

# EUCCHARISTIC EXPOSITION AND BENEDICTION



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GIRM=General Instruction of the Roman Missal

HCWEOM=Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass

RS=Redemptionis Sacramentum

SL=Sing to the Lord Music in Divine Worship

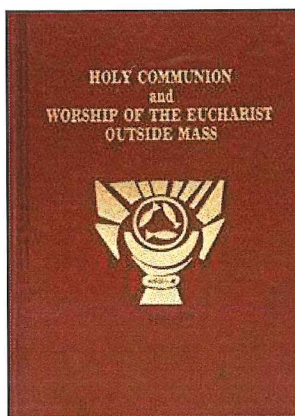
# EUCCHARISTIC EXPOSITION WITH BENEDICTION

## RITUAL NOTES

### Introduction

The Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction takes seriously the dictum that the celebration of the Eucharist is the source of all Eucharistic devotion. Exposition and Benediction is meant to deepen the faith of God's people and to prepare them to celebrate the Eucharist with clearer appreciation for this mystery of faith. As in all liturgical celebrations the Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction includes in its format readings of the Word of God, as well as, songs, prayers, and time for silent prayer.

Pope Benedict XVI writes in *Sacramentum Caritatis*: "one of the most moving moments of the Synod came when we gathered in Saint Peter's Basilica, together with a great number of the faithful, for Eucharistic adoration. In this act of prayer, and not just in words, the assembly of Bishops wanted to point out the intrinsic relationship between Eucharistic celebration and Eucharistic adoration. A growing appreciation of this significant aspect of the Church's faith has been an important part of our experience in the years following the liturgical renewal desired by the Second Vatican Council. During the early phases of the reform, the inherent relationship between Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was not always perceived with sufficient clarity. For example, an objection that was widespread at the time argued that the Eucharistic bread was given to us not to be looked at, but to be eaten. In the light of the Church's experience of prayer, however, this was seen to be a false dichotomy. As Saint Augustine put it: *'nemo autem ilam carnem manducat, nisi prius adoraverit; peccemus non adorando*—no one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it.' In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and desires to become one with us; 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 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.'" (*Sacramentum Caritatis* #66)



Ritual Book: *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, 1976

Chapter III-1: Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction

## Encouragement for Eucharistic devotions in every parish

“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. (HCWEOM #81)

Pope Benedict XVI writes in *Sacramentum Caritatis* “with the Synod Assembly, therefore, I heartily recommend to the Church’s pastors and to the People of God the practice of Eucharistic adoration, both individually and in community. Great benefit would ensue from a suitable catechesis explaining the importance of this act of worship, which enables the faithful to experience the liturgical celebration more fully and more fruitfully...” (*Sacramentum Caritatis* #67)

The worship of the Eucharist outside the Sacrifice of the Mass is a tribute of inestimable value in the life of the Church. Such worship is closely linked to the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Therefore both public and private devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist even outside Mass should be vigorously promoted, for by means of it the faithful give adoration to Christ, truly and really present, the High Priest of the good things to come and Redeemer of the whole world. It is the responsibility of sacred Pastors, even by the witness of their life, to support the practice of Eucharistic worship and especially exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament, as well as prayer of adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species. (RS #134)

A parish should have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at least annually.

Exposition which is held exclusively for the giving of benediction is prohibited (HCWEOM 89)

## Why is the Blessed Sacrament reserved in every church?

1) Viaticum; 2) Communion outside Mass

Because the Blessed Sacrament is reserved for these two it is also available for adoration.

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. (HCWEOM #5)

## Difference between Eucharistic adoration and Eucharistic exposition

**Adoration:** prayer before the Blessed Sacrament housed within the tabernacle

**Exposition:** Blessed Sacrament is displayed in a monstrance or ciborium for public veneration

A distinction should be made between adoration of the reserved Blessed Sacrament and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Eucharistic adoration of the reserved Blessed Sacrament is a devotional act. Eucharistic exposition is a liturgical action, by which the Blessed Sacrament is displayed outside the tabernacle in a monstrance or ciborium for public veneration by the faithful. It is a public celebration that enables the faithful to perceive more clearly the relationship between the reserved Sacrament and the "sacrifice of the Mass [which] is the origin and consummation of the worship shown to the Eucharist outside Mass." (see Eucharisticum Mysterium no. 3) Since it is a liturgical act, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed in either a monstrance or a ciborium is governed by the liturgical book Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass. (SL #242)

## Three purposes for exposition of Blessed Sacrament

1. "to acknowledge Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament"
2. to lead us to a fuller participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, culminating in Holy Communion
3. to foster "the worship which is due to Christ in spirit and truth."

