

# Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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Evidence of people's thirst for the transcendent abounds. On occasion their pursuit of this mysterious dimension finds exotic and even bizarre expression. The fact is, however, that in our parishes at the Sunday Eucharist we not only confront Mystery but "come to share in the divinity of Christ."<sup>1</sup> Do the faithful appreciate this? Do we who lead our worship, whether as presiding celebrants, ministers at the Eucharist, or those who prepare the liturgy, pay sufficient attention to empowering the faithful to recognize the "mystery [they] celebrate"?<sup>2</sup> Do we do all we can to enable the liturgy to impress vividly upon us its sacred character?

After sketching some of the ways in which liturgical prayer brings us into mystery, the following reflections aim at indicating concrete means by which can facilitate this encounter for the Sunday assembly. Certainly the documents on the Roman liturgy underline the transcendent holiness of our worship of our God Who embraces us in Jesus Christ.

The Christian mystery best finds expression not through "mystification," "foreign both to Christianity and its worship,"<sup>3</sup> but through the "noble simplicity"<sup>4</sup> proper to the Roman Rite.

To contemplate the meaning of the liturgy is to be led to the threshold of mystery. The liturgy is not so much something we do as it is what the Holy Trinity does in us. Recognizing this is essential if we are to appreciate the saving mystery into which the liturgy ushers us. Something far more dramatic than we could imagine unfolds before our eyes. The Holy Spirit incorporates us into the Son's paschal mystery, filling us with grace and making us adopted sons and daughters of the Father. Forgetting this priority of the divine action in the liturgy is an occupational hazard for those who prepare liturgical celebrations because they must attend so closely to the dynamics of participation in the liturgy. Such an overemphasis on our own action risks hiding from the assembly, typically more exposed to secular influence than formed by faith, the dimension of mystery. According to the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, "...The liturgy, 'making the work of our redemption a present actuality,' most of all in the divine sacrifice of the eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of

the true Church."<sup>5</sup> If the liturgy is to be appreciated as "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed" and "the fount from which all the Church's power flows,"<sup>6</sup> it must be embraced in its depth.

Hence the Constitution insists: "...It is necessary that the faithful come to it with the proper dispositions."<sup>7</sup> This entails that "[p]astors must...realize that when the liturgy is celebrated something more is needed than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and lawful celebration; it is also their duty to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects."<sup>8</sup> Opening ourselves fully to the effects of the liturgy entails allowing the celebration to have its full impact on us, which in turn presupposes appreciating the mystery of the action of the Holy Trinity in it. Balancing recognition of the priority of God's initiative on the one hand with appropriate emphasis on the other of the importance of our own participation in the liturgy so that we might receive all its benefits is a delicate task. Surely assisting the faithful to appreciate the mystery they encounter in the liturgy is necessary for the realization of the Council's goal of fostering "that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy," which "[i]n the reform and

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## WHERE'S THE MYSTERY?

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promotion of the sacred liturgy, ...is the aim to be considered before all else.”<sup>9</sup>

The mystery of Christ’s saving action in liturgical celebrations is by no means confined to those privileged moments: “...For well-disposed members of the faithful, the effect of the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals is that almost every event in their lives is made holy by divine grace that flows from the paschal mystery of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection, the fount from which all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power.”<sup>10</sup> Conversely, it is when members of the assembly engage life’s struggles and joys from the perspective of vibrant faith that they most readily find the mystery of Christ in the liturgy. In response to the Council, “the paschal mystery, understood in its traditional fullness,” has been restored to “the heart of the liturgical actions and celebrations.”<sup>11</sup> Understanding the rhythm of the paschal mystery in daily life, which presupposes coming to terms with the mystery of suffering, enables deep, personal participation in “this great and mysterious liturgy,” in which “we sink down to the deepest point from which all reality proceeds.”<sup>12</sup>

Catechesis on the dying and rising of Christ in our lives may well be the most important way in which presiders and other liturgical ministers can foster appreciation of mystery in the liturgy. Genuine insertion into the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ is at once the precondition and the result of fruitful liturgical celebration. There are many practical ways, however, by which liturgical celebration can serve the assembly’s awareness of this work of the Holy Spirit.

Well-prepared liturgies enable the assembly to enter into the action without diverting their attention from what is really important, the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ proclaimed in word, celebrated in sacrament and etched in the fabric of the lives of the faithful.

Distractions imposed by careless liturgical celebration, in contrast, draw attention to mechanics and keep it on the surface level. Moreover, the assembly must be prepared for the celebration if it is to enter into it, and this presupposes a basic familiarity with the order of the service. Just as actors enter more fully into a drama in which they participate when they need not expend energy remembering their lines and athletes perform best when they have no need to advert to the fundamentals of their sport, so also does a liturgical assembly need a certain level of comfort with its role if it is really to engage “the mystery [it] celebrate[s].”<sup>13</sup> If one seeks to facilitate this principally through explanation within the ceremony, however, the effort is bound to fail; such only draws attention back to the surface level. This preparation of the assembly is best accomplished remotely, by catechesis, liturgical formation, and, perhaps by including in participation aids, concise explanations designed to be read before the ceremony. During the liturgy itself a few brief and carefully crafted explanatory comments suffice. In this way the multivalent liturgical drama is allowed to speak for itself. Recall that the Son communicated the Gospel not only by words but by becoming the Word made flesh.

