



Worship Office

Archdiocese of Newark

Directives for Lengthy or “Perpetual” Exposition

“Whoever eats this bread will live forever.”¹

—John 6:58

1. These words are etched (in Latin) into the main altar of the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Newark. They are a reminder to all who approach the sacrament that the Liturgy of the Eucharist is a holy meal and a divine sacrifice to which God’s people are invited to participate.

This is why it is essential to remember that “the celebration of the Eucharist is the center of the entire Christian life, both for the Church universal and for the local congregations of the Church.”² And, “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 [all], who are thus invited and led to offer themselves, their work, and all creation together with him.”³

2. The offering of the eucharistic sacrifice “is the origin and consummation of the worship shown to the Eucharist outside Mass.”⁴ In both of these instances, not only “while the sacrifice is being offered and the sacrament is being confected, but also after the sacrifice has been offered and the sacrament confected—while the Eucharist is reserved in churches or oratories—that Christ is truly Emmanuel, which means ‘God with us.’ For he is in the midst of us day and night; he dwells in us with the fullness of grace and of truth.”⁵
3. With the adoration of Christ truly present in the sacrament, “[the faithful] should remember that this presence derives from the sacrifice and has as its purpose both sacramental and spiritual communion.”⁶ Therefore, it is necessary 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.”⁷ The Eucharist must be reserved in every parish church⁸ and pastors should see that those churches where the Blessed Sacrament 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.”⁹

¹ *Qui manducat hunc panem vivet in aeternum*

² *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, (HCWEOM) no. 1.

³ Paul VI, decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 5.

⁴ Congregation of Rites, instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, (EM) no. 3e: *AAS* 59 (1967) 542.

⁵ Paul VI, encyclical *Mysterium fidei*, no. 67: *AAS* 57 (1965) 771.

⁶ *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, (OSEHE) no. 5.

⁷ EM no. 3f: *AAS* 59 (1967) 543.

⁸ cf. *Code of Canon Law*, (CCL) no. 934 §1 1°

⁹ HCWEOM no. 8.

4. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament “offers the opportunity to the people of God for prayerful reflection on their call to a deeper devotion to the Holy Eucharist and a more faithful living of the Christian life. It provides them with an opportunity to become more aware of Christ’s presence with his people and invites them to a spiritual communion with him.”¹⁰

“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.”¹¹

5. Because Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, numerous safeguards have been established for its protection. Chief among these safeguards is that “the tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved habitually is to be immovable, made of solid and opaque material, and locked in such a way that the danger of profanation is avoided as much as possible.”¹² In fact, so important is the concern for the Eucharist that “for a grave cause, it is permitted to reserve the Most Holy Eucharist in some other fitting and more secure place, especially at night.”¹³ By requiring that the tabernacle “must be opaque and unbreakable,”¹⁴ it may not to be made of glass or contain windows.
6. “While the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, the celebration of Mass in the same area of the church (*eadem aula ecclesiae*) is forbidden, all concessions and contrary customs valid up to the present time, even those worthy of special mention, notwithstanding... the celebration of the Mystery of the Eucharist includes in a more perfect way that spiritual communion to which exposition should lead the faithful. Therefore there is no need for this further help.”¹⁵

If exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is to be extended for a day, or for several successive days, “it is to be interrupted during the celebration of the Mass. Mass may be celebrated in a chapel distinct from the area of exposition if at least some of the faithful remain in adoration.”¹⁶ The Blessed Sacrament is never to be exposed in the same area of the church during the celebration of the Eucharist, and is never to be left alone.

7. “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... which the Eucharist signifies and effects, and the cult of the sacrament may express a noble form of worship.”¹⁷

¹⁰ OSEHE, no. 3.

¹¹ HCWEOM no. 79.

¹² CCL. no. 938 §3.

¹³ CCL, no. 938 §4.

¹⁴ HCWEOM no. 10.

¹⁵ EM no. 61: *AAS* 59 (1967) 570-571.

¹⁶ HCWEOM no. 83.

¹⁷ HCWEOM no. 90.

