



Policy

on the Adoration of the
Blessed Sacrament in the
Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney



LITURGY OFFICE
Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney





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INTRODUCTION

"The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession" (CCC 1378).¹ Even though the primary and original reason for reservation of the Eucharist outside Mass is the administration of viaticum, "the reservation of the sacrament for the sick led to the praiseworthy practice of adoring this heavenly food in the churches. This cult of adoration rests upon an authentic and solid basis, especially because faith in the real presence of the Lord leads naturally to external, public expression of that faith."²

RECENT MAGISTERIUM ON ADORATION

In recent decades the Magisterium of the Church has consistently highlighted the spiritual and pastoral benefits of Eucharistic Adoration. St John Paul II, in his final encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), recalled that "the worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass is of inestimable value for the life of the Church. This worship is strictly linked to the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The presence of Christ under the sacred species reserved after Mass ... derives from the celebration of the sacrifice and is directed towards communion, both sacramental and spiritual."³ He emphasised that "it is the responsibility of Pastors to encourage, also by their personal witness, the practice of Eucharistic adoration, and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in particular, as well as prayer of adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species."⁴

Pope Benedict XVI addressed the relationship between the Eucharistic Sacrifice and Eucharistic Adoration in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), recalling St Augustine's famous saying: "No one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it."⁵ The Pope explained that "Eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church's supreme act of adoration. Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we receive. Only in this way do we become one with him, and are given, as it were, a

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 1378, quoting Paul VI's encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965), 58.

² Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (1973), 5, quoting Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium* (1967), 566-7.

³ John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), 25.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), 66, quoting St Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 98:9, CCL XXXIX, 1385.



foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly liturgy. The act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself. Indeed, ‘only in adoration can a profound and genuine reception mature. And it is precisely this personal encounter with the Lord that then strengthens the social mission contained in the Eucharist, which seeks to break down not only the walls that separate the Lord and ourselves, but also and especially the walls that separate us from one another.’”⁶

In the same document, the Pope heartily recommended the practice of Eucharistic Adoration, both individually and in community. He insisted that “this act of worship ... enables the faithful to experience the liturgical celebration more fully and more fruitfully.” Therefore, “wherever possible, it would be appropriate, especially in densely populated areas, to set aside specific churches or oratories for perpetual adoration.”⁷

These principles were echoed during Pope Francis’ pontificate. He frequently recalled the spiritual benefits of Adoration. In his meeting with the Organising Committee of the National Eucharistic Congress in the United States of America, he summarised his thoughts by saying: “I believe that we have lost the sense of adoration in our day. We must rediscover the sense of adoration in silence. It is a form of prayer that we have lost. Too few people know what it is. It is up to the Bishops to catechize the faithful about praying through adoration. The Eucharist requires it of us.”⁸

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN SYDNEY

In response to the growing devotion to the Eucharist, a number of parishes in the Archdiocese of Sydney have expressed their desire to host perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on their premises. The Archbishop has expressed his hope that there will be Perpetual Adoration Chapels in each deanery. The purpose of this document is to provide some practical guidelines on this matter. It is not an exhaustive resource on the topic of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, or on all practical matters related to constructing a Perpetual Adoration Chapel (e.g. heritage related matters, access, security and fire safety considerations, etc.). Rather, the purpose is to outline some basic norms that need to be observed when considering constructing a Perpetual Adoration Chapel on parish grounds.

⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁷ Ibid., 67.

⁸ Francis, Meeting with the Organising Committee of the National Eucharistic Congress in the United States of America (2023).



This policy is to be read in conjunction with the universal documents of the Church on these topics, especially the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM, 2010), *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (HCWEOM, 1973), *Code of Canon Law* (1983) and *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004).

1. The relationship between Adoration and Exposition

- 1.1. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is the most solemn way of adoring the Eucharistic Lord outside of the celebration of Mass. However, it should not be understood as the only way in which Christ can be adored. Apart from the solemn Exposition, it is possible and indeed praiseworthy to adore Christ present in the Eucharist when the Blessed Sacrament is enclosed in the tabernacle. In most parishes, this is the usual form of Eucharistic adoration. Exposition is a solemn liturgical celebration which requires special dignity and decorum, therefore whenever it is celebrated, it needs to be carefully prepared and conducted in accordance with the liturgical books of the Church.
- 1.2. To facilitate prayer before the Eucharistic Lord enclosed in the tabernacle, churches where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved should be open daily, at least for some hours at convenient times to allow the faithful to make visit and pray (HCWEOM, 8).

2. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

- 2.1 In most churches, Exposition will take place at the main altar. If the tabernacle is located in a separate chapel, Exposition may take place there, provided the space is suitable for this purpose (e.g., there is a suitable altar, there are kneelers and pews, etc.).

If the Blessed Sacrament is to be exposed in a monstrance, the following norms need to be followed.

