

## **Thurifer Training Manual**

A **thurible** is a metal censer suspended from chains, in which incense is burned during worship services.

The workings of a thurible are quite simple. Each thurible consists of a censer section, chains (typically three or four, although single-chain thuribles also exist), a metal ring around the chains (used to lock the lid of the censer section in place) and usually a removable metal crucible in which the burning charcoals are placed. Many thuribles are supplied with a stand, allowing the thurible to be hung safely when still hot, but not in use. Burning charcoal is placed inside the metal censer, either directly into the bowl section, or into a removable crucible if supplied, and incense (of which there are many different varieties) is placed upon the charcoal, where it melts to produce a sweet smelling smoke. This may be done several times during the service as the incense burns quite quickly. Once the incense has been placed on the charcoal the thurible is then closed and used for censuring.

### **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:**

The number of swings of the thurible to be used when incensing persons or objects is specified in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

#### **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.”

*\*The priest may incense the offerings for Mass by tracing a cross over them with the thurible instead of using three swings of the thurible*

### **The responsibilities of a thurifer include:**

- Holding the thurible open to enable the priest to put incense in it, after which he blesses it with the Sign of the Cross without using any formula of words.
- Carrying the thurible in procession (gently swinging if needed to keep the charcoal burning).
- Presenting the thurible to the priest or deacon when they need to use it.
- Incensing (in the absence of a deacon) the priest after the priest has incensed the offering at Mass.

Another server, previously called a boat boy and now more commonly a boat bearer, may carry a boat or container of incense with a small spoon to add grains as the thurible burns low.

The boat boy or boat bearer is a junior altar server position found in Catholic and Anglican churches. The role of a boat boy is to assist the thurifer, the senior altar server who carries the thurible. The boat bearer carries the boat, a small metal container, which holds the supplies of incense. The boat has a small spoon inside which is used to transfer the grains of incense onto the red-hot charcoals in the thurible. Although at times the boat bearer transfers the incense himself, more usually he simply holds the boat open as the priest performs this task.

***“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.”***