

Jesus teaches that a lamp is placed on a lampstand in order to give light to all in the house. With each Baptism, we take a candle and light it from the Paschal Candle, the large candle christened at Easter representing Jesus. On that most holy of nights, we acknowledge that with a pillar of fire Jesus banished the darkness of sin (Exsultet). Through baptism our sins are forgiven, and we each draw light from Christ to lead a holy life. Once the baptismal candle is lit and passed on to parents and godparents, we prayerfully remind parents of their awesome responsibility to teach the faith to their children and to keep the flame alive in their hearts and minds that they may come to know and love Christ.

In order for a fire to stay lit, you must stoke the fire. In prayer we ask God for guidance. In reading and reflecting on God's holy word, we invite God to shape our minds to his will. In practicing good works, we share the light of Christ with others. In seeking forgiveness for our own sins, we acknowledge God has the power to rekindle our fire when we have tried to extinguish it.

This teaching of Jesus comes immediately after the Sermon on the Mount. "By their deeds the disciples are to influence the world for good. They can no more escape notice than a city set on a mountain. If they fail in good works, they are as useless as flavorless salt or as a lamp whose light is concealed" (Footnote).

Having taught them the fundamentals for building the Kingdom of God, Jesus will send the disciples out shortly to put the theory into practice. As they bring the good news to others, they must do more than preach with words. They must accompany those who are at a loss helping them to they find their way. They must show mercy by forgiving others as God has forgiven them. They must hunger for righteousness and try to help the world to become a more just place. They must work for peace and build bridges to end divisions. As they try to make the world a better place, no doubt they will encounter opposition if not outright persecution. The sun shines its rays on the good and the bad, we too must learn to shine the light of our faith in the same way. "Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Mt 5:16).