8. “If a period of uninterrupted exposition is not possible, because of too few worshipers*, 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.”¹⁸

This is not to be a haphazardly timed reposition, but it is to be scheduled and announced for the good of the faithful. Additional insight was given by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments in 1995:

“Groups authorized to have perpetual exposition are bound to follow all of the liturgical norms given in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, nos. 82-100. Under no circumstances may perpetual exposition take place during the Easter Triduum. There should always be a sufficient number of people present for eucharistic adoration before the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. 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.”¹⁹

9. Given the above response from the Holy See to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on the Liturgy, the following is in full force in the Archdiocese of Newark:
- Perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament or adoration over extended periods of time is a devotional practice for those religious communities that have it as an integral part of their communal life and to “pious associations of the laity which have received official recognition.”²⁰
 - There should be **at least two people** present during the period of eucharistic exposition. This will ensure the safety of both the Blessed Sacrament and those present for adoration.
 - During a lengthy period of exposition, the Eucharist may only be reposed twice a day. These times of reposition are not for the convenience of the adorers, but should be scheduled and announced for specific times and durations by the pastor.
 - When it is necessary to repose the Eucharist during lengthy periods of exposition, “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 is said with those present. The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may take place in the same manner (at the scheduled time).”²¹
 - In the absence of a priest or deacon, the Blessed Sacrament may be exposed and later reposed by “a) an acolyte or special minister of communion; b) or a member of a religious community or lay association of men and women which is devoted to eucharistic adoration, upon appointment by the Ordinary.”²² Only these designated persons may expose or repose the Eucharist; adorers are not permitted to do so. They

* At least two (2) persons should be present at all times. See *Responsum ad dubium* received by the USCCB Committee on the Liturgy (RAD), July 1995.

¹⁸ HCWEOM no. 88.

¹⁹ RAD.

²⁰ RAD.

²¹ HCWEOM no. 88.

²² HCWEOM no. 91.

should wear “either the liturgical vestments which are used in the region or the vesture which is suitable for their ministry and which has been approved by the Ordinary.”²³

- Reposing the Eucharist means it is placed into a tabernacle by the appropriate minister, the door is closed and locked, and the key removed.
- “The use of drapes or doors to shield the monstrance, even for a short period of time, is not the required reposition of the Blessed Sacrament.”²⁴ This convenience simply does not afford the Blessed Sacrament the necessary protection.
- Covering the monstrance with a veil, placing a monstrance behind plexiglass, or putting the monstrance out of view does not constitute reposition and are forbidden practices.
- Exposition may never take place during the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday up to and including Evening Prayer of Easter Sunday).

10. Given these directives, it is necessary for parishes wishing to have lengthy exposition to prepare well in advance. They must ensure that there will be two people present whenever the Eucharist is exposed. The exposed Blessed Sacrament must never be left alone and it must be reposed in the proper manner by the proper minister only at designated times.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is, of course, not simply for the benefit of a single person, but for the community of the faithful. In fact, the liturgical rites “presume the presence of a number of people during the period of adoration.”²⁵ The rites clearly state that “there should be prayers, songs, and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord.”²⁶

11. Adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament, especially lengthy or “perpetual” exposition, requires much work and attention to be done correctly and safely. For this reason, only parishes capable of carrying out all of the requirements should attempt to do so. Parishes should also take into consideration the practice of lengthy or perpetual exposition in other parishes within the deanery and coordinate accordingly. Strict adherence to all of the laws and norms is required without exception.
12. The local Ordinary is responsible for all matters pertaining to the right ordering of the celebration of the Eucharist and adoration and devotion to the Eucharist outside Mass. It is his duty to promote and guide the liturgical life of the diocese. He determines when it is permissible and establishes the regulations to be followed in regard to perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.²⁷

Therefore, any parish or association in the Archdiocese of Newark that wishes to have (or continue) Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament must obtain the permission of the Archbishop of Newark annually through their Regional Bishop. Those parishes or associations that already have Perpetual Adoration or extended periods of time for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, are to register with the Regional Bishop by November 30, 2021.

Regarding questions, contact the Worship Office at 973-497-4345.

²³ HCWEOM no. 92.

²⁴ *Thirty-One Questions on Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, no. 24, USCCB, 2004

²⁵ *Thirty-One Questions on Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, no. 11, USCCB, 2004

²⁶ HCWEOM no. 95.

²⁷ RAD.

Available Resources

Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, Catholic Book Publishing, 1976.

Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist, The Liturgical Press, 1993.

Paul VI, decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*, December 7, 1965.

Congregation of Rites, instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, May 25, 1967.

Paul VI, encyclical *Mysterium fidei*, September 3, 1965.

Responsum ad dubium received by the USCCB Committee on the Liturgy, July 1995.

Thirty-One Questions on Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, USCCB, 2004.

Archdiocese of Newark, Guidelines for the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament,

www.rcan.org/sites/default/files/files/12%20Reservation%20Guidelines%20Newark.pdf, 2012.