



## Fr. Daniel's Corner

### Mass Moment:

#### Entrance Procession Part 2:

Thurible (Censer), Cross, Candle, Book of the Gospel.

A thurible is a metal censer suspended from chains, in which incense is burned at Mass. The Church sees the burning of incense as an image of the prayers of the faithful rising to heaven. The symbolism is mentioned in Psalm 141:2: "Let my prayer be incense before you; my uplifted hands an evening offering." Furthermore, incense symbolizes the prayers of the saints in heaven - (Rev 5:8; 8:3) which infuse upwards towards the altar of God. Incense is a sacramental, too, used to sanctify, bless, and venerate. It is evocative of the mystery of God Himself. As it rises upward the imagery and smell convey the sweetness of Our Lord's presence and it reinforces how the Mass is linked to Heaven and Earth, ending in the very presence of God. The smoke also symbolizes the intense faith that should fill us, and the fragrance is representative of Christian virtue.

The cross tells the story of Jesus, of his saving death and resurrection. History has left us many images—a jeweled cross of victory, Christ peacefully asleep on the wood of the cross, a figure in the agony of death, one with outstretched arms reaching down to embrace the world in love. But it is not only his cross. He also said that any who would follow him must take up the cross (Mt 10:38). It tells our story as well. Think of the realistic images of the scourged, crucified Christ so beloved when people find his sufferings played out in their own lives. There are so many ways, both large and small, in which we daily die to sin and self and rise to newness of life. Life is weighed down with pain and suffering, with failures in what we do, with hurt feelings and broken relationships. It is also buoyed up by health restored, by success in what we plan and do, by the joys of reconciliation. The history of the world, says theologian Karl Rahner, is a terrible and sublime history of dying and rising that reached its fulfillment in the dying and rising of Christ, in which all are joined in their daily moments of dying and rising. Rahner calls that the "liturgy of the world." The cross carried in the procession sums up in one image the story of Christ and also that liturgy of daily dying and rising which every member brings into the assembly.

Candles are used to light the darkness. For Christians, the candle is the Easter candle, symbol of the Risen Christ who once said, "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12). He also told his disciples "you are the light of the world" (Mt 5:14). He taught them that their light should be set on a lamp stand so that all might see their good works and give glory to God (Mt 5:15-16). The candles carried down the aisle are reminders of our baptismal candles, lit from the Easter candle, and symbols of the witness to Christ, however dim or bright, that we have each given that week.

The Gospel book tells the story of the life, words, deeds, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It also tells the story espoused as their own by those who are willing to follow in his footsteps and to lose their lives in loving service to others for his sake and the sake of the Gospel (Mk 8:35).

As we gather, censer, cross, candles, and Gospel tell us simply and silently what our celebration is about. We are followers of Christ, summoned to bring into the assembly our daily lives of dying and rising and of witness and service to others. There we are to join them with Christ. Our act of gathering and the entrance of our ministers remind us that Christ himself is in our midst to lead us in the celebration and to nourish us for Christian living at the table of Word and Eucharist.