Symbols speak to us more deeply than mere words, and can transport us into mystery most effectively: “Logical thought cannot get very far

with [liturgy]; liturgical actions yield their intelligibility in their performance, and this performance takes place entirely at the level of sensible realities, not as exclusively material but as vehicles of overtones capable of awakening the mind and heart to acceptance of realities that belong to a different order.”<sup>14</sup> Surely words are indispensable in human communication and in the economy of salvation. John the Evangelist aptly calls the Son the Word. When words limp, however, symbols can still speak forcefully to the imagination. Symbols can sometimes capture experiences that defy comprehensive verbal expression. Most powerful is the combination of word and symbol wherein words specify the otherwise multivalent meanings of symbols and symbols lend depth to words. It is no coincidence that the sacraments, crucial moments in the life of the Church and for the salvation of those who receive them,<sup>15</sup> involve just such a conjunction of word and symbol. (In this light the importance of liturgical music for communicating mystery also becomes evident: “...Music can...unveil a dimension of meaning and feeling, a communication of ideas and intuitions which words alone cannot yield.”<sup>16</sup>) We must trust that with the help of only a few words, most all of which are supplied by the liturgical books, symbols can speak with a power that verbiage can only dissipate. So to communicate, however, symbols must receive generous expression. Pouring of water and oil, large vessels, ample (but not self-conscious) gestures, a sense of leisure in employing symbols, and use of sufficient space, for example, allow symbols to impress themselves on the assembly, communicating their fuller range of meaning thereby.

Without compromising the theological insight gained in the West by close analysis of what is absolutely essential to liturgy and especially to the validity of the sacraments, we must persevere in the effort to recover for the faithful the full range of symbolic expression.<sup>17</sup>

Silence, too, gives expression to mystery. For example, rubrics prescribe silence following the readings and homily at Mass so that the assembly may internalize the words. This use of silence suggests a reality to which words cannot give exhaustive expression, and shows reverence for Christ Who speaks when the Scriptures are proclaimed.<sup>18</sup> What is at issue is “not the embarrassed, barren, uncontrolled lack of sound which occurs when things break down and no one knows what to say or do. Liturgical silence is purposeful, pregnant, and controlled—the thunderous quiet of people communicating that which escapes being put into mere words.”<sup>19</sup>

Given that liturgical ministers must allow mystery to shine through their service, it is of the utmost importance that they do not merely perform liturgical functions but really pray the liturgy. This presupposes first that they are prayerful people and second that they are comfortable enough with their roles, both in the general sense of their identity as liturgical ministers and insofar as their preparation for the particular liturgy is concerned, that they are free truly to engage their ministry prayerfully. Accompanying such an attitude will be appropriate reverence. Actions speak louder than words; actions include such gestures as genuflections, bows, and use of hands, as well as general

comportment. Understatement renders such nonverbal communication transparent to mystery; by undue emphasis on gesture a liturgical minister risks becoming the focal point<sup>20</sup> and obfuscating the mystery. It is crucial that liturgical ministers and especially presiders “know what [they] are doing.”<sup>21</sup> Pope John Paul II recalls these words from the Rite of Ordination of Presbyters as he reminds “all of us who are ministers of the Eucharist to examine carefully our actions at the altar, in particular the way in which we handle that Food and Drink which are the Body and Blood of the Lord our God in our hands....”<sup>22</sup> Priests and other ministers who maintain ongoing exposure to liturgical and sacramental theology not only develop their understanding of the liturgy but remain lively engaged in it. Good presiders reflect on both the meaning of the liturgy as a whole and its constituent elements, even its smallest parts. Such efforts go a long way toward helping priests and other liturgical ministers bring the mystery always present in the liturgy to the fore.

An understanding of the magnitude of the Holy Spirit’s intimate action expressed in the third Eucharistic Prayer, for example, can fill a celebrant with awe and wonder, thereby imbuing the heart of the liturgy with a greater sense of the transcendent, i.e., the dimension of mystery. Careful attention to the meaning of each line of the same prayer can attune him to his use of his eyes. Apart from the institution narrative, the prayer directed to the Father, is best served largely by looking upward, but judicious eye contact with the assembly and carefully selected glances at the Body and Blood of Christ on the altar can draw the

congregation more deeply into the prayer, enabling “full, conscious, and active participation”<sup>23</sup> in the mystery without in any way compromising the prayer’s vertical dimension. In fact, a Eucharistic Prayer well-prayed facing the people can go considerably further in this respect than could the hidden and remote recitation of the canon in the Tridentine Mass, however mysterious that style of prayer may have seemed.

