

# The Eucharist – Worship and Adoration/Exposition

## Historical Background:

- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, in response to a pastoral need, deacons would bring the Eucharist to those who were not present for the Sunday celebration. (*St. Justin Martyr*)
- In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Christians would carry a part of the consecrated bread home in little boxers (arcae) and reserve it there in a cupboard or closet to receive during the week, as they only celebrated Eucharist on Sunday. (*Cyprian of Carthage*)
- Eucharistic reservation and adoration as we know it today began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Participation in communion by the laity was primarily “visual”, that is seeing the elevated host was the high point of the Mass. (reason for the bells being rung). Laity rarely received communion. Why:
  1. A general feeling of unworthiness.
  2. The use of a language (Latin) that was foreign to them.
  3. Failure to appreciate the Eucharist as a shared meal.
  4. The assuming of the laity’s role by the clergy.
  5. A lost connection to the Church’s roots.
- By the 14<sup>th</sup> century various forms of Eucharistic devotion outside of Mass developed: pilgrimages, processions, and Forty Hours.
- In the 20<sup>th</sup> century following developments of the Liturgical Movement the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council (*October 11, 1962 – December 8, 1965*) recovered the Church’s liturgical roots and with it its eucharistic theology.
- First Council document written: the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. The Council Fathers stated: “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed. At the same time it is the fount from which all the Church’s power flows (CSL #10).
- The Constitution also recovered the early Church’s understanding of the multiple presence of Christ in the liturgy:
  1. In the minister
  2. In the Word proclaimed
  3. In the Eucharist and other sacraments
  4. In the participation of the faithful
- Eucharist worship consists in
  1. Our **active** participation in the Mass, culminating in Holy Communion;

## 2. Our public and private adoration of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

- Those who prepare eucharist devotions need to be careful the everything with them clearly brings out the meaning of eucharist worship in relation with the Mass – the source and culmination of the whole Christian life. (OSEHE # 4 & 7).
- Visiting the Blessed Sacrament should:
  1. Draw the faithful deeper into the Paschal Mystery.
  2. Strengthen their desire to lead lives as shares in the death and resurrection of the Lord.
  3. Foster the right dispositions to celebrate the Mass and receive frequently the bread given to us by the Father. (HCWEOM #80)

### **Adoration and Exposition:**

- **Adoration** – personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle.
- **Exposition** – public display of the Blessed Sacrament in either a monstrance or a ciborium.

### **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:**

- It is the general understanding of the Church that the adoration of the Eucharist reserved in the tabernacle is normative and sufficient. In the history of the Church, this has been the primary way eucharist adoration has occurred because it is a devotional practice of the individual; therefore, it needed no specific guidelines.

### **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament:**

- Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, in contrast to adoration, refers to the public display of the Blessed Sacrament in either a monstrance or a ciborium. It is part of a liturgical rite, therefore, the directives for exposition are explicit and outlined in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*. (#82-100). Exposition has a beginning and an end. By its very nature, it is not perpetual.
- Exposition should include:
  1. Music
  2. Reading(s) from sacred Scripture
  3. Preaching
  4. Intercessory prayer
  5. Time for private prayer/adoration (silence)
  6. Conclude with a special blessing of the faithful
- HCWEOM permits and encourages that the solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament take place in churches where the Eucharist is regularly reserved. There are two allowances for such expositions:

1. Annual Solemn Exposition – such as on the Feast of Corpus Christi.
  2. Brief Periods of Exposition – monthly or weekly for a fixed period of time.
- These brief periods should include the six components mentioned above.

### **Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament:**

- Because perpetual exposition is a devotional practice of a religious community, it should normally take place in a chapel of the religious community. (*Congregation of Divine Worship, July 1995*)
- The general understanding of the Church is that this type of exposition is not to be the normal and continuous pattern in the parish.
- Parishes seeking dispensation from this rule must petition the Bishop and show good reason for its need.

### **Conclusion:**

- Although exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may help foster devotion to Christ's presence in the Eucharist, a parish's first priority is well-planned and well-celebrated Masses.

### **Quick Review of the Sacrifice of the Mass:**

## **The Mass: Structure and Meaning**

### **Introductory Rites:**

The Mass begins with the **entrance song**. The celebrant and other ministers enter and reverence the **altar** is a symbol of Christ at the heart of the assembly and so deserves this special reverence.

All make the **Sign of the Cross** and the celebrant extends a greeting to the gathered people in words taken from Scripture.

The **Act of Penitence** follows the greeting. At the very beginning of the Mass, the faithful recall their sins and place their trust in God's abiding mercy.

On Sundays and solemnities, the **Gloria** follows the Act of Penitence.

The Introductory Rites conclude with the **Opening Prayer, also called the Collect**.