Exposition of the holy eucharist, either in the ciborium or in the monstrance is intended to acknowledge Christ's marvelous 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. (HCWEOM #82)

## What should take place during the period of exposition?

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may not be done for private devotion CIC 942 presumes presence of a number of people for a period of adoration. "There should be prayers, songs, and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord. The Liturgy of the hours may also be celebrated during the period of exposition or the Rosary may be prayed." (see HCWEOM #95, 96 )

During the exposition there should be prayers, songs, and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord. To encourage a prayerful spirit, there should be readings from scripture with a homily or brief exhortations to develop a better understanding of the Eucharistic mystery. It is also desirable for the people to respond to the word of God by singing and to spend some periods of time in religious silence. (HCWEOM #95)

Part of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially the principal hours, may be celebrated before the blessed sacrament when there is a lengthy period of exposition. This liturgy extends the praise and thanksgiving offered to God in the Eucharistic celebration to the several hours of the day; it directs the prayers of the Church to Christ and through him to the Father in the name of the whole world. (HCWEOM #96)

During the exposition of the blessed sacrament, the celebration of Mass is prohibited in the body of the Church. (HCWEOM #83)

"No set format is presented for the manner in which the period of adoration is to take place. The guide for selection and arrangement, therefore, ought to arise out of the spirit of sound liturgical principles. Chapter IV of the ritual provides a rich selection of readings and responsories from which to choose. Within the spirit of no. 95 of the ritual, the basic format of the liturgy of the Word, as it is used in all sacramental celebrations, suggests itself as a primary model for organizing the period of adoration.

The people may be greeted with an appropriate liturgical formula modeled on the greetings used at Mass. A form of the penitential act may follow. Especially appropriate would be a form based on the third penitential act of the Mass, using acclamations praising Christ for the effects of the Eucharistic gift of himself in our lives. Special care should be taken in the selection of the readings. Pastoral concerns and the needs of the faithful should determine the readings selected.

Since the central purpose of Eucharistic adoration is to lead the community to the full Eucharistic celebration, the variety of ministries in the Church should be evident. Therefore, readers proclaim the readings; cantors or leaders of song lead the community in the responses and the hymns; acolytes assist the presiding minister as necessary. A brief period of silence should be observed after each reading and responsory or song, and a longer period of silence should be observed after the homily. It would also be most appropriate to include prayers of petition for the needs of the Church and the world. These may be modeled after the general intercessions at Mass or may take the form used in the Liturgy of the Hours." (Eucharistic Worship and Devotion Outside Mass Study Text 11, Secretariat Bishops Committee on the Liturgy, page 45-46)

## Minister of Exposition

1. The ordinary minister for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is a priest or deacon. In the absence of a priest or deacon, a commissioned extraordinary minister of Holy Communion or another person appointed by the archbishop may publicly expose and later repose the Blessed Sacrament for adoration of the faithful.
2. If the minister for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is a priest or deacon he blesses the people with the sacrament.
3. A layperson may not give Benediction.

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 communion or a 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 replace the blessed sacrament in the tabernacle. It is not lawful, however, for them to give the blessing with the sacrament. (HCWEOM #91)

## Gesture of reverence

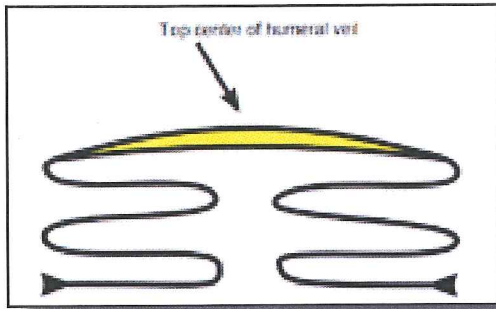
A single genuflection is made in the presence of the blessed sacrament, whether reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for public adoration. (HCWEOM #84)

## Incense

Three swings of the thurible are used to incense: the Most Blessed Sacrament... (GIRM #277)

Double swings are not specified. Three distinct single swings of the thurible suffice to fulfill the practice although three double swings would be permitted.