Does increased attention to mystery in the liturgy risk rendering the liturgy irrelevant? Does emphasis on mystery compete with concern for justice? These are legitimate questions, especially if one identifies mystery with retreat into an isolated, spiritual world. Mystery properly understood, however, permeates all reality even as it reaches its most intense expression and presence in



“the eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of Christian life...”<sup>24</sup> Reverent and informed celebration of our renewed liturgy allows that expression of mystery the more powerfully to grasp the assembly and to send it forth.

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- 1 Prayer during the mixing of wine and water at the Preparation of the Gifts, Ordinary of the Mass, in *The Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1985).
- 2 See Rite of Ordination, Presentation of the Gifts, in *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, Pueblo Books, 1980).
- 3 Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style* (New York: Pueblo, 1982), 57.
- 4 Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 34, in *The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Elizabeth Hoffman (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991).

- 5 Prayer over the Gifts, Holy Thursday and 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time [Roman Missal of 1962], cited in *SC*, 2.
- 6 *SC*, 10.
- 7 *SC*, 11.
- 8 *SC*, 11.
- 9 *SC*, 14.
- 10 *SC*, 61.
- 11 Irénée Henri Dalmais, “The Liturgy as Celebration of the Mystery of Salvation,” in *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. Aimé Georges Martimort, vol. 1, *Principles of the Liturgy*, new ed., trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 264.
- 12 Kavanagh, 101.
- 13 See Rite of Ordination, Presentation of the Gifts.
- 14 Dalmais, 259.
- 15 See Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, trans. W. J. O’Hara, *Quaestiones Disputatae* Series, no. 9 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 77.
- 16 Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Music in Catholic Worship,” 24, in *The Liturgy Documents*.
- 17 See Dalmais, 258-259. Very helpful in this regard is Jean Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship*, trans.

- Matthew J. O’Connell (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1988).
- 18 Introduction to the Second Edition of the Lectionary for Mass, 4, in *The Liturgy Documents*; *SC* 7 and 33.
  - 19 Kavanagh, 51.
  - 20 See Kavanagh, 69.
  - 21 Rite of Ordination, Presentation of the Gifts. “...[T]he pastors themselves [must] become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy and make themselves its teachers.” *SC*, 14.
  - 22 Pope John Paul II, Letter to Priests on the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, *Dominicae cenae*, 11, in *Vatican Council II: More Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello, 1982).
  - 23 *SC*, 14.
  - 24 Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, 11, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, new revised ed., ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello, 1975 and 1984).



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Celebrating the Beatification of

**Pope John XXIII (1881-1963)**

September 3, 2000

*“We are not on earth to guard a museum,  
but to cultivate a flourishing garden of life.”*

Convened the Second Vatican Council - October 11, 1962

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# Celebrating Exposition Not Benediction

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**B**efore the renewal of the liturgy that began with the Second Vatican Council, if someone asked the average Catholic what was the most important and solemn form of prayer in the Church the answer that person might have received was “benediction.”

I know when I was in grammar school during the late ‘50s and early ‘60s that would have been my answer. I knew the Mass was important, but next to benediction of the blessed sacrament it was a definite second. During benediction every candle in the sanctuary burned brightly. During benediction we genuflected on two knees and made a bow of the head as well. During benediction the priest was dressed in a flowing cope and surrounded by ranks of servers. During benediction we sang the *Tantum Ergo*, and *O Salutaris*, songs whose meaning I didn’t quite know, but I felt they had to be about something extremely holy and pleasing to God. During benediction there was the sound of ringing of bells and clouds of incense as we were blessed with the monstrance, a sure sign of God’s favor. And of course benediction ended with the Divine Praises and the singing of “Holy God,” which for me seemed to be the Catholic “national anthem.” Of course, benediction seemed the most important thing that Catholics did in church.

Benediction also was special

since it seemed to be attached to other services to make them have added value and importance. We had stations of the cross and benediction, the novena to the Miraculous Medal and benediction, the rosary and benediction. We even had graduation and benediction, and when I was confirmed we had confirmation followed by benediction.

With the renewal of the liturgy, and the proper emphasis given the Mass as the summit of the Church’s liturgical life, benediction became infrequent, if not forgotten, as other devotions passed from the parish calendar and were replaced by the celebration of the Mass. Today the majority of Catholics rarely experience benediction, and most, even altar servers, would have a hard time understanding words like “monstrance” or “humeral veil.”

While benediction is much less frequent, although there seems to be a little more emphasis on it recently, benediction remains part of the official liturgy of the Church. In this article I would like to look at benediction in light of the documents of the Church dealing with eucharistic worship.

