

# St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

## **DRAFT** Typical Thurifer Incensing Instructions

5/15/19

- The custom of using incense is an ancient one. The Old Testament describes it as a rich perfume used in sacrifices, and the Jewish people made it part of their temple worship. In Matthew's Gospel, the Magi bring frankincense (a type of incense) as a gift to the Christ child. In the book of Revelation, the burning of incense appears to be an important part of the worship in heaven.
- Incense is a symbol of our recognition of God's majesty. It also symbolizes our prayer rising to God.
- Incense is typically used in more solemn celebrations of the liturgy, i.e. special feast days and funerals.

### **WHEN MAY INCENSING BE PERFORMED**

- During the Entrance Procession and then to incense the crucifix and the altar.
- During the proclamation of the Gospel.
- After the gifts have been placed on the altar, to incense the gifts, crucifix, altar, Priest, and people.
- At the elevation of the Sacred Host and the Precious Blood after the Consecration (rarely used – maybe Easte).
- During the Exit Recessional (rarely used).
- At other times such as Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament/Benediction (not typical)

### **ITEMS USED DURING INCENSING**

#### Items stored on the stand in the hallway

- **Thurible** – a vessel suspended by chains used by the Priest, Deacon or Server to incense the altar, gifts of bread and wine, the Eucharist, holy items, the Priest, or people.
- **Boat** - a lidded vessel with a spoon that holds incense to be put in the thurible.
- **Tongs** – used to hold the charcoal when lighting it and placing it in the thurible.
- **Charcoal** - self-lighting coals are lit and placed in the thurible. The incense is placed on the burning coals.
- **Lighter** – used to light the coals.

#### Items stored in the overhead cabinet above the refrigerator in the working sacristy

- **Incense** - material used to produce a fragrant odor when burned and used as a symbol of the Church's offering and prayer going up to God.
- **Additional Charcoal Trays**

### **HOW TO PERFORM TASKS**

**Caution** - Thurifers must always use care and caution when handling the thurible since it gets very hot and can burn the skin. The entire thurible container, the lid, and the chain directly above the lid get very hot. To avoid a fire hazard, Thurifers must ensure that the lid is completely locked down on the thurible container after incense is imposed (scooped into thurible). Otherwise, hot coals could be spilled onto the carpet during incensing.

**Emptying Ashes** – Before lighting the first coal, if the thurible is full of ashes it should be emptied. If the ashes are old and are not hot to touch, they can be dumped into the trash can in the working sacristy. If the ashes are warm or if unsure, they should be dumped into the stones on the ground located outside the door by the server vesting room.

#### **Lighting the Coals** –

1. Coals are typically broken in half and placed into the thurible. Three (3) half coals are initially placed in the thurible. When adding additional coals, typically one (1) half coal is added.
2. To light a coal, hold it with the tongs over the open thurible. Using the lighter, apply the flame over one side of the coal until sparks begin to fly and engulf the entire side of the coal. Keep the flame on that side of the coal until it is completely engulfed by the sparks. Flip the coal over and light the other side and the edges of the coal in the same manner. It can take a minute or more to light the entire coal.

3. Place the coal(s) in the thurible and observe them for a minute or two to ensure that they begin to turn gray.
4. Close and lock the thurible lid and swing the thurible back and forth vigorously for a minute or two to assist in the coals' lighting and turning gray. If the coals are not turning gray, then attempt to re-light it if necessary. Coals should be lit for at least 10 minutes before placing incense on them.

### Carrying the Thurible and Boat

- The thurible is carried by holding the end of the chain in the left hand. The thumb may be placed in the ring on the chain. The left arm is bent upward and slightly outward at the elbow so the thurible hangs to the left of the Thurifer's leg. If the Thurifer is too short, he may grasp the chain below the end.
- When walking, the thurible swings slightly forward and backward to assist in keeping the coals burning.
- The boat is carried in the right hand and held so the bottom of the boat may be placed flat on the Deacon/Priest's hand. The spoon faces away from the Thurifer.

Note: When not carrying/holding the boat, the Thurifer's right hand is held against his chest.

**Passing the Boat** – Pass the boat so it may be placed flat on the Deacon/Priest's hand with the spoon facing the Deacon/Priest. Always pass the boat to the Deacon if he is present.