## Humeral Veil



The humeral veil is worn over the shoulders of the priest or deacon when holding the monstrance while in procession or while giving Benediction. The humeral veil can be folded so that each side is folded individually like an accordion.

## Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction

### Outline of the Rite

- I. Exposition
- II. Adoration  
Readings from Scripture, Prayers and Songs, Homily or brief exhortations,  
Period(s) of religious silence
- III. Benediction
- IV. Reposition

## Preparation

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. (HCWEOM #85)

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 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. (HCWEOM #92)

Exposition of the Most Holy Eucharist must always be carried out in accordance with the prescriptions of the liturgical books. Before the Most Holy Sacrament either reserved or exposed, the praying of the Rosary, which is admirable in its simplicity and even its profundity, is not to be excluded either. Even so, especially if there is Exposition, the character of this kind of prayer as a contemplation of the mystery of the life of Christ the Redeemer and the Almighty Father's design of salvation should be emphasized, especially by making use of readings taken from Sacred Scripture. (RS #137)



### For exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with a Monstrance

- A. Monstrance
- B. An altar cloth
- C. Four or six candles
- D. Thurible and incense boat
- E. Humeral veil
- F. Prie dieu (kneeler) [optional]
- G. Vesture for Priest or Deacon: alb and stole with a white cope
- H. Vesture for Lay ministers: alb
- I. Ritual Book: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass

### For exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with the Ciborium

- A. Ciborium
- B. An altar cloth
- C. At least two candles
- D. Thurible and incense boat, if incense will be used
- E. Humeral veil
- F. Prie dieu (kneeler) [optional]
- G. Vesture for Priest or Deacon: alb and stole
- H. Vesture for Lay ministers: alb
- I. Ritual Book: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass

## I. Exposition

After the people have assembled, a song may be sung while the minister comes to the altar. If the holy eucharist is not reserved at the altar where the exposition is to take place, the minister puts on a humeral veil and brings the sacrament from the place of reservation; he is accompanied by servers or by the faithful with lighted candles.

The ciborium or monstrance should be placed upon the table of the altar which is covered with a cloth. If exposition with the monstrance is to extend over a long period, a throne in an elevated position may be used, but this should not be too lofty or distant. After exposition, if the monstrance is used, the minister incenses the sacrament. If the adoration is to be lengthy, he may then withdraw. (HCWEOM #93)

1. The ministers may process in with a Eucharistic Hymn or Adoration Hymn. The singing begins with the procession and lasts through exposition and the first incensing. (The music is optional)
2. The minister puts on the humeral veil and brings the sacrament from the place of reservation. He may be accompanied by servers or by the faithful with lighted candles if a procession is appropriate.

### If a Monstrance is used for Exposition:

1. If a monstrance is used the minister places the Luna containing the Blessed Sacrament into the monstrance, which is then placed in a position to be seen by the faithful.
2. The minister kneels in front of the altar (back to the people) and incenses the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance, with three swings of the thurible.

### If a Ciborium is used for Exposition:

1. If a ciborium is used the minister places the ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament on the altar.
2. When a ciborium is used for Exposition the minister *may* incense the Blessed Sacrament with three swings of the thurible.

## II. Adoration

A period of Adoration follows with readings, hymns, psalms, silence, etc.

## III. Benediction

Toward the end of the exposition the priest or deacon goes to the altar, genuflects, and kneels. Then a hymn or other Eucharistic song is sung. Meanwhile the minister, while kneeling, incenses the sacrament if the exposition has taken place with the monstrance. (HCWEOM #97)

Afterward the minister rises and sings or says the prayer (HCWEOM #98)

After the prayer the priest or deacon puts on the humeral veil, genuflects, and takes the monstrance or ciborium. He makes the sign of the cross over the people with the monstrance or ciborium, in silence. (HCWEOM #99)

1. After the period of adoration the ministers approach the foot of the altar, genuflect and then kneel down.
2. A Eucharistic Hymn is sung.
3. The priest or deacon kneels in front of the altar and incenses the Blessed Sacrament with three swings of the thurible during the singing of the hymn.
4. The priest or deacon, stands, says or sings, "Let us pray" and then says or sings the prayer taken from Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass no. 98.
5. The priest or deacon, after the prayer, receives the humeral veil from a server, puts on the humeral veil, genuflects, and takes the monstrance or ciborium. In silence, he makes the Sign of the Cross over the people with the monstrance or ciborium, and replaces it upon the altar.

