

Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I The Relationship between Eucharistic Worship outside Mass and the Eucharistic Celebration

1. The celebration of the Eucharist is the centre of the entire Christian life, both for the Church universal and for the local congregations of the Church. "The other sacraments, all the ministries of the Church, and the works of the apostolate are united with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. For the holy Eucharist contains the entire spiritual treasure of the Church, that is, Christ himself, our passover and living bread. Through his flesh, made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men, who are thus invited and led to offer themselves, their work, and all creation together with him."
2. "The celebration of the Eucharist in the sacrifice of the Mass," moreover, "is truly the origin and the goal of the worship which is shown to the Eucharist outside Mass." Christ the Lord "is offered in the sacrifice of the Mass when he becomes present sacramentally as the spiritual food of the faithful under the appearance of bread and wine." And, "once the sacrifice is offered and while the Eucharist is reserved in churches and oratories, he is truly Emmanuel, 'God with us'. He is in our midst day and night; full of grace and truth, he dwells among us."
3. No one therefore may doubt "that all the faithful show this holy sacrament the veneration and adoration which is due to God himself, as has always been customary in the Catholic Church. Nor is the sacrament to be less the object of adoration because it was instituted by Christ the Lord to be received as food".
4. In order to direct and to encourage devotion to the sacrament of the Eucharist correctly, the Eucharistic mystery must be considered in all its fullness, both in the celebration of Mass and in the worship of the sacrament which is reserved after Mass to extend the grace of the sacrifice.

II The Purpose of Eucharistic Reservation

5. The primary and original reason for reservation of the Eucharist outside Mass is the administration of viaticum. The secondary reasons are the giving of communion and the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ who is present in the sacrament. 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.

6. In the celebration of Mass the chief ways in which Christ is present in his Church gradually become clear. First he is present in the very assembly of the faithful, gathered together in his name; next he is present in his word, when the Scriptures are read in the Church and explained; then in the person of the minister; finally and above all, in the Eucharistic sacrament. In a way that is completely unique, the whole and entire Christ, God and man, is substantially and permanently present in the sacrament. This presence of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine "is called real, not to exclude other kinds of presence as if they were not real, but because it is real par excellence."

Therefore, to express the sign of the Eucharist, it is more in harmony with the nature of the celebration that, at the altar where Mass is celebrated, there should if possible be no reservation of the sacrament in the tabernacle from the beginning of Mass. The Eucharistic presence of Christ is the fruit of the consecration and should appear to be such.

7. The consecrated hosts are to be frequently renewed and reserved in a ciborium or other vessel, in a number sufficient for the communion of the sick and others outside Mass.
8. Pastors should see that churches and public oratories where, according to law, the holy Eucharist is reserved, are open every day at least for some hours, at a convenient time, so that the faithful may easily pray in the presence of the blessed sacrament.

III The Place of Eucharistic Reservation

9. The place for the reservation of the Eucharist should be truly pre-eminent. It is highly recommended that the place be suitable also for private adoration and prayer so that the faithful may easily, fruitfully, and constantly honour the Lord, present in the sacrament, through personal worship.

This will be achieved more easily if the chapel is separate from the body of the church, especially in churches where marriages and funerals are celebrated frequently and churches which are much visited by pilgrims or because of their artistic and historical treasures.

10. The holy Eucharist is to be reserved in a solid tabernacle. It must be opaque and unbreakable. Ordinarily there should be only one tabernacle in a church; this may be placed on an altar or, at the discretion of the local Ordinary, in some other noble and properly ornamented part of the church other than an altar.

The key to the tabernacle where the Eucharist is reserved must be kept most carefully by the priest in charge of the church or oratory or by a spe-

cial minister who has received the faculty to give communion.

11. The presence of the Eucharist in the tabernacle is to be shown by a veil or in another suitable way determined by the competent authority.

According to traditional usage, an oil lamp or lamp with a wax candle is to burn constantly near the tabernacle as a sign of the honour which is shown to the Lord.

...

CHAPTER II

Forms of Worship of the Holy Eucharist

Introduction

48. The Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and culmination of the whole Christian life. Both private and public devotion toward the Eucharist, therefore, including devotion 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 in some sense, take their origin from the liturgy, and lead the people back to the liturgy.

49. When the faithful honour Christ present in the sacrament, they should remember that this presence is derived from the sacrifice and is directed toward sacramental and spiritual communion.

The same piety which moves the faithful to Eucharistic adoration attracts them to a deeper participation in the paschal mystery. It makes them respond gratefully to the gifts of Christ who by his humanity continues to pour divine life upon the members of his body. Living with Christ the Lord, they achieve a close familiarity with him and in his presence pour out their hearts for themselves and for those dear to them; they pray for peace and for the salvation of the world. Offering their entire lives with Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit, they draw from this wondrous exchange an increase of faith, hope and love. Thus they nourish the proper disposition to celebrate the memorial of the Lord as devoutly as possible and to receive frequently the bread given to us by the Father.

