

INSTRUCTIONS: Exposition / Adoration / Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

Resources

The norms which govern Eucharistic Exposition, Adoration, and Benediction are found primarily in the 1973 text from the Congregation for Divine Worship, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* Chapter III: Forms of Worship of the Eucharist (HCWEOM). In addition, the USCCB's Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy published *Thirty-One Questions on Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament* in 2004.

Vocabulary

The term "adoration" refers to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, whether reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for veneration. Adoration by itself is an act of personal piety and not governed by liturgical norms.

"Exposition," the displaying of the Blessed Sacrament outside the tabernacle in a monstrance or ciborium for the veneration of the faithful, on the other hand, is a liturgical rite and is governed by its own norms. As part of the liturgical life of the Church, exposition never takes place simply for the private devotion of an individual.

"Benediction" refers to the blessing given by a priest or deacon using the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance or ciborium. After Benediction, the Blessed Sacrament is reposed in the tabernacle.

Ministers

The ordinary ministers for Eucharistic Exposition are priests (presbyters and bishops) and deacons. They vest in alb (or cassock and surplice) and stole. If exposition takes place using a ciborium, they also wear the humeral veil for Benediction. If the monstrance is used, they use the humeral veil and wear a cope for the rite. Priests and deacons use incense as directed in the rite.

Properly trained laypersons (such as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion) may also expose and later repose the Blessed Sacrament. In these cases, an alb may be worn but the cope and humeral veil are never used, incense is not used, and the Benediction is not given.

Ciborium or Monstrance

Exposition may be celebrated using either a ciborium or a monstrance. If the former is used, at least two candles are lit, incense is allowed (but not mandated), the humeral veil is worn for Benediction, and the cope is not worn. With the latter, 4-6 candles are used ("as at Mass") and incense, the humeral veil, and the cope are all used.

Summary Table

Minister:	Priest or Deacon		Lay Leader of Prayer	
Vessel:	Monstrance	Ciborium	Monstrance	Ciborium
Vesture:	Alb (or cassock & surplice) and Stole Humeral Veil Cope	Alb (or cassock & surplice) and Stole Humeral Veil (for Benediction)	Alb	
Incense:	Required	Optional	Not used	
# Candles	4-6	At least 2	4-6	At least 2

Order of Service

The following briefly describes the Order of Service for worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass. Those who wish to use services that have already been prepared are referred to the diocesan website (links to the USCCB website) and to *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* from the Liturgical Press (1993).

Exposition

As the minister comes to the altar, a song may be sung (for example, *O salutaris Hostia*). If called for,¹ the minister then puts on the humeral veil and retrieves the Blessed Sacrament from the Tabernacle. The minister should be accompanied with servers with lighted candles. The minister opens the tabernacle, genuflects, removes the Blessed Sacrament, and, after closing the door, brings the luna (for the monstrance) or ciborium to the altar. The minister then genuflects, removes the humeral veil, and (if called for) incenses the exposed Eucharist.

Adoration

The period of adoration usually begins with a greeting and opening prayer (given in the rite), and is variable in length of time and content. According to the norms of the Church, “there should be prayers, songs, and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord” (HCWEOM §95). Preaching is allowed and the Liturgy of the Hours is strongly encouraged. The rosary may be prayed as part of the period of adoration, but the Blessed Sacrament may not be exposed only to pray the rosary (or give the Benediction).

Benediction

The minister approaches the altar, genuflects, and then kneels. While a eucharistic hymn is sung (for example, *Tantum ergo*), the minister, still kneeling, incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Then he stands and, while facing the Blessed Sacrament, prays the closing prayer. After the prayer, he puts on the humeral veil, approaches the altar, and genuflects. Then, in silence, he makes the sign of the cross over the people with the monstrance or ciborium. The Blessed Sacrament is then reposed (the minister opens the door, places the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, genuflects, and closes the door) during which the people may sing an acclamation (for example, the Divine Praises). If Benediction is omitted, the concluding rite includes the prayer and reposition alone.

¹ Paragraph 93 of HCWEOM notes, “If the holy eucharist is not reserved at the altar where the exposition is to take place, the minister [priest, deacon] puts on the humeral veil and brings the sacrament from the place of reservation.”