

The History of the Liturgy & The Ritual of the Raising of Incense

The Liturgy passed from the Apostles to their successors, the bishops as an oral tradition and was commanded to writing only after heresies in 4th Century

St Mark Brought Christianity to Egypt and the Liturgy that Bears his Name

Middle Ages – Deterioration in Liturgy Globally except for Egyptians

20th Century - a 'liturgic movement' in most churches except for Coptic Church to revise and conform to the liturgy of the early Church



Incense represents the prayers and praises of the saints and angels

Raising of Incense is the preparation for Liturgy

Raising of Incense includes

- Asking for forgiveness
- Worshiping
- Thanksgiving
- Praises
- Requesting the Lord's blessings
- Praying for others

THEN ANOTHER ANGEL, WHO HAD A GOLDEN CENSER, CAME AND STOOD AT THE ALTAR. HE WAS GIVEN MUCH INCENSE TO OFFER, ALONG WITH THE PRAYERS OF ALL THE SAINTS, ON THE GOLDEN ALTAR BEFORE THE THRONE.

- REVELATION 8:3

Jesus Taught the Apostles the Liturgy and its Rites and They delivered it to the Churches which They Established

- Apostolic Tradition



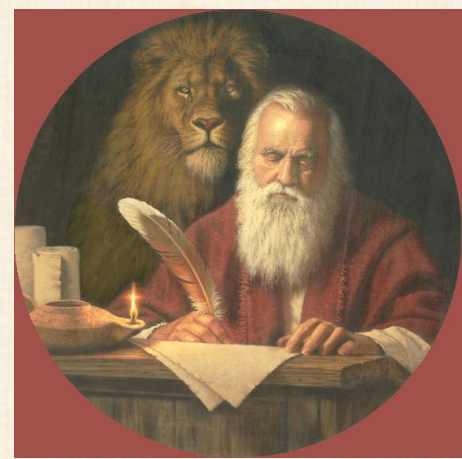
²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

The Liturgy was Recorded in Writing in the Fourth Century



- In the beginning, the Liturgy was passed from the Apostles to their successors, the bishops as an **oral tradition**
- The Liturgy **was commanded to writing only after heresies** started to appear in the Church, and when heretics attempted to put their heretic teachings into the Liturgy

St Mark Brought Christianity to Egypt and the Liturgy that Bears his Name (written in Greek)



- The very first Eucharist was held in the upper room, in St. Mark's house in Jerusalem. The man carrying the pitcher of water is believed to be no other than St. Mark himself (Mk 14:13-15).
- Saint John Chrysostom tells us that St. Mark was the first Apostle to inscribe the Liturgy, in the form of a service or a regular church ritual which is strictly followed in the celebration of the Eucharist.
- By the end of the fourth century another liturgy started to be used, that is the liturgy of Saint Basil the great (with great similarity with the anaphora of St Mark)

Liturgies in the Remaining 3 Early Centres of Christianity

- **The Liturgy of Rome:** The earliest liturgy is the liturgy of Hippolytus. Most scholars agree now that this liturgy originated in Egypt and was exported to Rome
- **The Liturgy of Jerusalem:**
 - the liturgy of St. James (The Lord's Cousin) was the dominant Eucharistic prayer by the fourth century. Not only in Jerusalem, but also in Syria, Arabia, Greece and Armenia. This was accomplished, no doubt, through the many pilgrims who travelled to the holy land.
 - there is some form of connection between this liturgy and the liturgies of Alexandria.
- **The Liturgy of Antioch (first centre to be preached to outside Judea):** The liturgy of the Apostles, supposedly written by Clement, bishop of Rome, who in turn received it from the Apostles. The liturgy is similar to St. Mark's liturgy.

6th Century

The Church of Alexandria: 3 liturgies

- The Greek liturgy of Saint Mark has now been translated into Coptic. Since the translation is traditionally attributed to Saint Cyril, it became known as: The liturgy of Saint Cyril.
- Anaphora of Saint basil is believed to be brought to Egypt by St Basil from Cappadocia during his visit to Egypt in A.D. 357 – Derived from the anaphora of St Mark.
- Anaphora of St. Gregory the Theologian – resembles the anaphora of St Basil yet it is addressed to Christ rather than to the Father.

The Church of Rome:

- Rome abandoned its early liturgy, attributed to Hyppolitus, believed to be of Egyptian origin, to adopt another liturgy, bearing the name of Pope Gregory the great, which is largely an adaptation of the Egyptian St. Mark

The Church of Constantinople:

- Constantinople starts to use an expanded form of the Egyptian St. Basil and later adopts a much abbreviated liturgy attributed to St. John Chrysostom.

