

Thurifer Training Manual

“The use of incense is an ancient custom in liturgical prayer. It signifies the prayer and offering of the Church during the Sacred Liturgy rising to the sight of God. Incense is customarily used during celebrations of the Sacred Liturgy on Sundays and solemnities, especially at the principal Mass.” -Diocese of Raleigh, General Norms for the Celebration of the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass in the Forma Ordinaria, 1.8.

Outline of Incense During Mass

Incense is used in the following manner:

- a) during the Entrance Procession (Thurifer leads procession);
- b) at the beginning of Mass to incense the Cross and altar;
- c) at the procession before the Gospel and the proclamation of the Gospel;
- d) after the bread and chalice have been placed on the altar, to incense the offerings, the cross, and the altar, as well as the Presider and the people;
- e) at the elevation of the host and chalice during the Consecration of the Eucharistic Prayer;
- f) and in the Recessional.

Incense is also used during the Easter Season and Funeral Liturgies:

- a) for the incensation of the Paschal Candle
- b) for the reverence of the remains of the deceased during Funeral Liturgies as a sign of the dignity of the human body and of the Resurrection of Christ.

The Use of Incense:

Three Swings

“The following are incensed with 3 swings of the thurible: the Blessed Sacrament; a relic of the Holy Cross or image of the Lord; the offerings of bread and wine during the Preparation of the gifts; the Altar Cross; the Book of the Gospels; the Paschal Candle; priest celebrants; and the assembly.”

Two Swings

“The following are incensed with 2 swings of the thurible at the beginning of the Sacred Liturgy during the incensation of the altar: relics and images of Saints.”

One Swing

“The altar is to be incensed with single swings of the thurible.”

Thurifer Procedures

Before Mass

- Sign In at Ministry Room 30 minutes before Mass and Vest in an alb
- Place stand for Thurible at Baptismal font. (MC will assist in putting stand out and making sure incense boat is full)
- Light 2 charcoal 15 minutes before Mass outside in an open area
- Be careful of sparks to clothing/vestment/yourself and never place thurible on Oak Tables or credence tables. Place lighted charcoal (star side up) in Thurible
- Before Mass, stand with thurible and boat in an open, high-ceiling space.

Procession and Beginning of Mass

- Ask MC or Presider to add 2 scoops of incense before procession begins.
- Lead procession swinging thurible and carrying boat
- Hold Thurible with thumb in ring, hand in a fist. Swing smoking Thurible forward and backward by moving wrist slightly (not your arm). Pace procession slowly, reverently leading assembly into prayer, filling the space with sweet fragrance.
- When arriving at steps, stand at Baptism side, facing Altar
- Take care not to hit candles/plants while swinging thurible. Bow head when the Presider bows
- Walk up steps toward Presider at Altar
- Exchange the boat first, and hold thurible while presider puts incense in, then exchange the thurible with Presider. Be careful, thurible will be hot!
- Give your attention to the objects that the Presider incenses
- Receive thurible back from Presider
- Walk down steps; place thurible and boat on stand near baptismal font
- Sit where designated with Altar Servers, using stairs behind baptismal font or in first pew

Gospel Acclamation and Incensing of Book of Gospels

- At start of Gospel Acclamation, remove thurible and boat from stand and stand behind Baptism font.
- **If the Bishop is present, wait until the priest celebrant gets the Book of the Gospels from the Altar, take thurible and boat to the presider chair. Hold thurible for the Bishop to put incense in.
- When the Presider arrives at the ambo with Book of Gospels, go to his right side. Exchange boat first, and then thurible with Presider.
- Give your attention to the Book of the Gospel while it is being incensed. Receive thurible back from Presider.
- Step back to a location behind and to the right of Presider.
- Gently swing thurible throughout Gospel reading. Ensure you do not block line of sight from ambo to Presider's chair (if Presider not doing the Gospel).
- Give your attention to the proclamation of Gospel
- After "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ" return thurible and boat to stand
- During homily, add 1 charcoal, star-side down; using tongs (leave the tongs, extra charcoal, and lighter near the stand). If incense is not burning well, light the additional charcoal prior to adding to thurible.
- Return to your seat

Preparation of the Gifts

- When the Presider and Altar Servers go to receive the Gifts, remove thurible and boat from stand.
- After the Altar Servers receive the gifts and place them on the altar, stand down one step, near the cross.
- After the Presider has given the wine pitcher to Altar Server, he will motion for you.
- Hold thurible for presider to put incense in. Exchange thurible with Presider and then go back down one step and wait for presider to incense the Cross.
- Give your attention to the gifts and Altar while they are being incensed. Receive thurible back from Presider. Presider will bow, Thurifer will bow and incense presider with three swings of the thurible and then bow again.
- Turn and go in front of altar at the top of the steps. Bow to the assembly, swing the thurible two times to the front, turn and swing thurible 2x to the left side, and turn and swing thurible 2x to the right side of the church. Bow again facing the front. Walk back using ramp behind presider chair. Return thurible and boat to stand and return to your seat.

Consecration

- Move to the front of the altar on the ground level during the Holy, Holy, Holy. (2 scoops of incense are placed on the coals in the Thurible during the Epiclesis).

Note: The *epiclesis*, in which, by means of particular invocations, the Church implores the power of the Holy Spirit that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated, that is, become Christ's Body and Blood, and that the unblemished sacrificial Victim to be consumed in Communion may be for the salvation of those who will partake of it.

- When the Presider lifts up the Blessed Sacrament, incense it (3 swings, 3 times).

Recession

When the Presider leaves the Chair (after the final blessing):

- Add 2 scoops of incense to Thurible
- Take thurible and boat and move to the center aisle, swinging thurible carefully
- Slight bow of head when Presider bows
- Lead recession at a faster pace than was done for the procession, (normal walking pace) leading assembly into their mission for Christ in the world.

After Mass

- Dispose of charcoals and incense in thurible in stones on left side when exiting building
- Be certain that charcoals are complete extinguished, if not get a cup of water and extinguish!
- The MC will help you extinguish and return thurible and boat to bathroom in vesting room unless needed at the next Mass and return stand, unless needed at the next Mass.

Reminders

- Anytime you are standing still with the thurible, gently swing the thurible to keep air flowing through the thurible.
- When swinging the thurible, keep your elbow close to your side.
- Use the tongs for picking up and loading the charcoal to avoid getting charcoal on your hands or alb.
- Make sure the charcoal is well lit before placing in the thurible.
- When incensing the congregation, do not lean into the swings, but keep your feet together and swing only using your wrist.