

Eucharistic Adoration and Exposition

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While it may be a personal bias, it seems a good number of conversations I overhear in public places about the Catholic faith often result on some liturgical or devotional topic. On several occasions recently I have listened to discussions concerning adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Several types of ritual practices have emerged over time in regard to Eucharistic devotion.

Eucharistic adoration, as it is referred, is simply a matter of praying before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. The ritual book *Holy Communion and the Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* (1976) reminds us that Eucharistic adoration “leads us to acknowledge Christ’s marvelous presence in the sacrament and invites us to the spiritual union with him that culminates in sacramental communion”. (art.82) Adults who attended Catholic schools will undoubtedly recall the periodic visits to Church to pray before the Blessed Sacrament for a holy hour, or remember the recommendation to make a daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament before or after the school day. Eucharistic adoration offers us the chance to connect with the Lord.

As Eucharistic adoration is prayer before the Blessed Sacrament housed within the tabernacle, Eucharistic exposition is the ritual by which the Blessed Sacrament is displayed outside the tabernacle in a monstrance or ciborium for public veneration by the faithful. This latter ritual form extends for a period of time and is accompanied by hymns, litanies, scripture readings and periods of silence. It concludes with a ritual form of benediction.

Some parish communities may also provide perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in a location that provides space for private prayer and adoration 24 hours a day. Parish churches and religious houses must seek the permission of the Diocesan Bishop to schedule perpetual exposition. This requirement assures that factors surrounding this devotional practice are provided and addressed appropriately. If permission has been given to the local parish or religious house to expose the Blessed Sacrament 24 hours a day, liturgical norms further indicate that under no circumstances may perpetual exposition take place during the Easter Triduum, that is from the beginning of the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper until evening prayer of Easter Sunday.

I recommend two very fine pamphlet-type publications from the United States Conference of Bishops on Eucharistic topics for further reading. They include: *Thirty – One Questions on Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament* (2004) and *The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions & Answers* (2001).