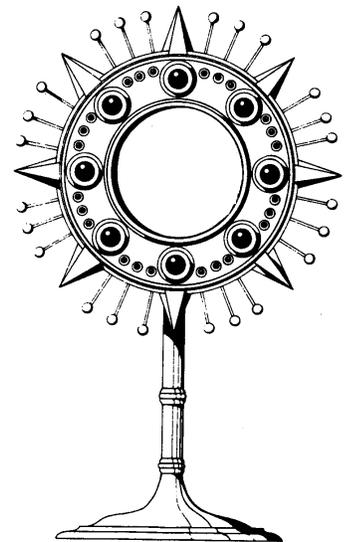
## **TWO BOOKS**

Services of eucharistic devotion, that include benediction, are governed by two ritual books, namely, *Holy Communion and Worship of*

*the Eucharist Outside of Mass and Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist.*

*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, part of the Roman Ritual, was approved by Pope Paul VI in 1973. Its English edition, approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See, was published in 1976. The book has instructions and ritual text dealing not only with exposition and other eucharistic devotions, it contains chapters concerning the distribution of holy communion outside Mass, for example, to the sick or dying, or to the faithful when Mass is not celebrated. Some of the instructions in this document have been superseded by later rituals.

*The Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, was published in 1993 by the authority of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy. As indicated in its introduction, this ritual book “contains a collection of rites and texts for use during the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist” as well as information and suggestions that apply to “other occasions when exposition, adoration, and benediction take place.” Basically, the book takes the latest rites and texts pertaining to exposition of the eucharist that are found in various places and brings them together in an



orderly and logical way in one book. Every parish should have a copy of the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* among its ritual books.

For purposes of this article, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, will be referred to by the abbreviation HC, while the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, will be referenced by the letters SE. We also will use the term exposition rather than benediction, since that is the proper term for what we are describing. Exposition applies to publicly displaying the holy eucharist for the adoration of the faithful, while benediction refers to the concluding blessing that takes place near the end of a period of exposition.

#### **THE MASS IS PRIMARY**

Before discussing exposition, we should state the obvious, which, as mentioned, was not so obvious in the years before the Second Vatican Council, namely, “the celebration of the eucharist is the center of the entire Christian life, both for the Church universal and for the local congregations of the Church.” (HC 1)

Exposition has its origin, and makes sense only, in relation to the Mass. “The celebration of the eucharist in the sacrifice of the Mass, moreover, is truly the origin and the goal of the worship which is shown to the eucharist outside Mass. Christ the Lord is offered in the sacrifice of the Mass when he becomes present sacramentally as the spiritual food of the faithful under the appearance of bread and wine. And, once that sacrifice is offered and while the eucharist is reserved in churches and oratories, he is truly Emmanuel, ‘God with us.’” (HC 2)

“Exposition of the holy eucharist...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.” (SE 7)

#### **LENGTHY EXPOSITION**

Exposition of the holy eucharist may be either lengthy or shorter in nature. “In churches where the eucharist is regularly reserved, it is recommended that solemn exposition of the blessed sacrament for an extended period of time should take place once a year, even though this period is not strictly continuous... This kind of exposition, however, may take place, with the consent of the local Ordinary, only if suitable numbers of the faithful are expected to be present.” (HC 86)

This period of lengthy exposition was traditionally referred to as Forty Hours Devotion since it originally lasted that length of time. Most likely the forty hour time period originated as a commemoration of the forty hours the body of Christ lay in the tomb between his death and resurrection. (SE 1) Even today the term Forty Hours Devotion is used for lengthy exposition even though the time period is rarely that duration. Today what is called Forty Hours can be just a few hours in duration. Calling that devotion Forty Hours is just as illogical as announcing that Christmas Midnight Mass will begin at 8:00 PM!

This lengthy or extended period of exposition not need be continuous, for example, “if a period of uninterrupted exposition is not possible, because of too few worshipers, the blessed sacrament may be

replaced in the tabernacle during periods which have been scheduled and announced beforehand. This reposition may not take place more often than twice during the day, for example, about noon and at night.” (HC 88, SE 12)

The same interruption in lengthy or extended exposition would also take place if it was necessary to celebrate Mass in the church. For example, this might occur if there was a regularly scheduled Mass during the time of exposition, or if it was necessary to celebrate a funeral Mass. “During the exposition of the blessed sacrament, the celebration of Mass is prohibited in the body of the church.... If exposition of the blessed sacrament is extended for an entire day or over several days, it is to be interrupted during the celebration of Mass.” (HC 83, SE 8) “The eucharist must be replaced in the tabernacle before the celebration of Mass begins.” (*Statement of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, see BCLNewsletter, June 1995*)

#### **SHORTER EXPOSITION**

Exposition of the blessed sacrament may also take place for shorter periods of time, for example, for a half hour, or an hour or two. Such “shorter expositions of the eucharist are to be arranged in a such a way that the blessing with the eucharist is preceded by a suitable period for readings of the word of God, songs, prayers, and sufficient time for silence. Exposition which is held exclusively for the giving of benediction is prohibited.” (HC 89)

In other words, during shorter exposition, the blessed sacrament is exposed for a

time of adoration by the faithful, and not simply placed in the monstrance for benediction, that is, for the blessing of the people.

