



# St. Paul's Cathedral

Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, California



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May 12, 2004

## Thurifer Customary

From: Head Thurifer, St. Paul's Cathedral, San Diego

To: All Thurifers, St. Paul's Cathedral, San Diego

Subj: THURIFER CUSTOMARY AND POLICIES

Purpose: To establish a uniform way for Thurifers to perform their functions as Servers at services at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Cancellation: All previous versions of Thurifer Customaries.

Background and Discussion: Psalm 141 says, "Let my prayer be set forth in your sight as the incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Incense has been used in worship since even before Christianity. It is a symbol of our prayers being lifted to GOD and is used to honor him.

Different parishes have different customs in the use of incense. Some use it every Sunday, and some use it only at certain times of the year. Some do not even use incense. Since there are no universal rules governing its use, each parish will normally have its own customary.

This customary is specifically for St. Paul's Cathedral, San Diego, California.

The Thurifer must be a reliable and dedicated part of the acolyte team. In order to be a Thurifer, you must have been a server at the Cathedral for a time specified by the Canon Liturgist. All Thurifers are appointed by the Head Thurifer on approval of the Canon Liturgist and/or the Dean of the Cathedral. As always, the Canon Liturgist and the Dean have final authority in the appointment of any servers.

## Safety

In using incense and the thurible, the first and foremost thing to remember is SAFETY. You must always be aware of what and who is around you. Always know where you are in relation to the Altar, the railing, chairs, pews and PEOPLE. Never get lazy or slack on safety.

## Preparation

You should show up at least 30 to 45 minutes early so that you can set up, get vested, rehearse and light the coals. You must light the coals early enough to have them hot enough to burn the

incense by the beginning of the service. You are also responsible for running through the service with the Celebrant/Officiant before the beginning of the service (especially if the Celebrant/Officiant is visiting or is unfamiliar with the use of incense).

The items you will need to prepare for the service are:

- Thurible stand
- Thurible
- Boat with small spoon
- Incense
- Coals
- Bowl
- Aluminum foil
- Lighter or matches
- Tongs
- Large spoon

Follow these steps in preparation for the service:

1. Get all of your items. (The thurible and boat can be found in the closet in the inner sacristy. All other items are in the Thurifer's Closet in the hallway leading to the sacristy).
2. Line the thurible with aluminum foil.
3. Place a sufficient amount of incense in the boat using the large spoon.
4. Place six (for Eucharistic services) or three coals (for Evensong and shorter services) in the bowl.
5. About 10 -15 minutes prior to the start of the service, light three coals and place them in the thurible. BE CAREFUL when lighting the coals. Hold them with the tongs away from you and other people and anything flammable. The coals will normally spark when you light them.
6. Take the thurible with the lighted coals outside and swing the thurible for a few minutes to help heat the coals.

You are now ready to start the service. Do not put any incense on the coals at this time. The Celebrant will load the thurible and bless the incense right before the procession begins. During the service, keep the thurible on the stairway side of the double doors in the hallway and keep those doors closed. This is to keep the smoke and strong charcoal smell out of the cathedral during the service.

#### Definitions:

Thurible: A censer of metal, for burning incense, having various forms, held in the hand or suspended by chains; -- used especially at mass, vespers, and other solemn services.

Thurifer: A person who has been trained to carry the thurible at public worship.

Cense: To swing the smoking thurible at an object or person in order to bless the same.

Long Chain: Technique of censuring where the dominant hand holds the top of the chains.

Short Chain: Technique of censuring where the top of the chains are held in the non-dominant hand while the dominant hand holds the chains just above the thurible.

Boat: The small container used to hold and carry the unburned incense.  
Boat Person: An acolyte who assists the Thurifer at public worship.  
Celebrant: The priest who presides at the Eucharist.  
Officiant: The person, clergy or lay, who presides at a non-Eucharistic service.  
Entrance: The Entrance includes the Procession and Gloria (or Kyrie) at a Eucharist.  
Gospel: The time at the Eucharist where the Holy Gospel is proclaimed to the People. It comes immediately after the Second Lesson and immediately precedes the Sermon.  
Offertory: For the purposes of the Thurifers; the time when the Elements are brought forward and the Altar, Elements and People are censed.  
Consecration: The Great Thanksgiving or the Eucharistic Prayer.  
Sanctuary: The area of the church behind the Altar rail.  
The Church: The area excluding the Sanctuary.  
The Aisle: The center aisle will be referred to with this word.  
The Crossing: The area of the Aisle just before the Altar rail.

