



Thurifer Training

VOCABULARY

- Thurifer – The altar server carrying the thurible
- Thurible – A metal censer on a chain for burning incense
- Boat – the small container with a spoon in it that holds the incense
- Boatbearer – A second altar server who holds the boat.

THURIFER

The Thurifer holds the thurible, keeping it gently swinging. The Thurifer holds the Thurible in either hand and places the other hand over their heart. If solo, the Thurifer holds the thurible in one hand and carries the boat in the other, handing it to the Priest when needed. When the thurible is not in use, it should be hung up on the stand in the sacristy with the lid open.

BOATBEARER

The Boatbearer holds the boat and accompanies the Thurifer. The Boatbearer stands at the Thurifer's left, shoulder to shoulder. When the Thurifer opens the thurible, the Boatbearer will open the boat and present it to the Priest, keeping it level with the thurible. The Boatbearer will accompany the Thurifer throughout the Mass until the incensing of the congregation. At that point the Boatbearer will return the boat to the sacristy until the recessional.

IN THE SACRISTY

Always be careful to avoid stains or burns when working with charcoal. Remember, safety comes first. Use caution. Fire can be very dangerous. Set up the work area with foil and make sure to **turn on the fan** before lighting the coals. Items that are required are:

- A pair of tongs
- A pan for lighting the charcoal
- A lighter
- Aluminum foil

In the Sacristy, the Thurifer checks the thurible to ensure it is clean, untangled, and lined with foil. The Thurifer then prepares the coals, placing two lit coals into the thurible. When lighting the charcoal piece, always use tongs to hold the charcoal; never hold it with your hands. Keep the thurible away from any smoke alarms at all times. Make sure there is enough incense in the boat.

When the Priest is ready, but before the procession begins, the Thurifer presents the boat to the Priest and opens the thurible. The Boatbearer opens the boat and presents it to the Priest, side by side with the thurible.

To open the thurible, pull the ring on the top up and around. The cap of the thurible will slide up on its chain. Grab onto the chains and lift the body of the thurible up to the Priest.

Be sure to raise the thurible to the level of the boat and close to it. Make sure to raise it to a comfortable height for the Priest. If it is difficult to raise it high enough, do not pull open the lid too much. This will make it easier to raise the thurible higher. The Priest places some incense on the lit charcoal, and blesses it. The Thurifer waits for the Priest to bless the incense, then closes the thurible.

THE PROCESSIONAL

The Thurifer leads the procession, swinging the thurible with reverence and care. The Boatbearer, if present, follows to the left of the Thurifer. Upon reaching the foot of the Altar, the Thurifer bows and proceeds to the left, remaining in a standing position while holding the thurible.

THE FIRST INCENSATION OF THE ALTAR

As the Priest reverences the Altar, the Thurifer and Boatbearer go up the altar to meet the Priest. The Thurifer pulls the chain of the lid up about 3-4 inches, presenting the thurible to the Priest. The Boatbearer opens the boat and presents it to the Priest, side by side with the thurible. The Priest will put incense in. After the Priest makes a sign of the cross over the incensed charcoal, the Thurifer closes the thurible and hands the thurible to the Priest. The Thurifer waits at the assigned position until the incensation is complete, then receives the thurible back from the Priest. The Thurifer and Boatbearer bring their respective items to the stand in the sacristy, then return to their seats.

THE GOSPEL PROCESSION

During the second reading, the Thurifer and the Boatbearer go to the sacristy and bring the thurible and boat out. When the second reading finishes, they walk after the reader, to the Priest. (Note that on celebrations with a sequence, such as Easter Sunday and Pentecost, wait for the sequence to finish.)

If the Priest is still sitting, kneel in front of him and open the thurible and boat so the Priest can refill the incense. If the Priest is already standing, the Thurifer can stand. After the Priest makes a sign of the cross over the incensed charcoal, the Thurifer closes the thurible, stands, and bows towards the Priest.

The Thurifer then processes down the steps, bows, then proceeds to the ambo. When the Thurifer proceeds to the ambo, the Boatbearer returns to their seat. The Deacon announces the Gospel, followed by the response, 'Glory to You Oh Lord.' The Thurifer makes a light noise with the thurible chain to remind the Deacon about the incense. Present the incense to the Priest or Deacon to incense the Book of the Gospels. After the incensation, the Priest or Deacon hands back the thurible to the Thurifer.

THE OFFERTORY INCENSATION OF THE ALTAR

After the Priest or Deacon adds the wine and water to the chalice, the Thurifer and Boatbearer go up the altar to meet the Priest. The Thurifer pulls the chain of the lid up about 3-4 inches, presenting the thurible to the Priest. The Boatbearer opens the boat and presents it to the Priest, side by side with the thurible. The Priest will put incense in. After the Priest makes a sign of the cross over the incensed charcoal, the Thurifer closes the thurible and hands the thurible to the Priest. The Thurifer waits at the assigned position while the Boatbearer returns the boat to the sacristy.

The Priest will either hand the thurible to the Deacon or Thurifer. If the Priest hands the thurible to the Thurifer but if a Deacon is present, the Thurifer hands the Thurible to the Deacon and waits until the incensation is complete.

If a Deacon is not present, the Thurifer will incense the Priest: first, bow to the Priest, then two swings in the middle, two swings to your left, and two swings to your right, then bow and walk to the front of the altar. Then, the Thurifer will incense the people: first, bow, then two swings for each aisle, then bow again. The Thurifer then waits for the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy song).

CONSECRATION

During the Holy, Holy, Holy, the Thurifer processes to the front of the Altar. At the end of the Holy, Holy, Holy, kneel on the second step up the altar, holding the chain to prevent the thurible from banging against the floor. When the Priest elevates the host, the Thurifer incenses the Eucharist with three sets of double-swings. This is done again for the Blood of Christ.

THE RECESSIONAL

When the Priest stands to give the final blessing, the Thurifer and the Boatbearer will go back to the sacristy to retrieve the thurible and boat. The Thurifer leads the procession in front of the cross as in the Processional.

POST MASS DUTIES

The Thurifer cleans the thurible, places the coals in the metal ash bin, and secures the lid. Make sure you dispose of the charcoal properly, only in a metal bin. Never place it in a plastic bin or paper container. It will catch fire. If the foil cup is mangled or too dirty, place it in the bin as well. The Thurifer then returns all items to their designated location, cleans the work area, and turns off the fan.