

DEVOTIONS AND EUCHARISTIC ADORATION - USCCB

Here is a typical question that many parishes have, regarding Solemn Exposition of the Eucharist...

May the Stations of the Cross be prayed during Eucharistic Adoration? I thought that the focus was on Jesus present on the altar and not on his passion. Please clarify this.

Regarding the praying of the stations of the cross during eucharistic exposition, I would refer you to numbers 15-16 of the *Order for Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, which is a convenient collection of the rubrics and directives of the liturgical books regarding eucharistic exposition and benediction:

"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 brief homily or 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 (See Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, number 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. (See Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, number 96)." (Note that these two paragraphs are taken from *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, which is a part of the *Roman Ritual*.)

In the light of these directives, the **Order for Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist** provides several settings for the Liturgy of the Hours and two Eucharistic Services of Prayer and Praise. These liturgies are designed to "acknowledge Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament and invites us to the spiritual union with him that culminates in sacramental communion." (Order for Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist, number 7)

Eucharistic exposition and benediction are no longer considered devotions, but rather are a part of the Church's official liturgy. Whereas in the past benediction was frequently added on to the end of another service or devotion, this is no longer permitted. Eucharistic exposition and benediction is a complete liturgical service in its own right and is to be celebrated as such.

The Stations of the Cross is an ancient and venerable devotion which is designed to foster a devotion to and meditation on the mystery of the Passion of Christ. As commendable as such a devotion may be, it can never fulfill the purpose of eucharistic adoration, that is to draw us more deeply into the mystery of Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, neither the Stations of the Cross nor any other devotion should be prayed during exposition of the Eucharist.

There is strong encouragement for anyone involved in the planning of eucharistic devotions to bear in mind that **the purpose of all exposition is adoration of Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament**. Devotion to the Eucharist, either in a Holy Hour or for a more extended period of time, *always flows from the celebration of the Mass*. Also, The

liturgy which the Church provides for us in the Order for Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist should provide the basis for all solemn eucharistic worship.