### STRUCTURE

Lengthy exposition or shorter exposition has the same ritual structure, namely, exposition, adoration, benediction, and reposition.

- Exposition – the blessed sacrament is placed on the altar of sacrifice.
- Adoration – there is time, either lengthy or brief, during which there are prayers, songs, and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord. (HC 95)
- Benediction – in silence, the sign of the cross is made over the people with the monstrance or ciborium.
- Reposition – the blessed sacrament is returned to the tabernacle.

Before looking at these four parts in more detail, we should consider some matters related to the celebration of exposition, namely, the minister, vesture, and signs of reverence shown the blessed sacrament when exposed for adoration.

The priest or deacon is the ordinary minister for exposition of the eucharist and he alone may bless the people with the sacrament at the conclusion of exposition. (HC 91)

“In the absence of a priest or deacon or, if they are lawfully impeded, an acolyte, another extraordinary minister of communion, or another person appointed by the local Ordinary may publicly expose and later repose the holy eucharist for adoration by the faithful. Such ministers may open the tabernacle and also,

as required, place the ciborium on the altar or place the host in the monstrance. At the end of the period of adoration, they replace the blessed sacrament in the tabernacle. It is not lawful, however, for them to give the blessing with the sacrament, nor do they incense it.” (SE 26)

### VESTURE

“The minister, if he is a priest or deacon, should vest in an alb, or a surplice over a cassock, and a stole. Other ministers should wear either the liturgical vestments which are used in the region or the vesture that is befitting this ministry and is approved by the Ordinary. The priest or deacon should wear a white cope and humeral veil to give the blessing at the end of adoration, when the exposition takes place with the monstrance; in the case of exposition in the ciborium, the humeral veil should be worn.” (SE 27)

### SIGNS OF REVERENCE

“A single genuflection (on one knee) is made in the presence of the blessed sacrament, whether reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for public adoration.” (HC 84, SE 9) This change from the previous ritual, which required a genuflection of both knees when the blessed sacrament was exposed, makes sense. We now have one consistent sign of reverence toward the blessed sacrament, whether in the tabernacle or exposed for adoration. The genuflection on one knee is also consistent with the genuflections of the presider at Mass. The presider genuflects on one knee during the consecration and before the invitation to communion.

The blessed sacrament may be exposed in the monstrance or the ciborium, that is the

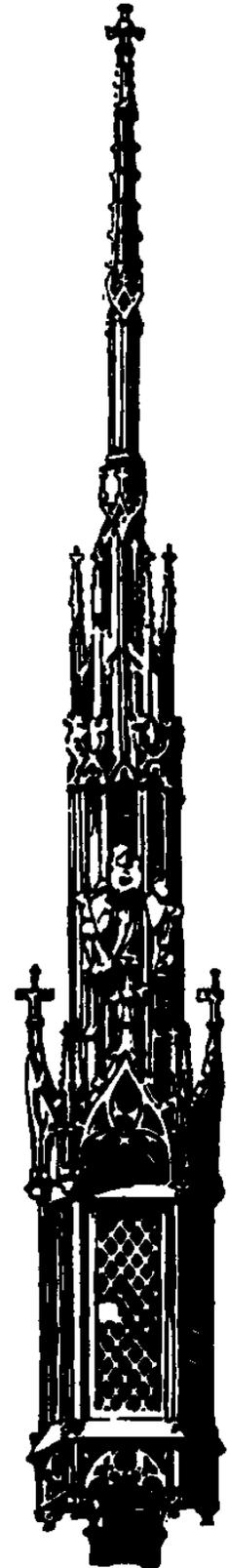
container in which the eucharist is reserved in the tabernacle. (HC 82, 93) It would seem that for more solemn or lengthy exposition the blessed sacrament would be more fittingly exposed in the monstrance.

“For exposition of the blessed sacrament in the monstrance four to six candles are lighted, as at Mass, and incense is used. For exposition of the blessed sacrament in the ciborium, at least two candles should be lighted, and incense may be used.” (SE 10) Ideally, these candles should not be placed upon the altar, but rather near it. (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 268)

The altar should be covered with a cloth. The corporal is not used for exposition of the blessed sacrament. (HC 93) The corporal is not used since its purpose is to catch any crumbs that might be created when the consecrated host is broken during the communion rite of Mass. There is no possibility of crumbs during exposition when the consecrated host is contained in a closed monstrance or ciborium.

