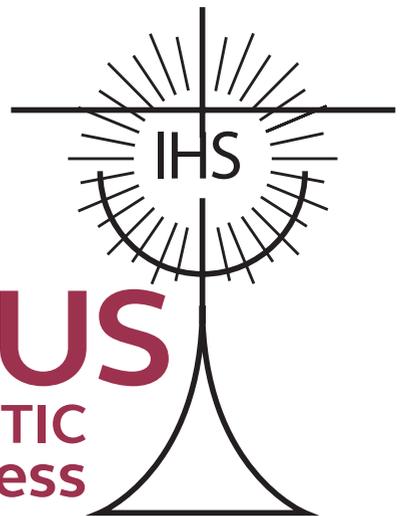


Exposition of the Holy Eucharist

A guide
for celebration

ADOREMUS

NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC
Pilgrimage & Congress



The contents of this booklet are based on the 'Introduction' to the Rite of Exposition and Benediction of the Holy Eucharist.

While summarising the Introduction this booklet is not intended to take its place. The full text of the 'Introduction' can be found in Volume I of Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass.

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Exposition of the Holy Eucharist

Introduction

The Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and the summit of the whole of Christian life. Devotion to the Eucharist is an important way of deepening our love of Christ, and of drawing us to a deeper participation in the paschal mystery of his passion, death and resurrection.¹

Prayer before the Lord present in the sacramental food reserved from Mass extends the union which we have reached with him in Holy Communion. It renews the covenant which in turn moves to seek to maintain in our lives what we have received by faith and the sacraments. We are encouraged to try to lead our whole lives with the strength derived from the heavenly food, as we share in the death and resurrection of the Lord.²

The liturgical rite provided by the Church for worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass provides a way of encouraging and shaping private devotions to the Blessed Sacrament.³

The renewed Rite

As with all liturgical texts the rite of Exposition was revised following the Second Vatican Council. Though the practice of Adoration has a long tradition within the Church there has not been a long history of an official Rite as part of the Roman Ritual. Whereas a series of texts have developed around Benediction the Rite provides a clear structure and a series of resources. For example, before the Benediction it has been the custom to sing *Tantum ergo* (in Latin or English), the Rite just highlights a *Eucharistic Song*. This is not to dismiss *Tantum ergo*, which many will be familiar with, but to highlight that the Rite allows for other possibilities, a song hymn or chant focussed on Christ the Lord and the gift of the Eucharist.

Relationship between Exposition and Mass

The principal desire of Christ in instituting the Eucharist is to be with the Church as food, medicine and comfort.⁴ The Eucharist is ministered to the Church principally at the celebration of the Mass. The reservation

of the Body of Christ primarily and originally took place for the administration of viaticum, the last sacrament ministered to the dying. Secondary reasons for the reservation of the Eucharist are the giving of Communion outside of Mass, especially to those unable to be present for the celebration of Mass, and the adoration of Jesus Christ, present in the Sacrament.⁵

Liturgies of the Holy Eucharist outside Mass must carefully express the prime importance of the Mass, and not obscure the principal feature of the Eucharist, that it is food for the Christian faithful. 'Exposition invites us to the spiritual union with him that culminates in sacramental communion.'⁶ Thus it fosters very well the worship which is due to Christ in spirit and in truth.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may not continue during the celebration of the Mass. Where there is an extended period of Exposition this is interrupted during the celebration of Mass.⁷

The connection between Mass and Exposition can be demonstrated by sometimes beginning the time of exposition directly after the Mass. In this case the Host for exposition should be consecrated in the Mass which immediately precedes the Exposition and after Communion should be placed in the monstrance on the altar. The Mass ends with the Prayer after Communion, and the Concluding Rites are omitted. Even where this practice is not adopted it is important to ensure that the host used for Exposition is regularly replaced by a host newly consecrated. The 'old' host should be broken and placed in the ciborium for the distribution of Holy Communion to the sick, or on other occasions outside Mass.

Other ways in which the connection with Mass is made clear is by the placing of the monstrance or ciborium directly on the altar used for Mass, the common use of a single genuflection at both Mass and Exposition and the same number of candles being used for both.⁸

The Shape of the Rite

Exposition

Song

Exposition (Procession from the place of Reservation)
(Exposition after Mass)

Adoration

Readings, homily, prayers, songs ad libitum
or Liturgy of the Hours.

(Sufficient time should also be allowed for silent prayer)

[Benediction

Eucharistic Song

Prayer

Blessing]

Reposition

Reposition (Procession to the place of Reservation)

Acclamation

NB Benediction may only be given by an ordained minister.

