

CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE  
of  
BALLARAT



Diocesan Liturgical Commission

# **GUIDELINES FOR THE RESERVATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

**CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BALLARAT**

## INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is in order that communion and viaticum may be taken to the sick and the dying. The reservation of the Blessed Sacrament also provides for the private prayer of the faithful before the Lord's abiding presence.

## WHERE MAY THE BLESSED SACRAMENT BE RESERVED?

In the documents of the Church we find the directives regarding reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament *must* be reserved in the following locations:

- In the cathedral church of a diocese (Canon 934 §1.1<sup>o</sup>);
- In every parish church (Canon 934 §1.1<sup>o</sup>);
- In a church or chapel connected to the house of a religious institute or society of apostolic life<sup>1</sup> (Canon 934 §1.1<sup>o</sup>).

Also, the Blessed Sacrament *may* be reserved in one additional location - the private chapel of the bishop (Canon 934 §1.2<sup>o</sup>).

The permission of the local bishop is required for reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in other churches and chapels (Canon 934 §1.2<sup>o</sup>).

## WHAT MAKES A CHAPEL APPROPRIATE FOR THE RESERVATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT?

- A chapel (also known as an oratory) is a place permanently set aside for divine worship by the permission of the local bishop for the convenience of some community or group of the faithful<sup>2</sup> (Canon 1223).

- A *private* chapel is a place set aside for divine worship by the local bishop for the convenience of one or more individuals (Canon 1226).
- Once a private chapel has been designated, it may only be used for divine worship and must be freed from all domestic use (Canon 1229).
- Before granting the permission to establish a chapel, the bishop is to inspect the place in question, either personally or through a representative (Canon 1224 §1).
- Once the permission has been given to establish a chapel in a place, it can not revert to secular use without the authority of the same bishop (Canon 1224 §2).
- Before becoming a sacred place, the chapel must receive the blessing established in the liturgical books (Canon 1205).
- This blessing must be given by the local bishop or his delegate<sup>3</sup> (Canon 1207) (*see the Rite of Blessing a Church*).
- In addition to being established as a chapel, the bishop must grant an additional permission before the Blessed Sacrament may be reserved in that place<sup>3</sup> (Canon 934).
- In addition to its establishment, the bishop must grant an additional permission before Mass or other sacred celebrations can take place in a private chapel (Canon 1228).

### **NOTE:**

It is not permitted to reserve the Blessed Sacrament outside of sacred places consecrated for divine worship. This includes keeping the Blessed Sacrament in personal custody except when it is carried for an urgent need such as the communion of the sick (Canon 935).

## WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE RESERVATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT?

For the Blessed Sacrament to be legitimately reserved in a church or chapel:

- An individual must be entrusted with the care of the Blessed Sacrament (Canon 934 §2);
- The tabernacle in which the Blessed Sacrament is placed should be in a part of the church or chapel which is distinguished, conspicuous, fittingly adorned and suitable for prayer (Canon 938 §2);
- The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle that is immovable, solid, not transparent and locked securely against profanation (Canon. 938 §3);
- The person in charge of the church or chapel should see that the key to the tabernacle is kept with the greatest diligence (Canon 938 §5);
- The hosts which are kept in a ciborium in the tabernacle are to be renewed frequently, with the older hosts being properly consumed (Canon 939);
- A lamp is to be kept burning perpetually before the tabernacle<sup>4</sup> (Canon 940);
- In churches or chapels where permission has been given to reserve the Blessed Sacrament, there should be a solemn period of Eucharistic Adoration at least yearly (Canon 942);
- The Blessed Sacrament may be reserved in only one tabernacle of any church or chapel (Canon 938 §1).

## **NOTE:**

- i) If the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a parish church or in a chapel by the permission of the Bishop, but one or some of the above are lacking, it is sufficient to correct the problem and supply the missing element. Otherwise it would be necessary to remove the Blessed Sacrament.
- ii) If the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a place that is not a properly blessed oratory or chapel with the required permission, the Blessed Sacrament should be removed from that place.

## **LOCATION OF THE TABERNACLE WITHIN THE CHURCH**

There are two options for the location of the tabernacle within the church (General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) 315):

- i) In the sanctuary, separate from the altar of celebration, in a form and place more appropriate, not excluding on an old altar no longer used for celebration ;
- ii) In a chapel or other area suitable for private adoration and prayer of the faithful, organically connected to the church and readily visible to the Christian faithful.

## ***RESERVED SACRAMENT AND THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST***

The relationship of the reserved sacrament and the Liturgy of the Eucharist should be made clear by the liturgical arrangement of the Church. It should be clear to all that the reserved sacrament derives from the sacrifice offered and shared in during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

## **RESERVATION ON AN OLD ALTAR**

Where the sacrament is reserved in a tabernacle which is part of an old high altar, that altar should not be used for the celebration of Mass. In order not to distract the attention of the faithful from the altar, the old altar should not be decorated in any special way (GIRM 303).

## **RESERVATION IN A BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL**

If there is a distinct Blessed Sacrament chapel, this should be in a conspicuous and distinguished place, secure and decorated appropriately, giving honour and reverence to the Blessed Sacrament.

A Blessed Sacrament Chapel should provide a quiet place in which the faithful may gather close to the reserved sacrament for times of private prayer and adoration. The design of the chapel should ensure that proper space is provided for the provision of chairs and kneelers for this prayer. In some circumstances it may be possible to keep this separate chapel open for prayer during the day even if the main body of the church has to be kept locked.

## **TABERNACLE**

The Order for the Blessing of a New Tabernacle states that the tabernacle is, as well as a reminder of Christ's presence, "also a reminder of the brothers and sisters we must cherish in charity, since it was in fulfilment of the sacramental ministry received from Christ that the Church first began to reserve the Eucharist for the sake of the sick and dying" (Book of Blessings 1192). Themes and motifs used in the art and embellishment of a place of reservation should reflect these pastoral concerns as well as doctrinal ones.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 This refers to houses of a religious community legitimately erected with the prior written consent of the bishop, (Canon 609 §1) and not simply to a building in which religious happen to reside.
- 2 For this permission to be granted, it is necessary that the place be subject in a secure way to the authority of the diocesan bishop (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 131). This may require a contract in the case of places owned by secular entities, such as hospitals.
- 3 Oratories receive a blessing according to the *Rite of Blessing a Church*, and not the dedication given to parish churches.
- 4 Roman Ritual: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass, 11.

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