

# Incensing

*Thurification or incensation is an expression of reverence and of prayer,  
as is signified in Sacred Scripture*

Incense may be used if desired in any form of Mass:

- a. during the Entrance procession;
- b. at the beginning of Mass, to incense the cross and the altar;
- c. at the Gospel procession and the proclamation of the Gospel itself;
- d. after the bread and the chalice have been placed upon the altar, to incense the offerings, the cross, and the altar, as well as the priest and the people;
- e. at the showing of the host and the chalice after the consecration.

Before and after an incensation, a profound bow is made to the person or object that is incensed, except for the incensation of the altar and the offerings for the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The following are incensed with three swings of the thurible: the Most Blessed Sacrament, a relic of the Holy Cross and images of the Lord exposed for public veneration, the offerings for the Sacrifice of the Mass, the altar cross, the Book of the Gospels, the Paschal Candle, the priest, and the people.

The following are incensed with two swings of the thurible: relics and images of the Saints exposed for public veneration, which should be done, however, only at the beginning of the celebration, after the incensation of the altar.

The altar is incensed with single swings of the thurible in this way:

- a. if the altar is freestanding with respect to the wall, the priest incenses walking around it;
- b. if the altar is not freestanding, the priest incenses it while walking first to the right hand side, then to the left.

The cross, if situated on or near the altar, is incensed by the priest before he incenses the altar; otherwise, he incenses it when he passes in front of it.

The priest incenses the offerings with three swings of the thurible or by making the sign of the cross over the offerings with the thurible before going on to incense the cross and the altar.

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## Some Questions

- When is incense used in your parish and why?
- In what ways does it enhance celebration? How might this be improved on?

## Practical Points

- Use different scents to mark the seasons
- Use good quality incense to avoid coughing
- Ensure charcoals are lit in good time and that sufficient incense is used for the smoke to be visible and for its perfume to scent the air

## Further References

Celebrating the Mass 117

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## Questions for Groups

1. What is good about current practice?  
What concerns do you have?

4. Who is most directly involved in these matters, e.g. liturgical ministers?  
What formation/information is necessary to engage them in the renewal of current practice?

2. In what ways does the documentation affirm or challenge your current practice?

5. How will the assembly be engaged in the process?  
What, in particular, needs addressing at Sunday and/or weekday celebrations?

3. Prioritise the issues you have identified.

6. How will you know whether the formation has worked?