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.

50. Prayer before Christ the Lord sacramentally present extends the union with Christ which the faithful have reached in communion. It renews the covenant which in turn moves them to maintain in their lives what they have received by faith and by sacraments. They should try to lead their whole lives with the strength derived from the heavenly food, as they share in the death

and resurrection of the Lord. Everyone should be concerned with good deeds and with pleasing God so that he or she may imbue the world with the Christian spirit and be a witness of Christ in the midst of human society.

1. EXPOSITION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

INTRODUCTION

I Relationship Between Exposition and Mass

51. Exposition of the holy Eucharist, either in the ciborium or in the monstrance, is intended to acknowledge Christ's marvellous presence in the sacrament. Exposition invites us to the spiritual union with him that culminates in sacramental communion. Thus it fosters very well the worship which is due to Christ in spirit and in truth.

This kind of exposition must clearly express the cult of the blessed sacrament in its relationship to the Mass. The plan of the exposition should carefully avoid anything which might somehow obscure the principal desire of Christ in instituting the Eucharist, namely, to be with us as food, medicine, and comfort.

52. During the exposition of the blessed sacrament, the celebration of Mass is prohibited in the body of the Church. In addition to the reasons given in no. 6, the celebration of the Eucharistic mystery includes in a more perfect way the internal communion to which exposition seeks to lead the faithful.

If exposition of the blessed sacrament is 'extended for an entire day or over several days, it is to be interrupted during the celebration of Mass. Mass may be celebrated in a chapel distinct from the area of exposition if at least some members of the faithful remain in adoration.

II Regulations for Exposition

53. A single genuflection is made in the presence of the blessed sacrament, whether reserved 'in the tabernacle or exposed for public adoration.
54. For exposition of the blessed sacrament in the monstrance, four to six candles are lighted, as at Mass, and incense is used. For exposition of the blessed sacrament in the ciborium, at least two candles should be lighted, and incense may be used.

Lengthy Exposition

55. In churches where the Eucharist is regularly reserved it is recommended that solemn exposition of the blessed sacrament for an extended period of time should take place once a year, even though this period is not strictly continuous. In this way the local community may reflect more profoundly upon this mystery and adore Christ in the sacrament. This kind of exposition, however, may take place, with the consent of the

local Ordinary, only if suitable numbers of the faithful are expected to be present.

56. For a grave and general necessity the local Ordinary may direct that a more extended period of supplication before the blessed sacrament exposed take place in churches where the faithful assemble in large numbers.

57. If a period of uninterrupted exposition is not possible, because of too few worshippers, the blessed sacrament may be replaced in the tabernacle during periods which have been scheduled and announced beforehand. This reposition may not take place more often than twice during the day, for example, about noon and at night.

The following form of simple reposition may be observed: the priest or deacon, vested in an alb, or a surplice over a cassock, and a stole, replaces the blessed sacrament in the tabernacle after a brief period of adoration and a prayer said with those present. The exposition of the blessed sacrament may take place in the same manner (at the scheduled time).

Brief Period of Exposition

58. Shorter expositions of the Eucharist are to be arranged in such a way that the blessing with the Eucharist is preceded by a suitable period for readings of the word of God, songs, prayers, and sufficient time for silent prayer.

Exposition which is held exclusively for the giving of benediction is prohibited.

Adoration in Religious Communities

59. According to the constitutions and regulations of their institute, some religious communities and other groups have the practice of perpetual Eucharistic adoration or adoration over extended periods of time. It is strongly recommended that they pattern this holy practice in harmony with the spirit of the liturgy. Thus, when the whole community takes part in adoration before Christ the Lord, readings, songs, and religious silence may foster effectively the spiritual life of the community. This will promote among the members of the religious house the spirit of unity and brotherhood which the Eucharist signifies and effects, and the cult of the sacrament may express a noble form of worship.

The form of adoration in which one or two members of the community take turns before the blessed sacrament is also to be maintained and is highly commended. In accordance with the life of the institute, as approved by the Church, the worshippers adore Christ the Lord in the sacrament and pray to him in the name of the whole community and of the Church.

III The Minister of Exposition

60. The ordinary minister for exposition of the Eucharist is a priest or deacon. At the end of the period

of adoration, before the reposition, he blesses the people with the sacrament. In the absence of a priest or deacon or if they are lawfully impeded, the following persons may publicly expose and later repose the holy Eucharist for the adoration of the faithful:

- a) an acolyte or special minister of 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.

Such ministers may open the tabernacle and also, if suitable, place the ciborium on the altar or place the host in the monstrance. At the end of the period of adoration, they re-place the blessed sacrament in the tabernacle. It is not lawful, however, for them to give the blessing with the sacrament.

