

- 1 Each December, the Jewish community celebrates a festival of lights, called 'Hanukkah'.
- 2 Over 2,100 years ago, King Antiochus (the Greek ruler of Syria) had control over the land of Israel, his southern neighbour. Whilst the Jews believed in one God, the king insisted that they worship many gods, including himself.
- 3 A Jewish rebellion started against the far greater forces of the occupying armies. After 3 years of war, the Jewish leader - Judah Maccabee - re-took Jerusalem's Temple, built by the Jews for the worship of God. The Temple had been desecrated - abused - by worshipping pagan gods whose statues had been placed there.
- 4 The Jews set about re-dedicating the Temple to God. There were 8 days of festivities. In the Temple, the oil lamps of the Menorah - a branched candlestick - were lit again, but there was only enough oil for them to burn for one day. Miraculously, the oil burnt for 8 days until new oil was obtained, and so 'Hanukkah' has become an 8-day festival.
- 5 Nowadays, as Hanukkah is celebrated, recalling the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem, Jews re-dedicate themselves to God. It is a happy time, and presents are given. Pancakes are eaten, and children play a game with a spinning top that bears 4 Hebrew letters, standing for the words: *"A great miracle happened here."*
- 6 At nightfall on the first day of Hanukkah, one candle is lit. Each night another branch of the candlestick is lit, until by the end of the Festival, all 8 are alight.
- 7 *Let us pray, basing our words on Jewish prayers used at this time:*
- 8 **Blessed are you, Lord God,  
King of the universe.  
We light these candles  
to remind ourselves  
of the wonders you have performed  
for your people down the ages.  
Create new miracles for us  
and, as the days go by,  
may your light  
grow brighter and brighter within us.  
Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in  
*'Praying Each Day of the Year'*,  
a 3-volume book  
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine  
to research this topic further.

This material is part of  
the prayer and education website  
of the De La Salle Brothers  
in Great Britain:

[www.prayingeachday.org](http://www.prayingeachday.org)