

# Thurifer Manual for Eucharistic Rites



## St Dubricius Episcopal Church

### The Holy Eucharist

The following instructions outline the procedures for a "usual" eucharistic rite (either I or II).  
ALL INSTRUCTIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE BY THE PRIEST!

#### **BEFORE THE SERVICE**

1. Come to the church *at least 30 minutes* before the service to put on vestments, to prepare the thurible, and to assist in instructions.
2. Since the thurible is so seldom used, assist the vergers in instructing the acolytes on what you will be doing and what they need to do.

## **GENERAL NOTES**

Never attempt to genuflect with the thurible. Instead, solemnly bow. If bowing from the waist is too awkward with the thurible, bow deeply with the head and shoulders.

When turning completely around, always turn around to your right. **Be predictable, especially when carrying fire!**

Otherwise, when you are in the chancel and not carrying the thurible, follow the procedures outlined in the manual for lectors and chalice bearers or the manual for acolytes.

## **PREPARING THE THURIBLE AND BOAT**

1. Lighting the Thurible: About 20 minutes before the service, place the thurible on the sink counter and open it. Take up a piece of charcoal in the tongs and light it. Place the charcoal into the copper basin in the thurible. Blow and poke as necessary to get the charcoal glowing. Close the thurible, take it outside, and swing it around vertically to set the charcoal and to assist in its glowing. Hook the thurible on the nails in the rafter next to the vestry door.
2. Place incense in the boat, making sure the spoon is in place.

## **CARRYING THE THURIBLE AND BOAT**

Carry the thurible in your right hand, holding the top of the chain (which is fully extended). You may slip your thumb through the top ring, but do not let the chain simply dangle from the ring. Your hand should be about a foot in front of you and about six inches to the right of your shoulder and slightly above it. Find a point that offers both control and comfort.

When standing or walking in the chancel, let the thurible swing gently back and forth. This allows smoke to escape and oxygen to enter.

When walking in procession, swing the thurible forward no more than 90 and backward no more than 45. Use a minimum of arm movement -- swing with the wrist and fingers.

Carry the boat on the palm of your left hand (holding it securely by the base with your fingers), with your elbow at a 90 angle and the boat against your chest.

## **CENSING THE THURIBLE**

Present the boat to the priest. With your left hand, grasp the lower ring and lift the thurible in front of you. With your right hand still holding the top of the chain and your thumb through the ring, swing your hand down and lift the top of the thurible up to the lower ring.

The priest will spoon incense into the thurible and bless it. Once the priest has blessed it, lower the top and return it to its position by your side.

Receive the boat with a reverent bow of the head and shoulders.

## **CENSING WITH THE THURIBLE**

There are two ways of censuring with the thurible.

1. To cense the priest and altar party, transfer the chain to your left hand, reach down with your right hand and grasp the chain below the lower ring (slipping your thumb into the ring if this works best), lift the thurible up in front of you and over your head, as you lower your left hand in front of you so that the chain is straight but slack at about a 45 degree angle. This should all be accomplished in one graceful movement.

Swing the thurible twice from your hand to the front. On the backswing, it should make contact with the chain and produce a pleasant ring. Note: Each censing is made up of two swings.

2. To cense the congregation from the edge of the chancel, transfer the chain back to your right hand, and swing the thurible to about a 90 degree angle. a *very slight* jerk when it is at its farthest point will produce a puff of smoke.

## **PRESENTING AND RECEIVING THE THURIBLE**

To present (give) the thurible to the priest, bring it in front of you, lift it up and grasp the chain under the lower ring with your left hand. Lower your right hand (making sure your thumb is no longer in the ring) so that the priest does not have to reach up for it. Cross your right hand over to the left of your left hand (and, of course, above it), so that the priest can grasp the chain without crossing arms. Present the thurible with a reverent bow.

Receive the thurible as it is presented to you, with a reverent bow. Gracefully move it to its appropriate place.

## **THE PROCESSION**

Before the procession, the priest will cense the thurible (as above) in the narthex or vestry, at the priest's discretion.

