



The Raising of Incense





Opening the Curtain of the Sanctuary

- The priest opens the Curtain of the sanctuary from left to right symbolizing our transfer from the left side to the right side by the work of redemption of the Lord Christ.
- The priest says, while opening the Curtain, “Have mercy on us, O God the Father, the Pantocrator. O Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, God of hosts, be with us, for we have no helper in our hardships and tribulations but You.”

- Then, the priest prostrates before the altar and before the congregation (asking for their forgiveness) as per the commandment, “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 Raising of the Incense Prayers

- Every service should start with the Lord's Prayer as per His commandment, "In this manner, therefore pray..." (Matthew 6:9-13)



1. Thanksgiving Prayer
2. The Litany
3. The Prayer of 𐌸𐌹 𐌺𐌰𐌹 𐌺𐌰𐌻 (Efnoti Nai Nan)
4. The Litany of Gospel & The Gospel Reading
5. The Five Short Litanies
6. The Absolutions



1. Thanksgiving Prayer ⁽¹⁾

- The priest stands outside the sanctuary holding a cross in his right hand.
- After finishing the Thanksgiving Prayer, the priest steps inside the altar and make the sign of the cross on the incense box three times (in the name of the Trinity) and puts five spoonfuls of incense in the censer.
- These five spoonfuls are symbols of the five men in the Old Testament who offered acceptable sacrifices to God
 - Abel, Noah, Abraham, Aaron, and Zachariah.





- After putting the spoonfuls of incense, the priest takes the censer and makes three complete processions around the altar and the deacon holding a cross proceeds before him.
- During these processions, the priest prays for
 - The peace of the Church
 - The Church fathers
 - The assemblies.



- After this, the priest comes out of the sanctuary and offers incense in the likeness of a cross before the altar,
- During this, the congregation chants the Verses of the Cymbals in which we offer greetings to all the heavenly hosts and to the church, the house of the angels.

2. The Litany



- In the evening raising of incense (vespers), the priest prays the Litany for the DEPARTED as the evening symbolizes the setting of the sun and the approaching end of our life on earth.

2. The Litany



- The Litany for the DEPARTED is also prayed in the matins of Saturdays as we remember the presence of the Lord in the tomb.

2. The Litany

- In the matins of Monday to Friday, the priest prays the litanies for the SICK and the TRAVELERS.
- These two groups are remembered as they cannot come to the Church.
- The Litany for the Travelers is prayed only in the mornings as this was the custom in the old days.



2. The Litany ⁽³⁾



- In the matins of Sundays and the Lord's feasts, the priest prays the litanies for the SICK and the OBLATIONS and not the TRAVELERS as everyone should be at the Church on these days bringing their offerings and oblations.
- The priest prays the Litany for the Oblations at the altar as the offerings are considered a sacrifice.

2. The Litany



- We notice during the procession that the priest offers incense before the main gate of the altar, before the Gospels on the Mangalia, the relics of the saints, the bishop (if he is in the Church), other priests, and the icons of the saints.
- After the litanies, the priest enters the sanctuary and puts a spoonful of incense in the censer and starts the procession of the incense throughout the Church.

2. The Litany



- The procession of the incense takes place in a counterclockwise direction as a symbol that in the Church we are above time and the movement of the Church is opposite that of the world.
- This procession of incense symbolizes that of Aaron by which he blessed the people and stopped the plague among them (Numbers 16).



- We notice that when the priest offers incense before the Gospel, he does this by putting the palm of his hand on the Gospel, followed by the back of his hand, and the palm once more before kissing it. This means that we give honor to the Gospel from within (the palm) and without (the back of the hand) and even more so from within meaning our heart and soul.





2. The Litany

- Offering incense before the relics and the icons of the martyrs and saints denotes our belief in their presence and fellowship with us.
- During the procession of the incense, the congregation chants the doxologies for the occasion and the saints followed by the Creed.



3. The Prayer of ΕΥΧΟΤΙ ΝΑΙ ΝΑΝ ⁽¹⁾



- At the end of the Creed, the priest holds a cross with three candles on it and faces the East praying, “O God have mercy upon us, settle mercy upon us, have compassion upon us.”
- Then, he turns to the north and says “hear us.” Then to the west, towards the congregation and says, “bless us.” Then, he turns to the south and says, “keep us,” before turning to the East once again, saying, “help us.”

- Then, while facing towards the East, he concludes by saying, “take away Your anger from us, visit us with Your salvation, and forgive us our sins.”
- The three candles on the cross indicate that the One who was crucified was the light of the world.
- The prayer starts and concludes towards the East as it is directed towards God requesting His mercy and forgiveness.





- The left side (north) denotes rejection, that is why the priest while facing north, says, “hear us.”
- Looking towards the congregation (west), he pleads for blessing for all the people.
- The right side (south) reminds us of God’s mighty hand, that is why the priest prays “keep us”.

4. The Litany of the Gospel & Gospel Reading



- After the prayer of $\Phi\tau$ $\text{N}\bar{\alpha}\iota$ $\text{N}\bar{\alpha}\nu$ the priest takes the censer and prays the Litany for the Gospel.
- At the end of the Litany, the deacon enters the sanctuary **first** followed by the priest.
- Both of them makes a procession around the altar and the priest takes the Gospel from the deacon while praying inaudibly, “ Lord, now You are letting your servant depart in peace, according to Your word...” (Luke 2:29-31)

- The procession around the altar symbolizes the spread of the word of God around the world.
- The Prayer of Simeon the elder recited by the priest during the procession symbolizes the end of the Old Testament, which Simeon represented, and marks the beginning of the New Testament with the birth of the Savior.





- At the end of the procession, the priest stands at the door of the sanctuary facing west and raising the Gospel above his head as a sign of veneration.
- The Deacon shouts saying “Stand up in the fear of God and Listen to the Holy Gospel”
- If the bishop is present, he is the one who reads the Gospel.





- During the reading, two deacons hold two candles on either side of the Gospel.
- Lighting the candles on either side of the Gospel reminds us of the psalmist David when he said, “Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path” (Psalm 109:105)



- Raising incense before the Gospel symbolizes the life of the Lord Christ which spread everywhere as a sweet savor of incense: “Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth” (Song of Solomon 1:3)

5. The Five Short Litanies



- After reading the Gospel, the priest stands before the door of the sanctuary holding the censer and he prays the five short litanies.
 - The peace
 - The fathers
 - The place
 - (waters, plants, or fruits)
 - The assemblies.

6. The Absolutions ⁽¹⁾

- While the congregation recites the Lord's Prayer, the priest, facing East, reads the first and the second absolutions inaudibly.
- At the end of the second absolution, the priest, facing the congregation, signs them with the cross and says the third absolution.
- These absolutions are read for the congregation to be absolved from their sins and to be sanctified before the beginning of the liturgy.
- The absolutions sanctify us if we are coming to the church with repentance and we practice the mystery of confession.





6. The Absolutions (2)

- After this, the priest places the cross upon the Gospel and the other priests and the deacons come and kiss the cross and the Gospel, during which they all chant the appropriate closing hymn.



The Short Blessing



- At the end, the priest says the benediction and dismisses the congregation in peace if during vespers.
- Or he enters the sanctuary to continue the liturgy if during the morning raising of incense.
- While the deacons Wait in the deacons room chanting the Blessing Hymn.

