbolism in the Armenian tradition. The light/flame signifies hope, power, energy, and rejuvenation.

Before Christmas and Easter, a Badarak is celebrated and at the end of the service, a candle lighting ceremony is performed.

- **Holy Saturday**, also known as the Easter Vigil, the mystery of salvation in the Resurrection of Christ is celebrated. The church is dark, and its lights are dim. Then the great verses from Isaiah 60 are read: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you"-at which point the lights are suddenly turned on. The dramatic, joyful candle-lighting ceremony is called "**jrakalouytz.**" During Badarak on Easter Eve we receive the good news of the Resurrection (Christ's defeat of death) and the light that this occasion brings into our lives represents everlasting life, hope, and salvation.
- At **Christmastime** in church, we take and share the good news of the Birth of the Lord. We receive a flame from the altar, which signifies the light of the Nativity of the Savior, hope, salvation, and the good news that this brings into our lives.

Many churchgoers bring cherished candles to light in church each year at Eastertime. These candles are often decorated with ribbons and other decorations and these different designs may be seen as an expression of each person. Other people bring ornate candles that they obtained from holy places, (Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Armenia, etc.) or that were used during their baptisms, weddings, or other special occasions.

In conclusion, if the candle represents a person or soul, then the flame represents the rejuvenation that the person/soul receives and takes with them after hearing the good news of the Lord.

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