Middle Ages – Deterioration in Liturgy Globally except for Egyptians - excluded by both Rome and Constantinople, who trying to cope with persecution of the various ruling dynasties clung to their eucharistic tradition

- 8th Century: “**Silent**” Mass became fashionable in both Rome and Constantinople- most of the prayers of the liturgy are silent - In Constantinople, the Emperor had to intervene to correct
- **Choral chants** were introduced into the Liturgy and gradually overshadowed the role of the celebrating priests as well as that of the congregation
 - In Constantinople: chants became **more and more complex** that they needed specialists to sing them, and, grew in length reducing the priest’s portion
 - In Rome: chants of the choir grew **without any direct connection to the prayer of the priest** or the mass
- “**Personal**” Prayers by Priests: As the choir took over the mass, the priest had to introduce all sorts of personal prayers to kill the time while the choir sang! - Nothing of the old Liturgy was left intact,
- 11th Century: Dramatic changes – Rome broke with Constantinople
- 16th Century: Protestants broke up with Rome
- The Liturgy deteriorated in the west until it finally “died”

20th Century - a 'liturgic movement' in most churches **except for Coptic Church** who has kept the Liturgy as it was in the Early Church.

- Historians and Theologians even among Protestants started to realize that the early Church had a liturgy, it had Sacraments, and that ministry of the early Church was deeply liturgical not simply a charismatic ministry as was once thought
- The twentieth century has witnessed a '**liturgic movement**' in most churches_ Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. Thanks to this movement, the churches have revised or completely changed their liturgies in order to conform to the liturgy of the early Church; also they changed their practices in favour of more participation of the faithful in the liturgy and more frequent communions.

The Ritual of the Raising of Incense

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The Ritual of the Raising of Incense

- The use of incense in the church is **not a pagan ritual** but a Biblical fact
- The use of incense represents the **prayers and praises of the saints and angels**
- Incense is raised during Vespers and Morning Prayers before every liturgy (except during the Great Lent which are concluded late)
- Minimum requirement is raising of the Prime Incense after the midnight praises
- The Raising of Incense is an introduction and preparation for the Liturgy
- The Raising of Incense consists of a collection of **prayers, praises** and **Thanksgiving** prayers which **request the Lord's blessings** upon the sacramental service.
- **The Raising of Incense may be performed on its own**, not just as an introduction to the Liturgy, but as an offer of the sacrifices of prayer and praise to God through its sweet incense

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The **absolution** from the other priests, and the **forgiveness** from the congregation is very important before starting the prayer of Thanksgiving

Priest opens the curtain saying 'Have **mercy** on us...'

Priest prays "The Lord's prayer"


Priest prostrates before the alter saying "We **worship** you Christ with your Gracious Father and the Holy Spirit for You have come/risen and saved us"

Priest prostrates before the other priests and the congregation saying "Accept my prostration, bless me and **forgive** me"

Priest exchanges a holy kiss with the other priests as a sign of **love, peace** and **reconciliation**

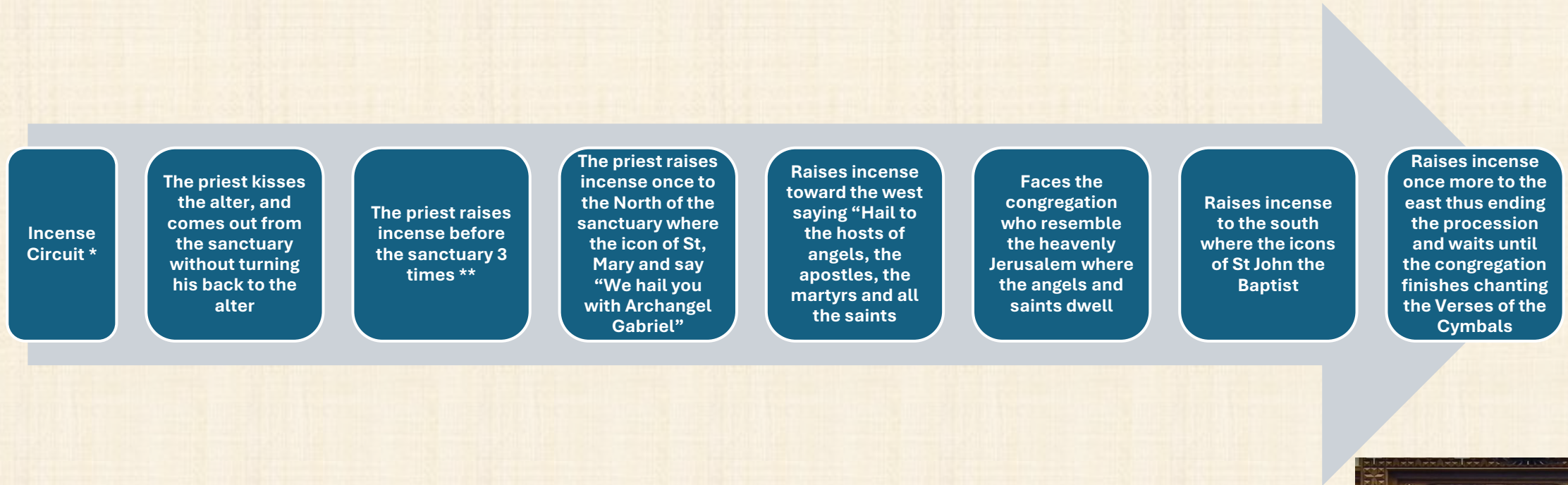
Priest turns to the congregation and says "**Forgive** me, I have sinned"

