



**GUIDELINES
FOR
ADORATION
AND
EXPOSITION
OF THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT**

DIOCESE OF LANSING

INTRODUCTION

In the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the Council Fathers state, "...the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows" (SC #10). Such a profound statement derives from the Church's long tradition that the Eucharistic assembly is the primary place in which the faithful experience the full mystery of Christ's paschal sacrifice and where it is continually and salvifically made present to God's holy people. From this central and normative experience of the Eucharistic liturgy, other public and private devotions have arisen.

The Church's official documents provide a more complete treatment of this subject. This guideline provides some insight into the church's teaching and liturgical norms regarding adoration and exposition.

THE TABERNACLE

From the Latin word for "tent," the **tabernacle** is a box or other suitable opaque, stationary container in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved outside the Eucharistic liturgy. The words of the Torah and the prologue of John's gospel remind us that God remains present, dwelling among his people.

While the Eucharistic assembly has always been a sign of the Church's unity, there were those in the community who are unable to attend yet earnestly desire to share in the celebration. Tabernacles were erected in churches and chapels to reserve the Body of Christ with the specific purpose of attending to the needs of the sick and the dying, to provide for their spiritual nourishment.

The Precious Blood is never reserved unless it is to be taken to the sick immediately after Mass (NHC-USA 54-55).

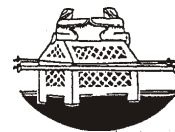
Placing a tabernacle on the altar became popular in the fifteenth century and only mandated in the nineteenth. Recent documents mandated that there be only one tabernacle in a church. "The Most Holy

Eucharist is to be reserved regularly in only one tabernacle of a church or oratory... It should be placed in a part of the church that is prominent, conspicuous, beautifully decorated, and suitable for prayer... (Canon 938). The tabernacle should be opaque, solid, immovable and locked (*ibid.*) A special oil lamp or lamp with a wax candle should burn continuously near the tabernacle as a sign of Christ's presence (HCWEOM 11).

The tabernacle may not be placed on the altar on which Mass is celebrated (GIRM 315). Instead, the tabernacle may be placed in a chapel which is integrally connected to the church and visible to the assembly. The chapel might also contain kneelers and chairs for those who come to pray. The tabernacle may also be placed in the sanctuary, if it is separated from the altar by lighting, distance, or architectural element (cf. GIRM 315 and BLS 74-80).

Thus, the proper placement of the tabernacle does not diminish the Blessed Sacrament. Rather, it furthers the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful in the Eucharistic liturgy. At the same time, it promotes the sacred doctrine of the Real Presence and fosters personal and communal adoration in a sacred setting.

(See also RM #276-277; SC #128; GIRM #314-317; CCC #1183 and #1379; CCL #934-940; BLS 70-80; CB #49; and ID #24-25.)



ADORATION

Throughout Church history, popular piety has developed a great reverence and love for the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. With profound appreciation for this spirituality, the Church also recognizes that, "Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the sacrament of unity, namely a holy people united and organized under their bishop" (SC #26).

As properly understood, **adoration** is reverent and private time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle and outside the Eucharistic Liturgy. If the tabernacle is located in the main body of the church and Mass is taking place, the faithful are enjoined to participate in the communal celebration, rather than separating themselves from the assembly for private devotion.

Adoration is primarily individual, although it may be done in groups or as a family. In the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the faithful are encouraged to offer prayers of gratitude to Christ, to pray for specific needs such as the peace and salvation of the world, and for their own intentions.

Signs of reverence include a light burning near the tabernacle, kneeling, and genuflection. Growing in grace, imbued with the virtues of faith, hope and love, those who adore the Eucharist will be strengthened to assume their roles as bearers of Christ in the modern world and inspired to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy as often as possible (See HCWEOM #79-81; CCC #1378; and ID #25-26).

Eucharistic adoration may take place in any parish church, chapel or oratory officially recognized by the Diocese of Lansing. Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is not permitted elsewhere without the written permission of the bishop of the diocese.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle is to follow the norms of the liturgical seasons, e.g., during the Sacred Triduum. (On Holy Thursday night, the tabernacle is empty before Mass. After the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Blessed Sacrament is carried in a ciborium to a suitably-prepared place of reposition and placed in a tabernacle. The faithful may continue adoration during the night according to local custom, but no solemn adoration may take place after midnight).

Adoration will naturally take place while the church is open to the public. Oftentimes, parishioners and visitors "make a visit" to the Church to pray before the Blessed Sacrament during the day. Frequent and occasional devotional visits can deepen one's spiritual relationship with Christ, have a profound impact on

one's life, and foster an interior serenity. Such visits, for short or extended periods should be encouraged.

PERPETUAL ADORATION

Perpetual adoration occurs when parishioners, religious orders and communities, and other interested people arrange their visits to Church in an organized way. Typically, two or more people, taking turns, spend an hour, in prayer and silence, before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. The hours of the day or night are so divided that adoration is considered perpetual or extended over a period of time.

Perpetual adoration is worthy to be promoted. In parishes and oratories where it does occur, measures should be taken to ensure that there are two or more of the faithful present and that there is a safe and secure environment for the adorers. It is strongly recommended that they pattern this holy practice in harmony with the spirit of the liturgy. When the whole community takes part in adoration before Christ the Lord, readings, songs, and silence may foster effectively the spiritual life of the community.

EXPOSITION AND REPOSITION

Exposition refers to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament outside of the tabernacle, either in a monstrance or ciborium. This pious practice is intended to deepen the spiritual communion of the faithful with the real presence of Christ in the consecrated host. It should also foster a desire to celebrate the Mass.

