

Then, before the proclamation of the Gospel, the Lectionary may be incensed, containing as it does the holy words of Scripture. At the Offertory, incense may be used on the offerings of bread and wine, the altar, the priest and the people. The gifts of bread and wine are to be transformed into Christ's body and blood on the altar through the priest's sacred ministry, in front of and for the benefit of the faithful baptised in the congregation. At the elevation, the (now) Body and Blood of Christ Jesus may be incensed. At a funeral Mass burnt incense may also be used over the earthly remains of the deceased and again at the graveside. At Easter, five grains of unburnt incense are placed into the Paschal candle, symbolising Jesus' five wounds, those in each of His hands and feet and the wound in His side.

The heavenly significance of incense in prayer is attested to in this extract from the Book of Revelation (8:3-4): *"And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God."*  
**-Stephen S**

**Entrance antiphon: These are the ones who, living in the flesh, planted the Church with their blood; they drank the chalice of the Lord and became the friends of God.**

**First Reading: Acts 12: 1-11**

**Responsorial Psalm: 33: From all my terrors the Lord set me free. /R**

**Second Reading: 2 Timothy 4: 6-8,17-18**

**Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. Alleluia!**

**Gospel: Matthew 16: 13-19**

**Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.**

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**Communion Antiphon: Peter said to Jesus: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus replied: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.**



## **Ss Peter & Paul, Cycle B, 2024**

### **Weekly Reflection: Sacramentals**

**(2): Incense:** Incense has long been used for both religious and secular purposes. It is regularly referred to in the Old Testament. For example, in God's instruction to Moses as to how to

build the tabernacle (Exodus 25-31) He says (30:1): *"You shall make an altar to burn incense upon; of acacia wood shall you make it."* In the first chapter of St Luke's Gospel it is said of the priest Zechariah, prior to the birth of his son, John the Baptist: *"according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense."* Also, frankincense was one of the gifts brought by the wise men to Jesus after His birth; this symbolised His role as priest, prophet and deity. Nevertheless, it cannot be said with confidence that incense was used prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> century in Christian ritual, It might be inferred that Christians may have followed the Jewish use from the outset. However, the fact that incense was also used in pagan sacrifices in the Roman world, including for paying homage to the Emperor as a God, may be a reason for Christians having avoided its use until after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Incense is regularly associated with prayer to God. In Psalm 141:2 it is written: *"Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee..."*. Our prayers can involve all the five senses, not just those of speech and of hearing the Word of God. Christians use the sense of sight to read the Word of God and also to look at and venerate holy images, for example the crucifix and icons. Touch is used, for example, in the laying on of hands by a priest or when we make the sign of the cross as a blessing. We can see incense, but we also use our sense of smell to appreciate its effect in assisting us to glimpse the divinity of God.

Incense may feature at various stages of any Mass. At the beginning it may accompany an entrance procession and be used on the cross and the altar.