

PERPETUAL EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Over the past several years a number of questions have been raised regarding the practice of perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The Liturgy Committee discussed the issues raised several times and decided to submit a series of questions regarding perpetual exposition to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The following responses were received from the Congregation at the beginning of July. As these responses indicate, those who are responsible for perpetual exposition should carefully review the norms contained in nos. 82-100 of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*.

Should perpetual adoration or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament take place in parishes?

RESPONSE: The Roman Ritual: *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass* (HCWEOM), no. 90, states that, according to their constitutions and regulations, some religious communities and other pious groups have the practice of perpetual eucharistic adoration or adoration over extended periods of time. If by "perpetual eucharistic adoration" is meant prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, this involves no special permission.

However, if by "perpetual eucharistic adoration" is meant adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the ciborium or monstrance, the permission of the local Ordinary is required.

Perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is a devotion and practice which is permitted to 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.

If a pious association of the laity, which has perpetual exposition as a part of its constitution, is established within a parish, the activity of that association should be seen as separate from that of the parish, although all members of the parish are free to participate in it.

May perpetual exposition take place in the parish church?

RESPONSE: Because perpetual exposition is a devotional practice of a religious community or a pious association, it should normally take place in a chapel of that religious community or association. If for some good reason perpetual exposition must take place in a parish church, it should be in a chapel distinct from the body of the church so as not to interfere with the normal activities of the parish or its daily liturgical celebrations.

When Mass is celebrated in a chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, the eucharist must be replaced in the tabernacle before the celebration of Mass begins.

May perpetual exposition take place twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year?

RESPONSE: Groups authorized to have perpetual exposition are bound to follow all 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 exposed (see HCWEOM, no. 88). 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.

Who is responsible for overseeing perpetual exposition?

RESPONSE: The local Ordinary has the responsibility for the regulation of perpetual exposition. He determines when it is permissible and establishes the regulations to be followed in regard to perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. He normally entrusts the superior or chaplain of religious communities or the local pastor or chaplain, in the case of pious associations, with the responsibility of seeing that the liturgical norms and his regulations are followed.

Must the local bishop permit perpetual exposition?

RESPONSE: The bishop 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. Consequently, he alone determines the pastoral appropriateness of perpetual exposition in his diocese and accordingly may permit it or not and may limit the number of places where it takes place.

In addition Volume 11 of the Liturgy Documentary Series: *Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* was developed by the Secretariat for the Liturgy as an aid to bishops, priests, deacons, and those persons responsible for planning and directing eucharistic devotions. A full description of this and other volumes of the Liturgy Documentary Series is available through the [Office of Publishing and Promotional Services](#).