Usually, exposition takes place at the end of the celebration of the Eucharist, "Immediately after the distribution of communion, the monstrance is placed on the altar. The deacon (or in his absence the priest, even the presider himself) places the host in the monstrance... . The celebrant goes to the chair and after a brief period of silent prayer, stands and says the Prayer After Communion. The concluding rites of the Mass are omitted. The celebrant then goes to the altar, and after placing incense in the censor, kneels and incenses the Holy Eucharist. After a period of silent prayer, the minister(s) rise, genuflect and depart" (OSEHE #120) (see also HCWEOM #82-98).

Exposition of the Eucharist, as a weekly or annual event, for specific periods of time, with approved liturgical celebrations, heighten the faithful's belief in the Real Presence.

To promote a deeper understanding of the Eucharistic mystery, it is recommended that such an exposition take place annually for an extended period of time in churches and chapels where the Eucharist is reserved (HCWEOM #86 and CCL #942). During the time of exposition, members of the faithful should be constantly present for prayer and adoration, whether communally or individually.

I encourage parishes to conduct a procession on the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, if it is part of local custom and is conducted with proper dignity. "Processions within the body of the church are no longer permitted. A procession with the Blessed Sacrament should go from one church to another. Nevertheless, if local circumstances require, the procession may return to the same church where it began" (OSEHE #20). Only with the approval of the bishop, may there be processions in the public streets. These processions usually require permits from city officials.

When it can be done in the judgment of the diocesan bishop, as a public witness of the veneration toward the Most Holy Eucharist, a procession is to be conducted through the public streets, especially on the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

-Canon #944

The specified time of exposition ends with reposition (the return of the Blessed Sacrament to the tabernacle). Simple reposition occurs when a priest or deacon, vested appropriately (or some other designated minister) prays with those present and then places the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Solemn reposition should include a reading, song, and communal and silent prayer after which only a priest or deacon (OSEHE #148) offers Benediction (blessing) to the faithful while the host is exposed in the monstrance. The host is then placed in the tabernacle. (Please see the ritual and its options, including celebrations within the Liturgy of the Hours, in *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* © 1992, ICEL and USCCB).

The Blessed Sacrament is never to be exposed simply for the sake of benediction (HCWEOM #88-89; CCL #942-943). No special permission is required for a parish to have such non-continuous Eucharistic exposition for a particular day of the week or an annual, specified time of parish retreat or renewal (CCL #942).

PERPETUAL EXPOSITION

While parishes and other chapels are free to practice the devotions mentioned above without permission of the bishop, they are not permitted to have continuous or **perpetual exposition** without the permission of the bishop.

Perpetual exposition should take place in a separate and suitable chapel, so as not to interfere with the celebrations of the daily or Sunday Eucharist. Since exposition may not take place during the Triduum, exposition does not take place 365 days a year.

The Congregation for Divine Worship notes, "If the sacrament were exposed continuously, there would be a lessening in the value of these occasions as reminders of their proper place in the spiritual life and of their character as high points for reflection on the Eucharist" (CDW, Notitiae 1971, #414- 415).

Perpetual exposition is officially authorized and permitted for 1) religious orders and communities for whom perpetual adoration or exposition is prescribed as an integral part of their constitution and religious life or 2) Public Associations of the Faithful whose constitution and statutes prescribe perpetual adoration or exposition.

The Pontifical Council for the Laity established the Association of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration as a universal and international Public Association of the Faithful with juridic personality and approved its statutes on June 2, 1991. This lay association is bound by prescriptions for such associations by Canon Law, enjoying the rights and privileges and observing the obligations of the canons. The Association promotes eucharistic worship and devotion and has a particular character of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

Adoration is governed by the liturgical laws of the Church (HCWEOM #82-92).

The formation of a Public Association of the Faithful for Perpetual Adoration requires the permission of the diocesan bishop and consent of the pastor, contingent on conformity to the statutes of the Association of Perpetual Adoration sanctioned by the Pontifical Council of the Laity.

In such cases, the connection between this practice and the normative and central celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy should always be fostered. At least one member of the order or institute must be present at all times, offering prayers on behalf of and for the whole community and the Church.

EXPOSITION AND THE MASS

When the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated, it preempts other devotional practices. Thus, prior to the beginning of Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is repositioned. During the celebration of the Eucharist, there can be no exposition in the same church or chapel. If there has been exposition prior to Mass and if it is to be resumed after Mass, the formerly exposed host is to be consumed and a new one consecrated for use in the post-liturgical exposition (HCWEOM #94).

In a church or chapel of extended or perpetual exposition, reposition (either for the sake of the liturgy or because of the absence of the faithful) should take place no more than twice a day (HCWEOM #88).

In cases where permission has been granted, where there is a Eucharistic chapel apart from the main church, and where this chapel neither interferes with nor conflicts with the primacy of the Mass, exposition may continue so long as there are sufficient numbers of the faithful present to maintain the devotion (HCWEOM #83 and CCL #941).

CONCLUSION

“The Eucharistic Liturgy is the source for achieving in the most effective way possible, human sanctification and God’s glorification, the end to which all the Church’s other activities are directed” (SC#10). “The preeminent manifestation of the Church is present in the full, active participation of the people in these liturgical celebrations” (SC #41). The Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and culmination of the whole Christian life. Therefore devotion, both public and private, toward the Eucharist even outside of Mass that conforms to the norms herein is strongly encouraged.

In structuring these devotional exercises account should be taken of the liturgical seasons so that they accord with the liturgy, are in some way derived from it, and lead the people back to it. When the faithful adore Christ present in the sacrament, they should remember that this presence derives from the sacrifice and has as its purpose both sacramental and spiritual communion (OSEHE #5). Thus, this devotion should foster a desire to celebrate the memorial of the Lord and the frequent reception of the Body and Blood of Christ.

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