## IV. Reposition

After the blessing the priest or deacon, who gave the blessing, or another priest or deacon, replaces the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle and genuflects. Meanwhile the people may sing or say an acclamation, and the minister then leaves. (HCWEOM #100)

1. The priest or deacon turns the monstrance sideways, removes the luna, and carries the luna back to the tabernacle. He places it in the tabernacle, closes the tabernacle door and then genuflects.
2. As the priest or deacon replaces the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle the assembly may sing or say an acclamation or hymn. Traditionally this has taken the form of the Divine Praises, the hymn Holy God We Praise Thy Name, or some other hymn.
3. The priest or deacon and other ministers leave the sanctuary.

When Benediction is not given, the period of Exposition may be brought to an end by the singing of a Eucharistic Song and a Prayer. The Blessed Sacrament is then simply reposed in the tabernacle.

## Music for Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass

While the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, and the ciborium or monstrance is placed upon the altar, it is fitting that a song be sung by those gathered. For the period of adoration, "there should be prayers, songs, and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord." (HCWEOM #95) A homily or brief exhortation is also appropriate, as are extended periods of silence. If benediction follows a period of exposition, the priest or deacon goes to the altar, genuflects, and kneels. Then a hymn or other Eucharistic song is sung, especially songs particularly appropriate for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, rather than those more suited to accompany the procession to receive Holy Communion at Mass. While more traditional songs like O Salutaris or Tantum Ergo are appropriate, other songs of adoration should not be excluded. "Meanwhile the minister, while kneeling, incenses the Sacrament if the exposition has taken place with the monstrance." (HCWEOM #97). After the prayer and Eucharistic blessing, the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle. The minister genuflects and leaves. "Meanwhile the people may sing or say an acclamation." (HCWEOM #100) (SL #243)

There is a distinct role for music in each of the 4 parts of the Rite: a processional song to accompany the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; music during the period of Adoration; the Eucharistic Song for Benediction and an acclamation as the Blessed Sacrament is replaced in the tabernacle.

### Exposition

1. A song may be sung while the minister comes to the altar.
2. Where the Blessed Sacrament has to be brought to the altar from the tabernacle by the minister this action is accompanied by a processional song.

3. When Exposition is celebrated directly after a celebration of Mass at which the host is consecrated the Mass ends with the Prayer after Communion and the Concluding Rites are omitted.
4. There may be occasions when it is fitting for the service to begin in silence.

### **Adoration**

The period of Adoration will be the longest part of a service of Exposition. It will consist of readings, music, and periods of silence.

### **Benediction**

1. At the end of the time of Adoration the priest or deacon goes to the altar, genuflects, and then kneels. As the Blessed Sacrament is incensed a Eucharistic Song is sung. One option is the *Tantum Ergo* is sung but other hymns may be used.
2. The blessing itself takes place in silence.

### **Reposition**

As the Blessed Sacrament is replaced in the tabernacle the rite recommends that the people sing an acclamation.

## GLOSSARY

**Adoration**—prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, whether reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for veneration. Adoration itself is a personal act of piety and is not governed by liturgical norms.

**Benediction**—the blessing given by a priest or deacon using the Blessed Sacrament contained in a monstrance.

**Boat**—the vessel that holds the incense

**Ciborium**—a covered container used to hold the consecrated small Hosts. It is similar to a chalice but covered and larger.

**Cope**—a long mantle or cloak, open in the front and fastened at the breast with a clasp.

**Genuflection**—the act of bending the right knee to the floor and rising up again to reverence the Blessed Sacrament or demonstrate penitence.

**Exposition**—the displaying of the Blessed Sacrament outside of the tabernacle in a monstrance or ciborium, for the veneration of the faithful. Exposition is a liturgical rite and is thus governed by its own norms.

**Humeral Veil**—the sacred vestment that covers the shoulders and hands of the minister, with flaps or pockets, so to carry the Blessed Sacrament or give Benediction without actually touching the sacred items.

**Luna**—circular glass case that contains the Host and is placed in the monstrance for adoration.

**Monstrance**—the sacred vessel used to expose the Host for adoration or Eucharistic procession.

**Reposition**—returning the Blessed Sacrament to the tabernacle after a time of exposition.

**Thurible or Censer**—the vessel used to burn incense.

**Thurifer**—the server who takes care of the thurible and incense during the liturgy.