The thurifer processes directly in front of the crucifer and behind the vergers. Note that the crucifer is right behind you, so swing the thurible with care.

Proceed to the chancel very slowly and reverently. Bow to the altar, turn left, stop, and turn around on the Gospel side of the gate. Place the boat on rail.

When the priest begins the *Gloria in excelsis*, present the thurible and remain where you are.

Receive the thurible and immediately leave the chancel through the upper door to the vestry. Take the thurible out and hang it on the nails next to the vestry door. NOTE: The vergers may do this for you, depending upon what he has coming up.

Be seated with the acolytes in their chancel station. If there is no room, stand with the vergers or retire to the vestry.

## THE GOSPEL PROCESSION

Retrieve the thurible early enough to add another coal (if necessary) and to tend to the glowing embers, stoking them with the tongs to expose red areas. The exact timing will depend upon the length of the second reading, but remember: **The coals take at least 10 minutes to be ready for the incense.** Once again, the vergers may do this for you.

At the beginning of the sequence hymn, carry the thurible and boat to the gate. It may be more convenient if you place the boat on the rail for the priest, who will cense it as above. In any case, leave the boat on the rail, proceed to the end of the chancel, turn, and wait for the procession to form. You will probably have to remind the crucifer not to turn around as well (only the one at the head needs to turn to see when the priest is in place).

Once the priest joins the procession, turn and proceed to the third row of pews. Step to the right, turn to the center of the aisle, and step back to the pew to allow the rest of the party to pass in front of you. (You may need to remind the crucifer to stop so the cross is between the fifth pews.) You should end up to the priest's right and behind.

When everyone is in place for the Gospel reading, prepare to present the thurible. The priest will take it, cense the Gospel book, and return it to you. Remain standing, facing the Gospel book and gently swinging the thurible.

If there is no subdeacon with the Gospel book, take the book as you present the thurible and hold it for the priest to cense it.

Be alert! If you notice the smoke overwhelming the nearest torchbearer or parishioner, move the thurible away from them.

After the Gospel reading, lead the procession back to the chancel. Reverence the altar, turn left, and exit through the vestry as before (or hand the thurible to the vergers, if he offers to take it).

## THE HOLY COMMUNION

During the sermon (at least ten minutes before the end), fetch the thurible and take it into the sacristy. With the tongs, crush the remains of the charcoal, light a new piece (if necessary), and place it into the basin amongst the old pieces. Take it outside and swing it around a few times. Again, the vergers may volunteer to do this for you.

When the priest has set the table and before the lavabo (the server may need to be reminded here to wait), carry the thurible and boat to the gate and present it to the priest as before.

After censuring the elements, the priest will return it to you. If the priest so desires, cense him or her three times, reverently bowing before and after censuring. From in front of the gate, turn to the lectors and cense them twice (bowing before and after), turn to the acolytes and do the same.

Proceed to the edge of the chancel. Using the swing motion (each time twice), cense the

congregation on the Gospel side (right), on the Epistle side (left), and then directly down the center aisle. Reverently bow before and after each censuring. Step down and leave through the lower vestry door.

### **THE RETIRING PROCESSION (RECESSIONAL)**

As at the Gospel procession, retrieve the thurible and stoke the coals before the recessional hymn.

At the beginning of the recessional hymn, carry the thurible and boat to the gate for the priest to cense it. Leave the boat on the rail. Turn and take your place behind the verger. If there is no verger, go to the edge of the chancel, stop, and turn around to face the altar.

If there is no verger, once the first members of the choir turn from the altar, turn (in unison with them) and proceed slowly and reverently to the narthex.

### **DISPOSING OF THE ASHES**

The incense in the ashes has been blessed and must be disposed of properly. But the coals are also extremely hot and must be disposed of safely.

Fill a glass with water and take the water and the thurible outside. If the ground is soft enough, dig a hole with the heel of your shoe. Pour water into the basin, pour the incense and ashes onto or into the ground, and pour the rest of the water over them. Gently stir it to make sure the fire is out.

Take the thurible home and clean it. The basin should be polished -- this results in a cleaner, more reliable burning the next time.