**Presenting the Thurible** – Present the thurible to the Deacon/Priest by raising and extending the left hand about neck high. Ensure the Deacon/Priest has a firm grasp of the chain before letting go. Always pass the thurible to the Deacon if he is present.

### Raising and Lowering the Thurible for Imposition of Incense

Caution: The thurible, lid and the chain directly above the lid get hot.

1. While standing erect, raise the left hand which is holding the end of the thurible chain and reach down with the right hand to grab the chain near the ring located about 8" above the thurible. Transfer the grip of the chain from the right hand to the left so the chain is being held in the left hand at the top end of the chain and near the ring about 8" above the thurible.
2. Using the right hand, pop open the lid of the thurible and place the right hand under the thurible to hold it still with the opening facing the Priest.
3. After the Priest imposes (scoops) incense into the thurible and blesses the incense by making the sign of the cross, close and lock the lid of the thurible by pushing down on the lid until it locks in place. It is very important to ensure the lid locks in place to avoid coals spilling out of the thurible during incensing.
4. Lower the thurible in reverse order by grabbing the chain near the ring about 8" above the thurible with the right hand and lowering the thurible while still holding the top of the chain in the left hand. Release the chain with the right hand and lower the left arm to its normal position.

### Incensing

- With Fr. Ben, when there is no Deacon, the Thurifer may incense the Priest and the people. If the Sacred Host and Precious Blood are to be incensed after consecration during the elevation (rarely), the Thurifer will do so.
1. The Thurifer raises the thurible in the same manner as for the imposition of incense by raising the chain in the left hand and reaching down with the right hand to grab the chain 6" above the thurible. There are several ways to grip the chain depending on the Thurifer's preference.
  2. The Thurifer extends the thurible toward the Priest/People/Sacrament with his right arm bent and his hand held about neck high. The left hand will be held near the chest in a manner that allows the slack of the chain to rest against the thurible. This will allow for the thurible to "click" against the chain when it is swung.
  3. The Thurifer makes a profound bow to the person(s) being incensed – the Priest, people, or elevated Sacrament.
  4. Using the wrist and slightly extending the elbow, the Thurifer swings the thurible toward the person(s) being incensed. The Priest and people are incensed with (3) double swings and the elevated Sacrament with (3) triple swings. Three double swings are executed by swinging the thurible quickly 2 times, slightly lowering the thurible and pausing for about ½ second, then executing the 2<sup>nd</sup> set of two swings, then pausing for about ½ second, and finally executing a 3<sup>rd</sup> set of double swings. Three sets of triple swings are performed in the same way except the thurible is swung quickly 3 times before the ½ second pauses.

5. Finally, the Thurifer executes a profound bow to the person who was just incensed.

Note: When incensing the people, the Thurifer will execute the 1<sup>st</sup> double swing while facing the choir loft. He then turns 45 degrees to the right and executes the 2<sup>nd</sup> double swing. He then turns 45 degrees to the left and executes the 3<sup>rd</sup> double swing. The Thurifer will face the choir loft when bowing before and after incensing the people.

## **ORDER OF MASS / PROCEDURES**

### **Before Mass**

1. Empty ashes from the thurible if necessary.
2. Light (3) half coals in the thurible about 15 minutes before Mass. Ensure they are burning and turning gray.  
**Note**: If incense will not be used until the offertory, then light coals at the beginning of the homily.
3. Fill the Boat with incense if it less than half full.
4. Verify with the Priest when incense will be used (i.e. Procession, Gospel, Gifts/Offertory, etc.).
5. Proceed to the atrium with the other servers 5 minutes before Mass carrying the thurible and boat.

### **Entrance Procession and Incensing the Altar and Cross**

1. After praying with the Priest and prior to the Procession, the Thurifer presents the boat to the Deacon/Priest for the Priest to impose and bless the incense. The Thurifer leads the procession carrying the thurible and boat.
2. When the Thurifer reaches the altar steps, he takes a few steps to the right and stops facing the altar.
3. When the Priest/Deacon genuflect, the Thurifer executes a profound bow and then proceeds to stand at the back left corner of the altar facing where the Priest will stand when he kisses the altar.
4. After the Priest kisses the altar, the Thurifer presents the boat to the Deacon/Priest, and raises and holds open the thurible lid for the Priest to impose and bless the incense. The thurifer closes and locks down the lid and lowers the thurible on its chain.
5. The Thurifer receives the boat back from the Deacon/Priest and presents the thurible to the Deacon/Priest.
6. The Thurifer then stands behind the ambo.
7. After the altar is incensed, the Thurifer approaches and receives the thurible back from the Deacon/Priest and proceeds to the hallway to hang the thurible back in the stand and light a half coal in the thurible. After ensuring the coal remains lit and is turning gray, he returns to his chair.

