

DIOCESE OF MARQUETTE
GUIDELINES FOR PERPETUAL ADORATION OF THE
HOLY EUCHARIST
LITURGICAL RENEWAL

Before the Second Vatican Council and the liturgical renewal it gave to the Church, we focused our understanding of the Eucharist mostly upon the bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of the Lord. Eucharist seemed to equal the Blessed Sacrament present on the altar or reserved in the tabernacle. Private and silent adoration of the Lord truly present on the altar or in the tabernacle appeared to be our primary understanding of Eucharistic worship.

External and internal participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, especially by reception of Holy Communion was key to the liturgical renewal which Pope Paul VI and the Council instituted. With the renewal now in place, we realize that our worship is not limited to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Rather and preeminently our Eucharistic worship is the act of participation in the Mass. We understand that through this participation we are joined to the Lord offering Himself to the Father. The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the Lord first of all so that we may share in the Lord's passion, death and Resurrection, and be nourished with this bread from heaven.

Eucharistic worship, then, consists in our active participation in the Mass culminating in Holy Communion and also in our public and private adoration of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. They are distinct forms of worship. The latter is dependent on and leads us to the saving action of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. That is why the Church recommends a separate chapel for reserving the Blessed Sacrament suited to the faithful's private adoration and prayer. That is also why the Church says that Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest should never be held on a weekend when a Mass of Obligation has already been or will be celebrated.

Today the renewal is secure and the Mass clearly central. It seems that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is again turning to Eucharistic devotions in order to nourish its understanding of the great gift that the Eucharist is, and also to complete our worship of the Lord truly present among us in sacramental form.

ADORATION OF THE EUCHARIST

From its earliest days, the Church has offered worship to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, not only during Mass, but also outside it. The Church reserved the Eucharist in order to allow those to receive the sacrament who could not gather for the Sunday celebration because of sickness or other reasons. The practice of reservation of the sacrament for communicating the faithful outside of Mass eventually led to the worship of Christ present in the reserved sacrament.

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical, *Mysterium Fidei* (1965) taught, "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers the worship of Latria (Adoration) to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, not only during Mass, but also outside it. It does so by reserving consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to solemn veneration by the faithful and carrying them in processions to the joy of great crowds of the faithful." (#56)

The revised portion of the Roman Ritual entitled, Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, published by the Holy See in 1973, provides the most recent regulations and texts for adoration of the reserved sacrament. The Ritual emphasizes the relationship between exposition and the Mass. "The Eucharistic Sacrifice is the source and culmination of the whole Christian life. Both private and public devotion toward the Eucharist, therefore including devotions outside Mass, are strongly encouraged when celebrated according to the regulations of lawful authority.

"In the arrangement of devotional services of this kind, the liturgical seasons should be taken into account. Devotions should be in harmony with the sacred liturgy, take their origin from the liturgy, and lead people back to the liturgy." (#79) "The faithful should make every effort to worship Christ the Lord in the sacrament, depending upon the circumstances of their own life. Pastors should encourage them in this by example and word." (#80)

PERPETUAL ADORATION

The Church has always sought a balanced and full understanding of the Eucharist. For this reason, she teaches the celebration of Mass should hold the pre-eminent place in the Church's prayer life and she has carefully regulated the solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Solemn Exposition of Forty Hours began in 1592 in Rome. It began to be observed for the first time in the United States in Baltimore in 1857. Today the Ritual recommends that solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for an extended period of time should take place once a year. "This kind of exposition, however, may take place only if there is assurance of the participation of a reasonable number of the faithful." (#86)

The Code of Canon Law, Canon 942, repeats this recommendation in closely similar words so "the total community may more attentively mediate on and adore the Eucharistic Mystery." Perpetual Exposition within the liturgical norms has been an exception and required a special indult. In recent years, paragraph 90 of the Roman Ritual: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass has received considerable attention by diocesan liturgy offices and the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments. This directive of the Ritual states that according to their constitutions and regulations, some religious communities and other pious groups have the practice of perpetual eucharistic adoration or adoration over extended periods of time. Some commentators reflected an understanding of this paragraph held by many people in the Church: "Outside of a religious community perpetual exposition is not permitted." (BCL Newsletter, 1986)

In 1986, the Congregation for Divine Worship gave a corrective interpretation of paragraph 90 writing, "When all the conditions are observed the bishop can grant permission for a pious association to have perpetual exposition."

In recent years, the Church has experienced a movement to encourage perpetual adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament in parishes. On June 2, 1991, the Pontifical Council of the Laity approved the statutes of a pious association of the faithful with juridical

standing according to the Code of Canon Law, called the Association of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration with headquarters in Los Angeles. It has as its purpose the promotion of "the practice of perpetual eucharistic adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament."

In 1995, the U.S. Bishops asked the Bishops' Committee on Liturgy to resolve some concerns and questions regarding perpetual adoration. The Bishops' Committee on Liturgy submitted five questions to the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments. To the question whether perpetual adoration or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may take place in parishes, the Congregation distinguished between perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle and exposed in a ciborium or monstrance. In the former case, no permission is necessary. In the latter case, permission of the local Ordinary is required. The latter is permitted in religious communities and pious associations with official recognition. "If a pious association is established within a parish, the activity is separate from the parish, although all members of the parish are free to participate in it."

Continuing its response to the questions, the Congregation wrote, "(Perpetual exposition) should be in a chapel distinct from the body of the church so as not to interfere with the normal activities of the parish or its daily liturgical celebrations. Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament should occur before the celebration of Mass begins in the chapel."

