**Thurifer Role**St Maximilian Kolbe Church  
Updated November 2021

**Terms and Background Information**

* **Incense:** small grains of minerals that, when combined with a hot coal, produce smoke and a pleasant aroma. It is used in liturgies for the sake of solemnity.
* **Thurifer:** the server in charge of the thurible and boat. Ordinarily this minister has only these duties and focus when serving at Mass. An additional chair is normally added to sit with the other servers. Participate in Mass as usual except for when ministering the incense. The thurifer vests in an alb like the other servers.
* **Thurible:** the metal censor attached to a chain. This is very hot when the coal inside is lit. The top has a rubber handle on it to lift up to add incense or more coal. The lid should always be placed on the hook once the coals are lit. This way the rubber handle will stay cool.
* **Boat:** the small metal bowl that holds the incense. Make sure the spoon is with it.

**Procedures**

* With your dominant hand, hold the thurible halfway up the chain so it can swing gently. In the other hand, hold the boat with the top of the chain from the Thurible underneath it. Normally, anytime you walk with the thurible, you will also be holding the boat.
* The priest will almost always add incense to the thurible before incensing, so always bring the boat with you. Grabbing the rubber handle, carefully lift the lid of the thurible for the priest so he can add grains of incense.
* Incensing normally occurs during the Entrance Procession, Gospel Procession, Preparation Rite, Consecration and Recessional Procession.
* Gently swinging the thurible while standing or walking helps keep the incense smoking and prevents the coal from going out. Be sure the lid is secure.

**Prior to Mass**

* In the work sacristy, or just behind the half-wall of the sanctuary (where the stand will be placed), light two coals in the thurible 10 minutes before Mass using a lighter. Blowing on the coal or gently swinging the thurible will help provide oxygen for it to light. Take the boat and the thurible with you and carefully carry it to the back of church to join the procession as Mass begins.
* Make sure additional coals and a lighter are conveniently located (on a small table behind the half-wall near the servers chairs is a good place.)

**Entrance Procession**

* The thurifer normally leads a liturgical procession in front of the crucifer. The priest will normally add incense. Then the thurifer leads the procession to the sanctuary. Gently swing the thurible forward and backward as you walk when possible.
* When you reach the steps to the sanctuary, pause to bow your head slightly (as you are carrying something and cannot bow from the waist) and go up immediately in front of the Presider’s chair and wait for the other ministers.
* After venerating the altar with a kiss, the priest will turn to you, add incense, and then incense the altar and crucifix. You remain standing in your place with the boat. When the presider incenses the crucifix, turn to face it as well. When he finishes incensing the crucifix, turn back around, facing the altar. When he is finished incensing the altar, take the thurible from him, walk to the stand, placing both thurible and boat on the stand. Be sure to lift the lid and rest it on the hook.

**Gospel Procession**

* During the Responsorial Psalm, go to the incense stand. Make sure the coal is still burning and check to see if an additional coal is needed. Return to your seat.
* At the end of the second reading, when the lector acclaims “The Word of the Lord”, go to the incense stand and pick up the thurible and boat. Remain standing there as the lector returns to his/her seat and there is a period of silent prayer.
* When the introduction to the Gospel Acclamation begins, take the thurible and boat to the priest. While standing at the chair, he will add incense. After he does so, move to a spot near the ambo, just to the side of the Tabernacle.
* The deacon will then receive a blessing from the presider, and then will lift the Gospel Book off of the altar. The deacon will process to the ambo. You can remain at your spot, but turn toward the ambo.
* After greeting the people, the deacon will come to you and take the thurible to incense the Gospel at ambo – he will not add any incense. Stay on your spot, facing the ambo. The deacon will hand you the thurible when he is finished, just before he proclaims the Gospel.
* During the Gospel reading stay in your spot, and gently swing the thurible without being a distraction from the reading.
* As soon as the Gospel is concluded, return the thurible and boat to the stand and go to your chair, bowing to the altar as you cross through the sanctuary.

**Checking the Thurible**

* After the homily, add an additional coal. Prepare the thurible for use during the Preparation Rite, using the extra coals (potentially needing to light them) and lighters behind the half-wall, near the stand.

**Preparation Rite**

* As the gifts are brought forward, (when the deacon goes to accept the bread and wine and the priest offers the silent prayers), get the thurible and boat and go stand in front of the deacon’s chair.
* After the prayers, the priest will bow to the altar and turn to you. Hand him the boat and raise the lid to the thurible to allow him to add incense. The priest will take the thurible and incense the altar, the crucifix and the gifts. Just like before, when he is facing the crucifix, turn to face the crucifix. After he finishes incensing the crucifix, bow slightly and turn back towards the altar. As he returns to the altar, the priest will hand the thurible to the deacon, who will then incense the priest and the people. IF THERE IS NO DEACON, you will do this. *(Instructions for this can be found on the last page.)*
* Afterwards, the deacon will return the thurible to you and you will return it and the boat to the stand, and you will return to your seat.

**Eucharistic Prayer and Consecration**

* If the presider would like incense used during the Eucharistic Prayer and Consecration, you will take the thurible from the deacon after the preparation rite and return it to the stand. Open the thurible and add incense again (you will want several scoops so it will last for the entire Eucharistic prayer.)
* When the “Holy Holy” begins, you will take the thurible (NOT the boat) and walk to the base of the steps in front of the altar and kneel on the floor, gently swinging the thurible in front of you.
* At the Elevation of the Host and Chalice, (when the bells are rung), incense the altar 3 times to the left, 3 times to the right and 3 times to the middle, a total of 9 times. *(There is no incensing during the Epiclesis, when the bells are rung once.)*
* Remain kneeling in front of the Altar until the Great Amen is sung. At that point, stand and walk reverently to place the thurible on the stand. Remember to lift the lid and set it on the hook. Then, return to your place at your chair.

**The Remainder of Mass and After Mass**

* Immediately following the final prayer, go to the thurible and add incense to the thurible for the procession. Then, take the thurible (the boat stays on the stand) and go to the center aisle. In the procession out at the end, the thurifer again leads.
* After processing out of the church and after the closing song has completely ended, empty the coals safely into the coal bin outside the door near the work sacristy. If incense is used at the next Mass, place the thurible back on the stand. If incense is not used at the next Mass, put the stand, boat and thurible back in the work sacristy.

**Appendix**

**Preparation of the Altar with no Deacon**

In the event that there is no deacon present, the thurifer is responsible for incensing the presider and possibly the assembly during the Preparation of the Altar. This occurs after the presider has incensed the altar.

* The presider will face you and hand the thurible to you.
* You will bow to him.
* You then incense the presider three times, once on the left, once on the right, and once in the middle and then bow to him again.

If you are responsible for also incensing the assembly, you will do so after incensing the presider.

* Walk reverently to the front of the altar
* Bow to the congregation
* Raise the thurible and incense the congregation – twice to the center, twice to the left and twice to the right
* Bow again and return the thurible to the stand.