

Use of the Tabernacle

It is most desirable that the faithful receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass so that Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.

In accordance with the structure of each church and legitimate local customs, the Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated, and suitable for prayer.

It is preferable that the tabernacle be located, according to the judgment of the diocesan Bishop:

- a. Either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, in a form and place more appropriate, not excluding on an old altar no longer used for celebration (cf. no. 303);
- b. Or even in some chapel suitable for the faithful's private adoration and prayer and organically connected to the church and readily visible to the Christian faithful.

GIRM 85, 314–5

It is notable that despite all the other details of the celebration of Mass that is describes the General Instruction does not speak of the reserved Sacrament being brought from the tabernacle for Communion during Mass.

Some Questions

- Is the place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament 'truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated'?
- Is that place also suitable for private adoration and prayer - quiet, with space in front of the tabernacle with supply of seats and kneelers?
- Is sufficient bread provided for consecration so as to avoid unnecessary recourse to the tabernacle during Mass?

Practical Points

- During Mass the decoration of the tabernacle should not distract from the priority proper to the ambo and the altar
- The presence of the reserved Sacrament is better indicated and honoured by a lamp fuelled by oil or wax than by an electric lamp
- When it is necessary that the reserved Sacrament be used for the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass, the Sacrament should be brought to the altar before the Breaking of Bread and the Agnus Dei begin

Further References

General Instruction of the Roman Missal:
274, 314-318
Celebrating the Mass: 100-102, 206
Redemptionis Sacramentum: 129-130
Mane Nobiscum Dominum: 17-18



Questions for Groups

1. What is good about current practice?
What concerns do you have?

4. Who is most directly involved in these matters, e.g. liturgical ministers?
What formation/information is necessary to engage them in the renewal of current practice?

2. In what ways does the documentation affirm or challenge your current practice?

5. How will the assembly be engaged in the process?
What, in particular, needs addressing at Sunday and/or weekday celebrations?

3. Prioritise the issues you have identified.

6. How will you know whether the formation has worked?