- 2.1.1 During Exposition the celebration of Mass is prohibited. Exposition is to be interrupted during Mass unless it is held in a separate area, and at least some of the faithful remain in adoration (HCWEOM, 52).



- 2.1.2 Whenever the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in the monstrance, at least four candles should be lit, and incense should be used (HCWEOM, 54).
- 2.1.3 The ordinary ministers of the Exposition are priests and deacons. In their absence, the following persons may publicly expose and later repose the holy eucharist for the adoration of the faithful: a) an Acolyte or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion; b) a member of a religious community or of a lay association of men or women which is devoted to eucharistic adoration, upon appointment by the local Ordinary (HCWEOM, 60). In the Archdiocese of Sydney, the authority to appoint lay persons to expose the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance is delegated to Parish Priests.
- 2.1.4 The minister, if he is a priest or deacon, should vest in an alb or a surplice over a cassock, and a stole. Other ministers should wear either an alb, or, if this is not possible, some other appropriate, respectful clothing appropriate for the occasion.
- The priest or deacon should wear a white cope and humeral veil to give the blessing at the end of adoration, when the exposition takes place with the monstrance; in the case of exposition in the ciborium, the humeral veil should be worn.
- 2.1.5 Lay ministers may never bless the congregation with the monstrance. When they expose the Blessed Sacrament, a simpler form of the rite, without the blessing, is to be used. The rite of Exposition that always needs to be followed is to be found in the book Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass.
- 2.1.6 The Blessed Sacrament exposed in the monstrance must never be left unattended (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 138).



3. Norms on Perpetual Adoration Chapels

- 3.1 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for an extended period may take place only with the consent of the Ordinary and only if suitable numbers of the faithful are expected to be present (HCWEOM, 55). This means that permission from the Archbishop must be sought when a parish wishes to create a Perpetual Adoration Chapel. The first step in this process is consultation with the Liturgy Office, followed by a request put forward to the Vicar General.
- 3.2 Since habitually there should be only one tabernacle in a church (Can. 938 §1; HCWEOM, 10), a Perpetual Adoration Chapel should normally be housed in a separate building. In some cases, it may be possible that such chapel would be located in the same building as the main body of the church, however in such cases a very clear separation between the chapel and the main body of the church is necessary.
- 3.3 There must be no confusion about the primary importance of the celebration of the Mass vis-a-vis the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. To avoid any confusion, the faithful should be clearly and regularly instructed about this. For example, the faithful present at Mass should know that they must remain there for the whole time during the Eucharistic celebration and they should not go to the Perpetual Adoration Chapel for their thanksgiving after Communion. It should be clear to everyone that Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament derives its sense and meaning from the Eucharistic Sacrifice and should always lead to it.
- 3.4 Adoration chapels should be designed and furnished to a high artistic standard. Artificial elements such as battery-operated candles, plastic flowers, or background music should be avoided to preserve liturgical authenticity.
- 3.5 If insufficient adorers are available for uninterrupted exposition, the Blessed Sacrament must be reposed in the tabernacle at scheduled times. This may happen no more than twice per day (HCWEOM, 57). If interruption would be needed more frequently, extended exposition should not be held.
- 3.6 If the Blessed Sacrament is replaced in the tabernacle during such an extended period of adoration, it may be done “simply” by the priest or deacon, vested. The priest or deacon would spend a brief period of adoration himself and say a prayer with the faithful present. The same applies to a lay minister who serve in the



absence of the priest or a deacon. The following exposition may be done in the same simple manner at the scheduled time (cf. HWEOM, 55).

3.7 The Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance is never to be covered with a veil or a curtain. Also, the use of 'adoration tabernacles' with the embedded function of exposing the Host through opening a part of the tabernacle without the due ceremony prescribed in the liturgical books is not permitted.

CONCLUSION

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a well-known and much-loved means of increasing the Eucharistic devotion among Catholics. In light of the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Sydney in 2028, parishes are encouraged to foster this devotion through catechesis, preaching, and regularly scheduled Exposition.

If a parish wishes to create a Perpetual Adoration Chapel, pastors need to take into consideration all the theological and practical factors involved, including the possible location of such a chapel, the challenge of involving reliable and scheduled adorers, the requirements set out in the current liturgical books of the Church, etc. It needs to be remembered that while a Perpetual Adoration Chapel usually helps in fostering Eucharistic piety, it is not necessary for creating vibrant and fruitful devotional life in the parish.

It is hoped that parishes will find this policy helpful in preparing and revising their plans in this regard. It is also hoped that whatever decisions they make in preparation for the IEC2028, Eucharistic devotions will continue to flourish in the Archdiocese of Sydney and will continue to be celebrated with the necessary dignity and respect for the tradition of the Church, and in fidelity to the current liturgical norms.