The ritual states that “if exposition with the monstrance is to extend over a longer period, a throne in an elevated position may be used, but this should not be too lofty or distant.” (SE 13) However, since such a throne is not required, nor seemingly recommended, it would be better if such a throne were not used. Having the monstrance in direct contact with the altar of sacrifice would seem to be a better sign of the relationship of the sacrifice of the eucharist to the adoration of the eucharist.

During exposition, when the eucharist is honored with the



incense, the censer is swung back and forth three times for the incensation of the blessed sacrament. Before and after incensation, a profound bow is made to the blessed sacrament. The blessed sacrament is incensed from a kneeling position. (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 91, 92, 94)

#### **RITE OF EUCHARISTIC EXPOSITION, INCLUDING BENEDICTION**

After the people have assembled, a song may be sung, or instrumental music played, while the ministers comes to the altar. (HC 93, SE 91)

The deacon, or in his absence a priest, even the presiding priest, brings the eucharist to the altar and places it in the monstrance. (SE 93) If the holy eucharist is reserved at some place distant from the altar, the minister puts on a humeral veil and brings the sacrament from the place of reservation; he is accompanied by servers or the faithful with lighted candles. (HC 93)

Rather than having an empty monstrance upon the altar before the service begins, the monstrance could be near the tabernacle. In this way, the minister places the host in the monstrance at the tabernacle, and then brings the monstrance with the host and places it upon the altar.

After the blessed sacrament has been exposed in the monstrance, the presiding minister goes to the altar and, after placing incense in the censer, kneels and incenses the sacrament. Meanwhile, a suitable song may be sung by the people. After the incensation, the ministers go to their chairs. If the period of adoration is going to be

lengthy, the presider and other ministers may withdraw. (HC 93, SE 94) [Normally this service is led by a priest or deacon, if this service is led by a lay minister, the incensation at the beginning and at the blessing are omitted. (SE 91)]

What has just been said applies to a shorter period of exposition. If there is to be solemn and lengthy exposition, it begins with the celebration of the Mass, and the host to be placed in the monstrance is consecrated in the Mass that immediately precedes exposition. After the distribution of holy communion, the host for exposition is placed in the monstrance on the altar. The priest returns to the chair, and after a period of silence says the prayer after communion.

The priest then stands and goes before the altar where he kneels and incenses the eucharist. The people may sing a song at this time and observe a period of silence. Afterward the presider stands and says a prayer. He may now give the blessing with the monstrance. If so, wearing the humeral veil, he goes to the altar, genuflects, then takes the monstrance and makes the sign of the cross over the people. A deacon, or in his absence the priest himself, then replaces the monstrance on the altar. The ministers reverence the eucharist with a genuflection and leave in silence. The concluding rites of Mass are omitted. The period of extended exposition now begins. (HC 94, SE 31-36)

#### **ADORATION DURING EXPOSITION**

The period of exposition, which may be either long or short, is a time of adoration of the Lord present in the eucharist. "There should be

prayers, songs, and readings, to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord. To encourage a prayerful spirit, there should be readings from Scripture with a homily or brief exhortations to develop a better understanding of the eucharistic mystery." (SE 15)

Appendix 1 of the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* contains a listing of appropriate readings for this time of adoration. The readings are from Lectionary for Mass for the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, and the votive Mass of the Eucharist. There also is an appendix of readings in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* and

"Part of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially the principal hours, may be celebrated before the blessed sacrament when there is a lengthy period of exposition." (HC #96) The *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* contains Evening Prayer I, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer II, for the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. These services could be appropriately used during the time of exposition.

The *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* also contains two eucharistic services of prayer and praise that could be used during a period of extended adoration. These services could also be used for shorter periods of eucharistic adoration.

In addition to public prayer during this period of adoration, it is also recommended that there be times of silence. (HC 95)

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The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has reversed a decision made 31 years ago about whether or not the recitation of the rosary is appropriate during exposition of the blessed sacrament.

The Congregation issued in Spanish “Notes on the Recitation of the Rosary During Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament,” in which it stated, “One should not expose the eucharist only to recite the rosary. However, among the prayers that are used during adoration, the recitation of the rosary certainly may be included, emphasizing the Christological aspects with biblical readings relating to the mysteries, and providing time for silent adoration and meditation on them “ (*Notitiae* 34, 1998, 507-511; unofficial English translation provided by Secretariat of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy.)

#### **BENEDICTION**

“Toward the end of the exposition the priest or deacon goes to the altar, genuflects, and kneels. Then a hymn or other eucharistic song is sung. Meanwhile the minister, while kneeling, incenses the sacrament if the exposition has taken place with the monstrance.” (HC 97)

Asung or spoken prayer by the priest or deacon follows. After the prayer “the priest or deacon puts on the humeral veil, genuflects, and takes the monstrance or ciborium. He makes the sign of the cross over the people with the monstrance or ciborium, in silence.” (HC 99)

#### **REPOSITION**

After the blessing, the priest or deacon who gave the blessing, or another priest or deacon,

immediately removes the blessed sacrament from the monstrance and places the blessed sacrament in the tabernacle and genuflects. (HC 100, SE 102)

It may be better if the minister brings the monstrance with the host to the tabernacle, and there removes the host from the monstrance and replaces it in the tabernacle. In this way an empty monstrance does not remain on the altar after the blessed sacrament has been reposed in the tabernacle. As this is taking place the assembly may proclaim the Divine Praises, or sing or say another acclamation or song, or instrumental music may be played. The ministers then leave. (HC 100, SE 103)

#### **CONCLUDING A LENGTHY TIME OF ADORATION**

If there has been a lengthy time of adoration, the conclusion of exposition may take place during Mass or outside of Mass.