61. 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 the liturgical vestments which are used in the region or the vesture which is suitable for this ministry and which has been approved by the Ordinary.

The priest or the 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.

...

SUPPLEMENTARY APPENDIX to the Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction **CATECHETICAL POINTS**

The theological basis for the eucharistic devotion is well set out in nos. 48-50 of the rite itself. For the purposes of introduction, brief homily, etc, the following four main points will prove useful:

1. In the blessed sacrament, God is truly with us (Emmanuel). Though in the form of bread, Christ is really present as God and Man. The changes in minor points of discipline, such as single genuflexions instead of double ones, are merely externals and in no way lessen the respect due to God truly present in the sacrament.
2. Devotion to the eucharist has its origin in the sacrifice of the Mass, where bread and wine are truly changed into the body and blood of Christ. Such devotion should lead the faithful back to the Mass with renewed, invigorated and increased spirituality, by nourishing the spiritual union with Christ that leads to a heightened sacramental communion with him in the Mass.
3. Eucharistic devotion fosters a deeper participation in the paschal mystery. The faithful are more closely associated with the grace of salvation effected by Christ in his death and resurrection.

4. Through the eucharist, divine life is poured into the members of the Mystical Body. The faithful thank God for the gifts given to man through Jesus Christ, and are thus drawn further into the life and love of the body of Christ which is the Church. From this they can also draw help and inspiration in the missionary aspect of their lives as witnesses to Christ.

PASTORAL POINTS

The presentation of services of eucharistic devotion demands as much preparation as any other liturgical service. Through proper planning, based on thought and reflection as well as prayer, the minister may lead the people in this act of worship as a community rather than making it an occasion for individualized prayer; and this will also benefit the celebration of other liturgical services, especially the Mass.

On a practical level, the following points should be borne in mind:

1. Light.

Light is a visual aid, though we seldom think of it as such. (Further remarks about other visual aids will be found below.) Subdued lighting will normally assist in producing an appropriate atmosphere for prayer and meditation. However, enough lighting will be required for the people to be able to read the words (and the music) of anything that they have to say or sing. It will often be found useful to alter the lighting in some way — in intensity, or in area, or by changing the focal point — in the course of a service in order to give visual relief and contrast. ...

2. Silence.

It is generally better to have too much than not enough. If a real spirit of prayer and adoration has been promoted in the service, there will be no such thing as a surfeit of silence. A major point to remember is the transition from silence to something else — normally a spoken prayer or reading. (See above under Light.) The atmosphere is easily broken when a spoken voice utters something in a “public reading” or “proclamation” style after a period of silence. A softer, more intimate, delivery is called for, at least at the beginning of the new section. (Such a delivery will be necessary throughout prayers of the Meditation Prayer type, if these are used; it should also be noted that these are specifically designed for use after a period of silence and not after a reading or song.) The priest or reader should remain open and sympathetic to the mood of the worshipping community at all times, as in any other liturgy.

3. Music.

Nothing too demanding should be sung. Uncomplicated hymns and psalms — which need not necessarily be accompanied if no musicians are

available — will generally work well. So also will litanies and other forms that include recurring refrains that can easily be picked up. It is probably best not to attempt to teach anything new, except in unusual circumstances (such as an extended vigil before the Blessed Sacrament). It might seem that this principle would create a problem for such forms as acclamations, which are short and probably not known by the people. In such cases, it is sufficient for a cantor to declaim the acclamation, everyone repeating it after him or her.

There is a particular place in meditative services for background music as an aid to prayer. If an organist is available, there is a large repertoire of suitable pieces to choose from. An unaccompanied woodwind instrument such as a flute or recorder may also prove effective, as may a plucked (not strummed) guitar. Much will depend on the resources available. If there are no musicians, recorded music on tape, cassette or disc could well be played through the church loudspeaker system. Background music, if it is used, will be most effective during a period of silent adoration, and perhaps occasionally during a reading (careful selection will be required in this case).

It would be particularly effective at times such as the second stage of silent adoration in the suggested Holy Hour structure given above, in conjunction with the change of lighting suggested... Whenever background music is used, it should be precisely that — an unobtrusive background. This should cause no problems with musicians, but some experiments may need to be carried out for recorded music-levels with the church loudspeaker system. A list of suitable pieces is given below; any other suitable pieces may be selected at choice.

The rite of exposition suggests that an Opening Song be sung while exposition takes place. This will be a Processional Song if the eucharist is not reserved at the altar where the blessed sacrament is to be exposed. If exposition follows immediately after Mass (see para 64 of the rite) the Opening Song here will replace the Song after Communion of the Mass. This would be the normal practice. On some occasions, however, it may be thought preferable to begin the service with exposition carried out in silence. Similarly, the rite suggests that a song or acclamation be sung during reposition. It will normally be found that song and not silence will be better at this point.

...

The full text of **Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass** is available at www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/HCW/HCWE-Introduction.pdf