## Liturgy of the Word:

**On Sundays** and solemnities, there are **three Scripture readings**. During most of the year, **the first reading is from the Old Testament** and **the second reading is from one of the New Testament letters**. During the Easter season, the first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles which tells the story of the Church in its earliest days. **The last reading is always taken from one of the four Gospels.**

In the Liturgy of the Word, the Church feeds the people of God from the table of his Word (cf. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 51). The Scriptures are the word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In the Scriptures, God speaks to us, leading us along the path to salvation. The **Responsorial Psalm** is sung between the readings. The psalm helps us to meditate on the word of God.

**The high point of the Liturgy of the Word is the reading of the Gospel.** Because the Gospels tell of the life, ministry, and preaching of Christ, it receives several special signs of honor and reverence. The gathered assembly stands to hear the Gospel and it is introduced by an acclamation of praise. During most of the year, that acclamation is **"Alleluia!"** derived from a Hebrew phrase meaning "Praise the Lord!" A deacon (or, if no deacon is present, a priest) reads the Gospel.

After the Scripture readings, the celebrant preaches the **homily**. In the homily, the preacher focuses on the Scripture texts or some other texts from the liturgy, drawing from them lessons that may help us to live better lives, more faithful to Christ's call to grow in holiness.

**The Nicene Creed** follows the homily. The Nicene Creed is a statement of faith dating from the fourth century.

**The Liturgy of the Word concludes with the Prayer of the Faithful**

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with **the preparation of the gifts and the altar**. After the gifts and altar are prepared, the **Eucharistic Prayer begins**. This prayer of thanksgiving is the heart of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

the celebrant begins **the Preface**. The Preface tells of the wonderful actions of God, both throughout history and in our lives, giving thanks to God for all these things.

***Sanctus***

The next major part of the Eucharistic Prayer is **the *epiclesis***. In the *epiclesis*, the priest asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit on the gifts of bread and wine so that, through the power of the Spirit, they may become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The prayer continues with **the institution narrative and consecration**. This part of the prayer recalls the action of Jesus Christ on the night before his death. He gathered with his closest disciples to share a final meal.

The Eucharistic Prayer continues with **the *anamnesis***, literally, the "not forgetting."

The next part of the prayer is **the offering**. In this part of the prayer, the priest joins the offering of this Mass to the perfect sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. The priest offers this sacrifice back to God the Father in thanksgiving for God's abundant gifts, particularly the gift of salvation in Christ.

**The intercessions follow**. Confident in God's loving care, the gathered assembly makes this sacrifice on behalf of the living and the dead, for the leaders of the Church and for all the faithful.

The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with **the Final Doxology**.

The **Communion Rite follows the Eucharistic Prayer**, leading the faithful to the Eucharistic table.

The rite begins with **the Lord's Prayer**. Jesus taught this prayer to his disciples when they asked how to pray (cf. Mt 6:9-13, Lk 11:2-4).

**The Rite of Peace follows**. The celebrant prays that the peace of Christ will fill our hearts, our families, our Church, our communities, and our world. As a sign of hope, the people extend to those around them a sign of peace, typically by shaking hands.

In **the Fraction Rite**, the celebrant breaks the consecrated bread as the people sing the *Agnus Dei* or "Lamb of God." John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). The action of breaking the bread recalls the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, when he broke the bread before giving it to his disciples. One of the earliest names for the Eucharistic celebration is the breaking of the bread.

Before receiving Communion, the celebrant and assembly acknowledge that we are unworthy to receive so great a gift. The celebrant receives Communion first and then the people come forward.

Those who receive Communion should be prepared to receive so great a gift. They should fast (except for medicines) for one hour before receiving the Eucharist and should not be conscious of having committed serious sin.

Because sharing at the Eucharistic Table is a sign of unity in the Body of Christ, only Catholics may receive Communion. To invite all present to receive Communion implies

a unity which does not exist.

Those who do not receive Communion still participate in this rite by praying for unity with Christ and with each other.

**The people approach the altar and, bowing with reverence, receive Communion.**

People may receive the Body of Christ either on the tongue or in the hand. The priest or other minister offers the Eucharist to each person saying, "**The Body of Christ.**" The person receiving responds by saying, "**Amen,**" a Hebrew word meaning, "So be it" ( *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2856).

As the people receive Communion, the communion song is sung. The unity of voices echoes the unity the Eucharist brings. All may spend some time in silent prayer of thanksgiving as well.

**The Communion Rite ends with the Prayer after Communion** which asks that the benefits of the Eucharist will remain active in our daily lives.

## **Concluding Rites**

When it is necessary, announcements may be made. **The celebrant then blesses the people assembled.** Sometimes, the blessing is very simple. On special days, the blessing may be more extensive. In every case, the blessing always concludes "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." It is in the triune God and in the sign of the cross that we find our blessing.

After the blessing, **the deacon dismisses the people.** In fact, the dismissal gives the liturgy its name. The word "Mass" comes from the Latin word, "*Missa*." At one time, the people were dismissed with the words "*Ite, missa est,*" meaning "Go, you are sent." The word "*Missa*" comes from the word "*missio*," the root of the English word "mission." The liturgy does not simply come to an end. Those assembled are sent forth to bring the fruits of the Eucharist to the world.

(from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website)