If it takes place during Mass, the exposed eucharist is first reposed in the tabernacle, then Mass is celebrated. This closing Mass follows the same order as the Mass that began the time of solemn or lengthy exposition. In other words, after communion, a host consecrated at the Mass is placed in the monstrance on the altar. Following the prayer after communion, the blessed sacrament in the monstrance is incensed, and a prayer is said by the presider. He then puts on the humeral veil, takes the monstrance and makes the sign of the cross with it over the people. The blessed sacrament is then removed from the monstrance and brought to the tabernacle. As this is taking place the people may sing an acclamation or another song, or instrumental music may be

played. (SE 131)

While permitted, it seems to make more sense **not** to celebrate the closing celebration within Mass, but rather to celebrate the closing service outside of Mass. Celebrating the closing within Mass requires that exposition come to an end before Mass, then at the conclusion of Mass exposition starts again, only to end again.

The closing outside of Mass seems to flow more logically. In this case the ministers enter, the priest or deacon who is presiding then incenses the blessed sacrament while a song is sung by the assembly. The presider then greets the people, and a liturgy of the word follows. After the homily, the blessed sacrament is incensed as the people sing, silence or intercessions then follow. The presider then says a prayer, puts on the humeral veil, takes the monstrance and makes the sign of the cross with it over the people. The blessed sacrament is then removed from the monstrance and reposed in the tabernacle. As this is taking place the people may sing an acclamation or another song, or instrumental music may be played. (SE 150)

Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski  
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# SUGGESTED BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS FOR THE JUBILEE DAYS

The following suggestions are provided in order to encourage the use of appropriate prayers and blessings on the Jubilee Days. The suggestions are taken from the *Book of Blessings* and the *Roman Missal*, including the *Sacramentary* and *Lectionary for Mass* along with references to other books of the Roman Ritual. Care should be taken to observe the liturgical calendar and the provisions of liturgical law which encourage the appropriate use of these treasuries of prayer.

The rich resources of the *Book of Blessings* should be used generously. The blessing of persons, places and articles meant to foster the devotion of Catholics (rosaries, scapulars, etc...) help to bring special meaning to the Jubilee Year. Like the use of blessings relate feasts and seasons (See Preface of the *Book of Blessings*) helps to create a sense of God's presence in our midst in every time and place and season.

References to the *Book of Blessings* are given as the "paragraph number," not the page number, which differs in each edition. "Paragraph numbers" usually appear as red print before the beginning of a prayer, rubric or section of the *Book of Blessings*.

No prayers, even prayers from the *Book of Blessings*, should

be introduced into the Mass unless an order for that blessing "during Mass" is provided. When no form for a blessing "during Mass" is provided it may be used in a variety of settings such as parish meetings, special assemblies, school or other groups.

(USA)

**Readings:** For the Blessing of Human Labor (LFM 907-911), or Weekday: 1 Cor 2:1-5/ Lk 4:16-30 (LFM 431).

**Blessings:** The Order for the Blessing of Tools or Other Equipment for Work (*Book of Blessings* 919-941) may be appropriately used today.



Particular care should be taken to respect the liturgical calendar. Masses for Various Needs and Occasions or Votive Masses should be used only when the liturgical calendar as described in the Ordo permits such use.

## September 2000

### Mon September 4

**Labor Day - proper Mass or Weekday**

**Jubilee of Workers, Crafters, Builders & Tradespeople**

### September 10

**Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Jubilee of Teachers / Professors**

**Readings:** Is 35:4-7a/ Ps 2:1-5/ Mk 7:31-37 (LFM 128)

**Blessings:** The Order for the Blessing of Students and Teachers (*Book of Blessings* 22-550) may be appropriately used today.

### September 17

**Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Jubilee of Catechists (USA)**

**Readings:** Is 50:5-9a/ Jas 8/ Mk 8:27-35 (LFM 131)

**Blessings:** The Order for Blessings that Pertain to Catechists and to Commensal Prayer (*Book of Blessings* 491-517) may be appropriately used today.

### September 24

**Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Jubilee of Senior Citizens (USA)**

**Readings:** Wis 2:12, 17-20/ Jas 3:16-4:3/ Mk 9:30-37 (LFM 134)

**Blessings:** The Order for the

Blessing of Elderly People Confined to their Homes (*Book of Blessings* 344-375) may be appropriately used today.