Customary: The following paragraphs will describe the basic functions for all the regular services held at St. Paul's Cathedral. Changes in liturgy frequently occur, so flexibility is a trait that must be learned by all Thurifers. The intention in this Customary is to give a basic understanding of functions that a Thurifer must understand.

1. 10:30 Eucharist. This service is the primary public worship service at the Cathedral. Incense is used every Sunday except during Lent.
2. Make preparations for the service. The Thurifer should arrive at 9:45 for this service. All preparations (except for lighting the coals) should be made prior to the Gospel rehearsal.
3. The Thurifer takes place immediately before the Gospel Book in procession. While in procession, cense the People. Stop censing when you reach the Crossing.
4. Cense the Entrance. When a Gloria or Kyrie is sung, bring the thurible to the Celebrant (you will meet at the center of the Altar on the side closest to the back wall). The Celebrant will cense the Altar and return the thurible to you. Take the thurible back to the preparation area. In the summer months when no Gloria or Kyrie is sung, the Entrance is censed during the processional hymn.
5. Cense the Gospel. The Gospel Procession is rehearsed 30 minutes before the service. You must attend this rehearsal. Hand the thurible to the Gospeller after the announcement of the Gospel. When the thurible is returned to you, take place about four or five feet directly behind the Gospeller.
6. Replace the coals. During the Sermon, replace your coals or add more to the existing coals. Be sure to dump the burned incense in the area provided by the steps.
7. Cense the Offertory. After the Table is set, the Anthem has been sung and the Offertory Hymn starts bring the thurible to the Celebrant just as at the Entrance. The Celebrant will again cense the Altar and return the thurible. The Celebrant, Liturgical Deacon and Preacher will step forward. Cense these three using a short chain technique by swinging twice to the Celebrant, twice to the Liturgical Deacon and twice to the Preacher. Move to the front and center of the Altar and face the Altar party. Using a short chain technique cense the Altar party (one set of three to each side) to the left, then to the right. Turn and face people and cense them using a long chain technique. The People are censed with seven swings. The Thurifer now takes place in front and to the right of the Altar (as facing the Altar).

8. Cense the Consecration. During the Great Thanksgiving there are two times when the Thurifer censes. The first is at the Sanctus (Holy, holy, holy) and the second is at the Final Doxology (by him and with him and in him...). At each of these times nine long chain swings are directed to the Bread and Wine. At the introduction to the Lord's Prayer, go back to the preparation area. When at rest, swing the thurible side to side to keep air moving, but never outside the boundaries of your body. Do not be distracting.
9. Clean up. The coals are dumped in the area provided next to the steps. The aluminum foil is thrown in the trash (make sure all burning material is gone) and the bowl is wiped out when it has cooled down. Return the thurible and boat to the inner sacristy and all other supplies to the Thurifer closet in the hallway.

Evensong. Evensong is sung at 5:00pm every Sunday at the Cathedral. The Thurifer should arrive no later than 4:30pm to prepare for the service.

1. Make preparations. There is no rehearsal at this service so you must know the patterns. If there are questions, you should ask the Head Thurifer or the Verger.
2. Carry in Procession. At the Procession, the thurible is only carried. Do not cense the People during the Procession.
3. Cense the Magnificat. The Magnificat is sung after the First Lesson. Bring the thurible to the Officiant at the center of the Altar closest to the People (note that this is different from 10:30). The Officiant will return the thurible and ~~return to his/her seat~~<sup>1</sup>. Cense the Officiant six times using a short chain technique. Face the Altar party to the Left and cense three times and then the Altar party to the right. Note: Even if you cannot see anyone to your right, the Organist and Verger are there; cense that area even if you see no one. Turn to the People and cense the Aisle. Return to the preparation area when you are finished censing, do not wait for the music to end.
4. Clean up. Clean up as you would for 10:30. You should wait until after the service at Evensong. You should rejoin the Altar party after the Magnificat.

Conclusion: The procedures in this Customary are basic and some things may change from time to time. Special services and special situations are discussed in the Thurifer's Special Customary. Any questions about this Customary should be directed to the Head Thurifer. If the Head Thurifer is not available then ask a Verger. If the Verger is not available ask the Canon Liturgist or the Clergy in Charge. All Thurifers should read and understand this Customary.

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## Changes

1. *The Officiant will return the thurible and step back towards the Dean's Stall.*