

KEEP THE EASTER FLAME ALIVE IN YOUR HOME

By Michelle DiFranco



I love candles. They symbolize life, love and celebration. And I love burning them in my home, but I've had to resort to enjoying them only when the boys are out of the house. Between my husband being afraid of the house burning down, and my son playing with the wax like it is Silly Putty, the candles just don't stay lit. So, their illumination is very short-lived in my house.

Thankfully, I get plenty of candle in church. Christians know that, like Christmas, Easter is not just a day, but an entire season that lasts 50 days until Pentecost. To visually mark this, a very large paschal candle (or Easter candle) often sits near the altar for the season of Easter.

So what is a paschal candle?

In short, the paschal candle is lighted for the first time on the evening of the Easter Vigil, when people coming into the Church are baptized. The vigil begins in darkness; a fire, which has been blessed outside the church, is used to light the paschal candle. The candle, symbolizing the resurrection and light of Christ, is carried in procession into the church, dispelling the darkness. The candle is then blessed. The five grains of incense on the candle represent the five wounds of Jesus, and the alpha and the omega indicate Christ is the beginning and end. The numbers within each corner of the cross are for the current year.

The candle is lit at each service throughout the paschal season until Ascension Thursday (before Pentecost Sunday). After the Easter season ends, it is moved from the sanctuary to the baptismal font, and is only lit at baptisms and funerals.

The meaning and symbolism are quite beautiful and have inspired me to make a smaller version for my home. The question is, will it stay lit? Well, I don't think my "Smokey the Bear" husband would be as eager to extinguish a paschal candle since that would feel, well, sacrilegious to him. So I went ahead and bought the supplies and created a candle representative of what we would see in a church. I encourage you to make one, too. Whether you light it before prayer or at dinnertime, it's a simple and beautiful way to enhance the celebration of the Easter season in your own home.

DIY Paschal Candle

- 1 large, white pillar candle
- Permanent markers
- Letter and number stencils
- Ruler
- Tissue paper
- Wax paper
- Scissors
- 5 metal brads (real cloves can be used, too)
- Hair dryer
- Oven mitt

Place a piece of paper underneath your design to prevent marker ink from bleeding onto the surface of your table. Using a ruler, draw a cross in the middle of the tissue paper.

Using the letter and number stencils, create the Alpha and Omega above and below the cross, leaving some space for the brads. For 'Omega', you can use part of the letter "O" stencil and add two dashes to the bottom (as shown). Add the numbers (for the current year) within the four corners of the cross (as shown).

You can also print your own letters and numbers and simply trace them.

Trim the excess paper.

Place the tissue paper design in the middle of the pillar candle. Wrap the wax paper directly over the tissue paper design and hold it tightly in back. Make sure the wax paper is large enough to cover the candle. The heat from the hair dryer can get hot, so you may want to use an oven mitt while holding the candle. Using a



hair dryer, heat the design until it appears to have transferred (it will look a bit darker). This takes about 30-60 seconds. Carefully remove the wax paper. Using the tip of a nail, make a small slit/hole on each end of the cross and in the middle to mark where the brads will go. Carefully push brads into the candle.