



Preparing the Thurible

The thurifer (the person who carries the incense) should light the coals between ten and fifteen minutes before the start of the service. Coals are often infused with a self-lighting chemical. For a service with limited incense use, like sung Evensong, one coal should suffice. For Masses (especially Solemn High Masses), two to three coals are preferred. To light a coal, hold it with tongs above the open thurible bowl and place the flame (whether lighter or match) to it until the starter chemical ignites. Place the lighted coal into the bowl and proceed onto the next coal until all are lit.

Safety

Fire extinguisher and water should always be on hand ✠ Always use tongs to handle hot coals ✠ Never put your bare hand on a thurible containing hot coals ✠ Always place used coals and matches in water to ensure they are extinguished and cooled off before throwing away.

Thurifer



I, ictus



II, ductus

Censing People and Things

There are two basic swings to know when censing people and things. For the single (I, *ictus*), hold the ring in the left hand and the chain a few inches from the thurible in your right hand. Then raise the thurible and flick the right wrist once to swing it forward once. The double (II, *ductus*) follows the same procedure as the single, except that the thurifer makes two flicks of the wrist before lowering the thurible again (this creates an up, flick, flick, down pattern).

Normally the thurifer only censes in a straight line, such as at the altar. However, when censing the congregation, the thurifer censes to the left, right, and then center.

Different combinations of single or double swings are used. So if there are two singles, the motion would be up, flick, down, up, flick, down. If there are two doubles, the motion is up, flick, flick, down; up, flick, flick, down. Check your congregation's customary to find out how many singles or doubles are expected for each object or person.

Standard Swing



When leading a procession with a procession with a charged thurifer, swing the thurible the full length of the chain. There are three main patterns.

The standard swing is recommended for new thurifers. In this case, swing the thurible in an arc back and forth in front and behind the body but never allow the thurible to swing higher than parallel to the ground.

360s



In a 360, the experienced thurifer allows it to go in a full circle perpendicular to the ground. Rather than stopping the thurible, the thurifer swings with enough force to allow it to complete a full, 360-degree circle.

Figure Eights



Figure eights are simply a series of 360s that alternate sides. The experienced thurifer alternates between 360s on the right and left sides of the body while keeping the thurible in the right hand. The thurible will cross in front of the body in a figure-eight pattern.

