

## The Sanctuary Lamp

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In honour of Jesus Christ a lamp burns perpetually before the altar. The Christian souls longs to remain in constant adoration at our Lord's feet there to be consumed by gratitude and love. In heaven alone, will this happiness be given to us, but here below, as an expression of our devout desires, we place a lamp in the sanctuary to take our place. In this little light St. Augustine shows us an image of the three Christian virtues. Its clearness is faith, which enlightens our mind; its warmth is love, which fills our heart; its flame, which, trembling and agitated, mounts upward till it finds rest in its centre, is hope, with its aspirations toward heaven and its troubles outside of God.

The Lamp of the sanctuary represents Jesus Christ risen and glorious, source of all light and of all charity in the Church. Nothing is commoner in Holy Writ than the comparison of oil to mercy and in the sanctuary lamp, He Who is infinite mercy presents Himself to us under the same emblem. The Church herself is also symbolised by the oil which is being perpetually consumed before the Eucharistic God. That oil is extracted from olives, and in the Bible the olive tree is a figure of the Church.

The evergreen of the tree may indeed well suggest the perennial vigor of the Church militant, and the shade it provides for the traveler corresponds to the Church's care for her children. In very truth the Church, the Spouse of Christ, really present in the tabernacle before which the sanctuary lamp is ever glowing, is, "as a fair olive tree in the plains," bringing to us her children the precious oil of mercy.

Little flame of fire bright!  
How I envy you,  
Standing there a sentinel  
The night watch through!