The Prayer of Thanksgiving "**We thank you for everything, concerning everything and in everything**"



"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.
Mark 11:25

The Mystery of Vespers & Morning Incense



* The priest goes around the altar 3 times with the censer, silently praying the Three Litanies, namely, the 'Litany of the Peace of the World and Church', the Litany of the Fathers', and the 'Litany of the Gatherings', while the congregation sings the Verse of the Cymbals. Facing him on the opposite side of the altar is the deacon who holds the cross and responds

** 1st: "We worship You O Christ our God with Your gracious Father, and the Holy Spirit for You have come and saved us

2nd: "But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy, in fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple" (Ps.5:7)

3rd: "I will praise You with my whole heart. Before the angles I will sing praises to You"(Ps.137:1-2)



The Litanies



- **“A cross of Incense”**: The priest, standing at the door of the sanctuary, raises incense in all four directions, signifying that God is Omnipresent and can hear our prayers
- **On weekdays Matins** – Litany of sick and travelers
- **On Saturday Matins** – litany of the reposed (to commemorate Christ in tomb Saturday)
- **On Sunday and Feast Matins** – say offering instead of travelers as Church presumes no one is traveling
- **Vespers** – always the litany of the departed

The procession of Incense

- The priest enters the sanctuary, put hand of incense and comes out of the Altar doing a complete circle around it.
- Cross of incense facing the east
- Incense to the “Katameros” and Holy Relics
- Incense inside the nave of the church: before icons of the angels, apostles, saints, and, among the congregation offering incense and blessing
- Congregation respond to the priest blessing with silent words of repentance

The Prayer of Efnouti nai nan – Lord Have Mercy on Us



- After the Doxology and the Creed, the priest holds the cross with **three lit candles** to signify that He Who was crucified is the Light of the world, sacrificing Himself to give light to those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death.
- While facing due East, and without signing Without Making The Sign of the Cross, he chants, "Lord have **mercy**, settle Your **mercy** upon us, have **compassion** upon us." He turns to face the North and, while signing the cross, says, "**Hear** us." Then he turns towards the West, gives the blessings to the congregation, and says, "**Bless** us." The congregation bows their heads to receive the blessings. The priest then turns to the South and says, "**Guard** us," while making the sign of the cross. He then turns to the East once more, and with the sign of the cross, he says, "**Help** us." Still facing East, he completes the Litany without signing, saying, "**Take away your anger** from us, visit us with Your salvation and **forgive us our sins**." Then the people respond by "**Kirialyson** 3 times".

The Litany of the Gospel

- crosses the box of incense, and puts another spoonful of incense into the censer while saying the Litany of the Gospel
- Standing before the sanctuary, the priest offers incense to the Holy Bible while saying, "We worship before the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the prayers of David the Psalmist and Prophet. **O Lord grant us the forgiveness of our sins.**"



The Absolutions



- The priest then takes the cross from the deacon and recites the three absolutions; two of them are prayed in silence while facing the East, and the third is said audibly while facing the congregation (West).
- While the priest is saying the third absolution, the congregation bows their heads, [asking for absolution and forgiveness](#).
- These three [absolutions are the same prayers that our spiritual father prays on us after confession](#).
- At the end of the absolution, the congregation proceeds towards the priest to kiss the cross, the Holy Bible, and the priest's hand.

The Blessing



- Finally the priest prays the final blessing which varies according to the season...here is the example of the annual one: "May God **have compassion** upon us, **bless us**, make **His face to shine upon us**, and **have mercy** upon us. Lord **save Your people**, **bless** and **uplift the Christians** everywhere, through the supplications and prayers of the Lady of us all, the holy Theotokos St. Mary, and the holy Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, and all the heavenly hosts, and our fathers the Apostles, the martyrs, the saints and the cross bearers, and the blessed saint and angel of this day. May their holy blessings, their grace, their favor, their love, and their support be with us all forever, Amen."
- The priest then says, "Christ is our God", and the congregation responds with, "Amen, let it be so."
- Facing the East, the priest continues, "O King of Peace, **grant us Your peace** and **forgive us** our sins, for unto You is power, glory.... Amen."
- He also **asks the angel of peace to accompany each member of the congregation** as they leave the church, until they arrive at their homes.
- Then together with the congregation, the priest prays The Lord's Prayer.