

# The Pillar of Fire

What is this great paschal candle that stands in our midst, that during the Fifty Days of Easter seems always to be burning, never to go out?

It is the pillar of fire by which God led the children of Israel from slavery to freedom, through the dust desert to the land flowing with milk and honey. Behind it, we marched freed from sin from the gloom of exile back into our church's house on Easter eve. With it, we led those chosen for the Sacraments of new life to the font of Baptism that is both tomb and womb.

It is the holy sign of Christ our Light. (Thanks be to God!) On it, we traced the sign of Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the ending, the Alpha and Omega. Into it, we pressed five jewels that are the wounds of divine hands and feet and side. For it, we sang our song of consecration and praise: "Accept, O God, this Easter Candle. Let it shine with the lights of heaven and bravely burn forever!" From it, we take our own light, a flame divided but undimmed. All who are Baptized walk in its glow.

For fifty days it shines gloriously in the Assembly of the Church. Then, held in a place of honor near the font, it is brought out and lit for every evening sacrifice of praise, for every Baptism and every funeral, every birth and every birth unto eternal life. And as the days and seasons turn, slowly this pillar of finest wax and strongest wick is consumed, burned down, eaten up by fire, sacrificed — like Christ himself — and never truly extinguished. And so it measures our days and seasons until it is Easter again, until once more we sing in the light of a new Paschal Candle: "May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning: Christ the Morning Star, who came back from the dead and shed his peaceful light on all people." Thanks be to God!

