

Christmas, 2004

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Candles speak to us of winter. Time for quiet. Leisure for reading. Opportunities for conversing with a friend. Environment for prayer.

During the last week of Advent I have been praying with a candle infused with chamomile and lavender, a gentle aroma. The title placed on this candle is PEACE.

There are other “meanings” for candles in various cultures. In South Africa during apartheid the candle was a sign of revolt, non-acceptance, resistance!

The San Jose Catholic Campus Ministry Program at San Jose State University recently sponsored a Eucharist and blessing of a renovated student lounge. During the homily of the Eucharist Father Carson held a beautiful candle and asked us to consider, “Is it possible that a candle could ever be considered illegal? Could the candle be considered illegal for reasons other than fire safety?”

He proceeded to explain that in South Africa at the time of apartheid a candle burning in a window was an expression of resistance. Because the movement of burning candles in the window became so prolific the government considered making candles illegal!

Surrounded by beautiful Christmas candles and lights burning with the scents and reflections of Christmas scenes we are called to look on the “light of Christ” as calling us to something other than nostalgia and memories of Christmas past. Like our sisters and brothers who lived during the repressive system of apartheid, we too can be separating ourselves from the “light of Christ” burning within each of us!

If the “Christmas light” really shone through each of us there would be a revolution! Only the limits of our imagination keep us from resisting that which continues the “darkness”. Beautiful candles point us to a living light—living in us and waiting to burn fully in peace, love, hope, justice, and mercy!