

01/21/24 Eucharistic Adoration: *What are the Norms for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament?*

With a full appreciation of the beauty and uniqueness of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, what are the norms that the Church presents? The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) have provided guidance and in this reflection I share what the bishops teach us.

First, as noted above, adoration and even perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a practice that is to be encouraged and cultivated within the life of the parish. It does not require any special permission and is a blessed way to foster Eucharistic devotion. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for select periods of time is also encouraged and simply needs to follow the norms outlined in the document I spoke about in the last reflection, *Holy Communion and the Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*. However, if a religious community or a parish seeks to have what is called **perpetual exposition** that is, the constant exposition of the Blessed Sacrament normally in a monstrance, then certain requirements need to be in place. What are those requirements?

The norms from the USCCB highlight the importance of the local Ordinary, the Bishop, as the primary person responsible for the regulation of perpetual exposition. They write: “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.”

Perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is normally reserved to religious communities or what are called ‘pious associations’ of the faithful. These are groups that have at the heart of their mission or charism a devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. In those instances the bishop can permit perpetual exposition given the strict focus of the community and the commitment to their mission. It is not the norm that a parish community would have perpetual exposition. During the years I was assigned to the seminary, we asked the seminarians to develop a

love for Jesus through adoration and to integrate into their lives the habit of a daily holy hour, but we did not have perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The seminary community has periods of time each day for exposition, one in the early morning and one in the late afternoon. These periods of exposition were for one hour and followed the rites of the Church. Throughout the rest of the day, the seminarians and guests of the seminary would pray in the chapel in adoration before the Lord in the tabernacle. Those hours of prayer were no doubt profound and rich encounters with the Lord, but it was not exposition.

To foster a healthy, authentic devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, it's important appreciate how exposition is a special rite, and how adoration is also a privileged time of encounter with the Lord, shaping our hearts and minds so that we are more eager to serve the Lord and give joyful witness.

Why is it important to follow the guidelines and rites of the church especially as they relate to adoration and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament?

How can I cultivate a devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?

How can we as a parish community cultivate a devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?