

## TREASURES of OUR FAITH

by: Deacon Ryan Adams

Greetings brothers and sisters. As we go through this 'Year of Faith', each week we will take a journey together to deepen and rediscover our faith as Catholic Christians. We will take time to look at the rich traditions of our Church, we'll look at what certain things signify and their symbolism, take time to answer some frequently asked questions and look at why we do certain things as Catholics.

This week we'll talk about Incense.

The sweet smell of incense and its rising smoke gives it a kind of natural symbolism. It has become the image of something pleasing to God. The rising smoke symbolizes the prayers of the congregation rising up to God, its burning signifies zeal or fervor and its fragrance signifies virtue. The burning charcoal used to heat up the incense is symbolic of our hearts on fire with love for God.

In Psalm 141 we have the plea to God, "Let my prayer come like incense before you."

Burning incense is also a sign of reverence. Incensing the body at a funeral Mass is a sign of reverence for the body that was once the temple of God.

Incensing the Easter candle is a sign of reverence for Christ who is the light of the world.

Incensing the Blessed Sacrament at Benediction is a sign of adoration and worship given to Christ, who truly is present upon the altar.

During the liturgy, incensing the cross and altar shows respect for Christ, of his sacrifice made present upon the altar, that same reverence is shown when the gifts of bread and wine are incensed during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Incensing the Book of Gospels indicates reverence for the word of God and Christ himself who is the Word Incarnate. Incensing the Priest who is celebrating the Mass is a sign of respect for the actions he takes *In Persona Christi*, and then incensing us, the congregation, shows respect for the role we take on as the Body of Christ gathered together in community as the faithful.

The next time we're sitting in the pews and we see an altar server process in with the thurible, with that sweet smelling smoke rising towards Heaven, let us imagine all our love and prayers rising up to our loving God.