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.

The rubrics of the Rite of Eucharistic Exposition, with the exception of those rubrics particular to the Blessing of the assembly, apply equally to lay and ordained ministers.

Texts for the Rite

Scripture Readings

Scripture readings for the Rite are provided in the *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, Volume II – Biblical Readings*. Readings may also be chosen from the Mass of the Day, and Volume III of the Lectionary (e.g. Ritual Celebrations: Eucharist and Votive Masses: The Holy Eucharist).

Liturgy of the Hours

Part of the *Liturgy of the Hours*, especially Morning and/or Evening Prayer may be celebrated before the Blessed Sacrament, especially where there is a more lengthy period of exposition.⁹

Prayers and Song

The Rite provides a series of alternative prayers to conclude the time of Exposition and, in an appendix, a selection of Hymns, Antiphons and Responsories.

Additional suggestions for song will be founded in many hymnbooks. Care should be taken to ensure that the songs used are appropriate for Adoration, rather than, for example, intended to be sung to accompany the reception of Holy Communion.

Additional guidance on texts.

A Supplementary Appendix to the Rite provides further guidance on readings, hymns and psalms, together with a series of Catechetical and Pastoral Points. In addition that Appendix contains 3 sample services, one for Easter, one for Advent and a simple form on the theme of ‘The Eucharist: Source and Summit of Christian Life’.

Arrangements for Exposition

Length and pattern of celebration

Shorter expositions of the Eucharist (for example, a 'Holy Hour') are to include readings of the word of God, songs, prayers, and sufficient time for silent prayer.¹⁰ The readings from scripture should be chosen to assist in the developing of a fuller understanding of the Eucharistic Mystery. It is desirable that the people should respond to the word of God in song and in prayerful silence.¹¹

(More extended periods of exposition require the consent of the Bishop. Their regulation is considered in Introduction 55-57.)

Candles

When the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for adoration the same number of candles as used for the regular celebration of Mass in the Church should be lit. (This indicates the proper relationship between the rite of Exposition and the Mass. The use of additional candles at Exposition can be understood to indicate the priority of the rite of Exposition.) Incense is also to be used.¹²

Sign of Reverence

The faithful should offer the same reverence to the Blessed Sacrament exposed for adoration as when the Sacrament is reserved in the Tabernacle, i.e. a single genuflection.¹³

Devotions

Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament should focus on Christ. It is most fitting that prayers addressed directly to our Lady or the Saints and devotions in their honour be held outside the period of exposition. The custom is commended by which, after the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the celebrant leads the faithful to an image of the Blessed Virgin. There an appropriate hymn or antiphon in her honour can be sung.¹⁴

The Minister of Exposition

Ordinary ministers

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.¹⁵

Extraordinary or commissioned ministers

When a priest or deacon is not present, an acolyte or a commissioned minister of Holy Communion may publicly expose and later repose the Holy Eucharist for the purpose of the adoration of the faithful:

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. They may not though give the blessing with the Sacrament.¹⁶

Other ministers

The worthy celebration of the Rite is best enabled when it is well prepared, and where effort is taken to ensure close collaboration between all the ministers involved. In addition to the presiding minister celebrations of the rite are likely to involve also readers, musicians, servers and sacristans.

Thought should be given also to how the participation of the assembly is best encouraged — this is likely to involve the preparation of a service sheet, but may also include consideration being given to the ministry of welcome.

Vesture

An ordinary minister should vest in an alb, or a surplice over a cassock, and a stole. Unless the Ordinary of the Diocese has established other regulation a lay minister may vest in an alb, or wear their normal clothes. Mindful of the dignity of the action that they perform, lay ministers will wish to ensure that their clothing is not such as is likely to indicate lack of reverence.¹⁷

The priest or the deacon should wear a white cope and humeral veil to give the blessing at the end of adoration, when the Holy Eucharist is exposed in a monstrance.¹⁸

Endnotes

1. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, Volume I – Rites (Hereafter HCWE) 48
2. HCWE 49, 50.
3. *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* (Hereafter *Directory*)164, 165, cf 2.
4. HCWE 51.
5. HCWE 5
6. HCWE 51
7. HCWE 52
8. cf. HCWE 53, 54, 63
9. HCWE 66
10. HCWE 58, 65
11. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, Volume II – Biblical Readings 4
12. HCWE 54
13. HCWE 53
14. HCWE 71, footnote
15. HCWE 60, 69
16. HCWE 60
17. HCWE 61
18. HCWE 61