Numbers 82-100 of the Ritual regulate the worship of the Eucharist and require that there be no perpetual adoration during the Easter Triduum. In addition, the Congregation emphasized, "Every effort should be made to ensure that there should be at least two people present. There must absolutely never be periods when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed and there is no one present for adoration. It may prove necessary to expose the Blessed Sacrament for adoration only at stated times when members of the faithful are present."

Finally, the Congregation clarified in response to the questions of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, "The local Ordinary alone determines the pastoral appropriateness of perpetual exposition in his diocese, and accordingly may permit it or not and may limit the number of places where it takes place."

In conclusion, it seems clear that chapters of the pious association mentioned above can be established within parishes, and, with the local Ordinary's permission, perpetual adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament initiated.

PRACTICAL CONCERNS REGARDING PERPETUAL ADORATION IN THE PARISH

1. There are some practical matters of safety of the adorers and the danger of profanation, theft and robbery, especially in the night hours. Some measures to ensure safety are necessary if perpetual adoration is observed in a parish facility.

2. Secondly, many of our parishes because of the small number of members, would suffer a physical and moral burden should they attempt alone to carry out perpetual adoration. While most people can afford one hour a week for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, to be present for a set hour every week of the year is impossible for most people. The result is the maintenance of an organization for scheduling hours of adoration that can weigh heavily on a small congregation and could impinge on one's duties of state. Parents and working people are misguided if they omit their duties to their families and employers in order to keep their commitment to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. A parish family should not be tempted to feel less generous or guilty if they are unable to maintain perpetual adoration. Much better that they limit adoration to one or two days a week and adore with a larger complement of the parish members in attendance. To think God's generous blessings are due to our maintenance of twenty-four hours of prayer a day is offensive to God's goodness and His gratuitous grace. People are obligated to pray, but we can only encourage and not obligate people to participate in a devotion of perpetual adoration.
3. Thirdly, a separate chapel should be used to avoid interference with the daily liturgical celebrations of the parish. Without such a facility, a parish wishing to initiate perpetual adoration should set briefer periods of time and perhaps fewer days of scheduled adoration. Laws governing Eucharistic reservation protects some important theological values. The Eucharist may be reserved only in a church or oratory or chapel legitimately erected. These are sacred places blessed or dedicated according to the liturgical rites and established with the permission of the Bishop or competent Ordinary. Secondly, the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be celebrated regularly to maintain the intrinsic connection between the Eucharist celebrated and reserved and to ensure the frequent renewal of the host. (cc. 934,2; 939) Reservation outside of a church, chapel or oratory, even in a room of a rectory or convent, is forbidden.
4. Fourthly, regular catechesis should be offered by the pastor to enable the faithful to have a wholeness and balance in their understanding of Eucharistic theology and in their prayers of adoration. The people should understand the relationship of private adoration to the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The following practices can assist the people in seeing this correlation and the harmony of private devotions with the liturgical seasons. Sunday Eucharistic celebrations should be exemplary so that the Scripture is well proclaimed, the preaching is good, participation is active, and liturgical ministerial roles filled. Fresh altar bread should be consecrated at every Mass for the distribution of Holy Communion. A host consecrated at the Mass should be regularly taken at the end of Mass to the chapel for exposition. Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament should be celebrated regularly with the Liturgy of the Hours, "prayers to the Eucharistic Mystery, silence, readings - especially from Scripture, (homilies or brief inspirational words), singing and petitions." (S.C. Rites, 1968) During private adoration, at each hour or several times a day, the adorers could be encouraged to read the word of God aloud following the Lectionary readings for the Mass of the day, or another systematic schedule of selections from the books of the Bible.

5. There is a danger of routine the pastor must attend to. After the initial fervor, brought by novelty, people can inadvertently minimize the significance of the Real Presence, and reduce it to a par with other signs of the Church: Statues, stained glass windows, vessels of the Holy Oils, a baptismal font, etc. However, exposition can often become an occasion for contemplation and religious experience. Some means of addressing this concern are benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, an annual extended period of time of exposition in the church with total parish participation and Eucharistic Processions. (Ritual #79-108)
6. One of the challenges of Christian spirituality in our society today is to avoid the heresy of activism on the one hand and escapism on the other. The practice of perpetual adoration should lead the faithful to a sense of gratitude for God's tremendous love and a response of reaching out in the spirit of love to their neighbors and the community, especially to the poor. Pastors should be attentive in their preaching and catechesis to encourage the people of the parish to ponder Jesus' teaching in their hearts and put it into practice. Parishes may want to place prayer cards throughout the adoration chapel which remind the people to pray for the parish, the community and our brothers and sisters around the world, especially the poor and the oppressed.

SPECIFIC DIRECTIONS

1. Before a parish completes plans for perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed, permission should be requested of the bishop. The pastor should indicate in his request how the parish will comply with the Church's regulations in the Roman Ritual: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass.
2. In addition, the pastor should demonstrate how the parish will handle the six practical concerns listed above and indicate the approved pious association with which they will affiliate.
3. If another parish in the deanery has a Chapter of the Association of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration, serious thought should be given to participating cooperatively with that parish before initiating a separate devotion of adoration.
4. A parish should consider the introduction of a weekly Eucharistic Day(s) following morning Mass as a helpful way to prepare the parish for perpetual adoration or to discern its feasibility.
5. After one year, the pastor should submit to the bishop an evaluation of the perpetual adoration devotion indicating the amount of participation, the effects on people's spiritual life and the parish life, and any problems encountered in the practical concerns listed above.

+Most Reverend James H. Garland
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Solemnity of the Body & Blood of Christ