## October 2000

### Sun October 1

**Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Jubilee for Life (USA)**

**Readings:** Nm 11:25-29/ Jas 5:1-6/ Mk 9:38-43, 45, 47-48 (LFM 137)

### Tue October 3

**Weekday**

**Day of Jewish -Christian**

**Dialogue**

**Readings:** Jb 3:1-3, 11-17, 20-23/ Lk 9:51-56 (LFM 456)

**Prayers:** The Prayers for an Interfaith Gathering (*Book of Blessings* 570-573) may be appropriately used today.

### Wed October 4

**Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi**

**Jubilee of Environment (USA)**

**Readings:** Jb 9:1-12, 14-16/ Lk 9:57-62 (LFM 457)

### Sun October 8

**Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Jubilee of Bishops /**

**Dedication Of 3rd Mill. To Mary**

**Readings:** Gn 2:18-24/ Heb 2:9-11/ Mk 10:2-16 or 10:2-12 (LFM 140)

### October 14-15

**International Family Celebration in Rome**

**Blessings:** The Order for the Blessing of Families (*Book of Blessings* 40-89) may be appropriately used today.

### Sun October 22

**Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Mission Sunday**

**Readings:** Is 53:10-11/ Heb 4:14-16/ Mk 10:35-45 or 10:42-45 (LFM 146)

### Sun October 29

**Thirtieth Sunday in**

**Ordinary Time**

**Jubilee of Sports / Jubilee of Youth (WYD USA)**

**Readings:** Jer 31:7-9/ Heb 5:1-6/ Mk 10:46-52 (LFM 149)

**Blessings:** The Order for the Blessing of a Gymnasium or a Field for Athletics (*Book of Blessings* 834-850) may be appropriately used today.

## November 2000

### Sun November 5

**Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Jubilee of Government Officials (Public Life)**

**Readings:** Dt 6:2-6/ Heb 7:23-28/ Mk 12:28b-34 (LFM 152)

**Prayers:** See the Prayer for the Inauguration of Public Officials (*Book of Blessings* 1961-1965).

### November 12

**Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Jubilee of Agricultural Workers (USA)**

**Readings:** 1 Kgs 17:10-16/ Heb 9:24-28/ Mk 12:38-44 or 12:41-44 (LFM 155)

**Blessings:** The Order for the Blessing of Fields and Flocks (*Book of Blessings* 966-985) may be appropriately used today.

### Sun November 19

**Thirty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Jubilee of Police**

**Readings:** Dn 12:1-3/ Heb 10:11-14, 18/ Mk 13:24-32 (LFM 158)

**Blessings:** The Order for the Blessing of Organizations Concerned with Public Need (*Book of Blessings* 574-589) may be appropriately used today.

### Thr November 23

**Thanksgiving Day, or:**

or optional memorial for Saint Clement I, pope and martyr; Saint Columban, abbot;

Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, priest and martyr;

**Jubilee Day for Families (USA)**

**Readings for Thanksgiving:**

From Massed of Thanksgiving (LFM 943-947), especially Sir 50:22-24 (LFM 943.2)/ 1 Cor 1:3-9 (LFM 944.1)/ Lk 17:11-19 (LFM 947.6) or any readings from the Appendix to the Lectionary (for Thanksgiving Day)

### Sun November 26

**Solemnity of Christ the King**

**Jubilee Day for Lay Ministry (USA)**

**Readings:** Dn 7:13-14/ Rv 1:5-8/ Jn 18:33b-37 (LFM 161)

**Blessings:** The Orders for the Blessing of Those Who Exercise Pastoral Service (*Book of Blessings* 1808-1826), Readers (*Book of Blessings* 1827-1846), Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians and Ushers (*Book of Blessings* 1847-1870) and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (*Book of Blessings* 1871-1896) may be appropriately used today.

## December 2000

### Sun December 3

**First Sunday of Advent**

**Jubilee for the Disabled**

**Readings:** Jer 33:14-16/ 1 Thes 3:12-4:2/ Lk 21:25-28, 34-36 (LFM 3)

### Sun December 17

**Third Sunday of Advent**

**Jubilee of Entertainers**

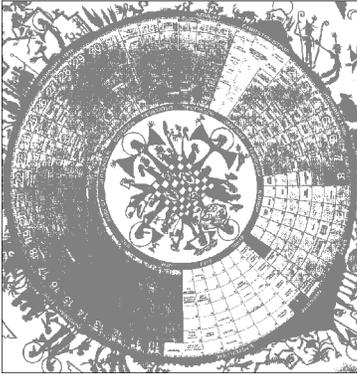
**Readings:** Zep 3:14-18a/ Phil 4:4-7/ Lk 3:10-18 (LFM 9)

### December 31

**Prayer Vigil for Passage to the New Millennium**

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