### **Readings and Incensing the Gospel**

1. At the end of the singing of the Psalm, the Thurifer proceeds to the hallway to retrieve the thurible and boat and proceeds to stand next to the brick wall behind the Priest's chair.
2. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading the Thurifer proceeds to stand next to the Missal Server's chair so he is visible to the Priest.
3. When the Priest stands, the Thurifer proceeds to stand in front of the Priest and presents the boat to the Deacon/Priest for the imposition and blessing of incense.
4. The thurifer receives the boat back from the Deacon/Priest and proceeds with the thurible to stand approximately 6 feet behind and slightly past the ambo.
5. When the Deacon/Priest is making a sign of the cross on his mind, lips, and heart, the Thurifer steps forward to present the thurible to him. The Thurifer takes a several steps back to his spot while the incensing takes place.
6. After the incensing, the Thurifer steps forward to receive the thurible from the Deacon/Priest and steps back to his spot and remains in place until the Gospel reading is completed.
7. At the words, "Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ," the Thurifer exits to the hallway to hang the thurible in the stand.
8. The Thurifer lights another half coal in the thurible. After ensuring the coal remains lit and is turning gray, he returns to his chair.

**Note**: If incense is not used during the Gospel, the Thurifer lights a coal (or coals) shortly after the homily begins.

## **Incensing the Gifts, Priest and People**

1. After receiving the gifts, the Thurifer proceeds to the hallway to retrieve the thurible and boat and then stands beside the Missal Server's chair.
2. When the Priest raises and places the chalice back on the altar, the Thurifer proceeds to the Priest when he would normally wash his hands.

**Note:** The Priest will not wash his hands until after he incenses the gifts. The Servers with the wash basin and water should stand behind the Missal Server's chair until the incensing begins. They will approach the Priest to wash his hands after he has completed incensing the gifts and has been incensed by the Deacon or Thurifer.

### **For Fr. Yohe or For Fr. Ben if there is a Deacon:**

3. The Thurifer presents the boat to the Deacon/Priest and raises the thurible for the imposition and blessing of incense.
4. The thurifer receives the boat back from the Deacon/Priest, hands the thurible to the Deacon/Priest, and stands beside the Missal Server's chair.
5. After the Priest incenses the gifts and if there is a Deacon, he incenses the people, the Thurifer approaches and receives the thurible back from the Deacon/Priest. He then returns the boat and thurible to the hallway without lighting a coal (unless there will be incensing during the elevation or during the exit recessional) and returns to his chair.

### **For Fr. Ben if there is no Deacon:**

3. The Thurifer presents the boat to the Priest, and raises the thurible for the imposition/blessing of incense.
4. The Thurifer receives the boat back from the Priest and hands the thurible to the Priest.
5. While the Priest is incensing the gifts, the Thurifer **places the boat on the brick wall** and then stands next to the Missal Server's chair.
6. After the Priest incenses the gifts, the Thurifer approaches and receives the thurible back from the Priest.
7. The Thurifer takes a step back, raises the thurible, bows (profound bow) to the Priest, and then incenses him with 3 double swings of the thurible. After doing so, the Thurifer bows to the Priest again.
8. The Thurifer then lowers the thurible and proceeds to the right around the Priest and Altar to the top step of the sanctuary. While doing so, he gestures with his right hand for the people to stand.
9. Facing the choir loft, the Thurifer raises the thurible, bows (profound bow) to the people and then incenses them with 3 double swings of the thurible. The 1<sup>st</sup> set of double swings is done while facing the choir loft. The 2<sup>nd</sup> set of double swings is done while facing 45 degrees to the right. The 3<sup>rd</sup> set of double swings is done while facing 45 degrees to the left. After doing so, the Thurifer again faces the choir loft, bows to the people, and lowers the thurible on its chain.
10. The Thurifer then then retrieves the boat from the brick wall, returns the thurible and boat to the hallway and returns to his chair unless there will be incensing during the elevation (see below) or exit recessional.

**Note:** If there is a concelebrating Priest(s) in the sanctuary, the Thurifer will incense him/them as a group (in the same manner as the celebrating Priest) before incensing the people.

## **Incensing During the Elevation After Consecration (rarely done – perhaps at Easter)**

**Note:** If incensing will be performed during the elevation, then the Thurifer will not return the thurible to the hallway following the incensing of the people above. He will stand in front of the brick wall with the thurible and will give the boat to the Missal Server or Mr. Lauer if he is there. ]

1. As soon as the Sanctus (Holy, Holy) begins, the Thurifer raise the thurible and the Missal Server will impose 2 scoops of incense, but will not bless it. This must be done quickly.
2. After lowering the thurible, the Thurifer proceeds to the front of the altar without the boat and faces the altar. He must arrive before the end of the Sanctus when all will kneel.
3. At the conclusion of the Sanctus, the Thurifer kneels on the first step and raises the thurible in preparation for incensing.

4. Following the words of consecration when the consecrated Host is elevated, the Thurifer bows and the Thurifer incenses Our Lord with three triple swings. The bells are rung during each set of triple swings (one set of triple swings = one bell ring). The Thurifer then bows after the incensing.  
Note: The bell ringer will need to ring the bells (3 rings) longer to allow the incensing to take place simultaneously. Each triple swing should correspond to one ring of the bells.
5. The Precious Blood is also incensed in the same manner with three triple swings when elevated.
6. After the Great Amen, when all stand, the Thurifer proceeds back to the brick wall. He will retrieve the boat and returns the thurible and boat to the stand. He will not light another coal unless incense will be used during the exit recessional.

#### **Exit Recessional (rarely done)**

1. The Thurifer proceeds with the other Servers to retrieve the thurible, crucifix and candles. Before proceeding out the door to the sanctuary, he scoops a small amount of incense into the thurible.
2. The Thurifer leads the Candle and Crucifix Bearers out the door to the sanctuary and to the center aisle. The Thurifer will be behind the other servers when facing the altar.
3. When the Priest genuflects, the Thurifer bows, turns, and leads the procession out of the sanctuary.

**Exceptions:** There may be some variations to these procedures at special feasts or during confirmation. Mr. Lauer or Snyder will discuss any variations with the Thurifer before Mass.

#### **Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament**

Incense may be used at other times such as Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Benediction may take place on Corpus Christi Sunday, during 40 hours, or during other devotions.

Details will be coordinated by Mr. Lauer or Snyder, but the following procedures are typically part of the Benediction:

##### **Priest Incensing the Blessed Sacrament**

- The Thurifer follows the Priest and Deacon to the steps in front of the Altar and presents the boat to the Deacon and raises and holds open the thurible lid for the Priest to impose and bless the incense. The Thurifer closes and locks down the lid and lowers the thurible on its chain.
  - The Thurifer receives the boat back from the Deacon and presents the thurible to the Deacon.
  - When the Priest and Deacon kneel facing the Altar, the Thurifer kneels next to the Deacon (typically to the left of the Priest).
  - While kneeling, the Thurifer bows along with the Priest and Deacon immediately before and following the Priest's incensing the Blessed Sacrament.
  - If the Thurifer will not be incensing after the Priest, he holds the boat with 2 hands while kneeling and when the Priest and Deacon stand, the Thurifer does so and receives the thurible back from the Deacon.
- Note: If the Thurifer will be incensing after the Priest, see below.

##### **Thurifer Incensing the Blessed Sacrament**

- If the Thurifer will be incensing after the Priest, he places the boat on the steps in front of him and when the Priest finishes incensing, the Priest or Deacon passes the thurible to the Thurifer while they are still kneeling.
- When the Priest and Deacon stand and approach the altar, the Thurifer stands with the thurible, moves so he is centered on the altar, and kneels.
- When the Priest raises the Monstrance straight up, the Thurifer bows and incenses the Blessed Sacrament with the first of (3) triple swings. A bell ringer will ring the bells during the triple swing.
- When the Priest raises the monstrance to the left, the Thurifer and bell ringer repeat a 2<sup>nd</sup> time. When the Priest raises the monstrance to the right, the Thurifer and bell ringer repeat a 3<sup>rd</sup> time. The Thurifer then bows again.
- When the Priest lowers the Monstrance after the 3<sup>rd</sup> set of triple swings, the Thurifer stands, moves back to his initial spot, and kneels where the boat is located. He continues to hold the thurible.