

Norm for the Place for the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament

Diocese of Stockton

General Principle

The Church has had a most ancient tradition of reserving the eucharistic bread in a tabernacle in the church or oratory. The purpose of this reservation is to bring communion to the sick and dying and to be the object of private devotion. Canon law states: “The tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved is to be situated in some part of the church or oratory which is distinguished (*insigni*), conspicuous (*conspicua*), beautifully decorated (*decore ornata*), and suitable for prayer (*orationem apta*)” (c. 938, §2).

Details to Consider

1. Environment

As canon 938, §2 indicates, the focus is not on the tabernacle as much as it is on that part of the church or oratory in which the tabernacle is located. In other words, it is the part of the church or oratory that is to be “distinguished, conspicuous, beautifully decorated, and suitable for prayer.” This part of the church or oratory is devotional in nature. It should create an atmosphere of warmth while acknowledging the mystery of the Lord. Nothing should obscure the primary focus of Eucharistic devotion.

2. Location of the Place of Reservation

DIOCESAN NORM: In accordance with n. 315 of the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (2000), it is the judgment of the Bishop of Stockton that the location of the tabernacle should be as follows:

- a. *In new church buildings*, the tabernacle is to be placed in a chapel “suitable for adoration and the private prayer of the faithful, and which is integrally connected with the church and is conspicuous to the faithful” (*IGMR*, n. 315).
- b. *In the renovation of churches or oratories*, every effort is to be made to locate the tabernacle in a chapel separate from the worship space. If this is not possible due to the existing structure of the church, it is permitted to locate the tabernacle in the main worship space, even in the sanctuary, though apart from the altar of celebration (*IGMR*, n. 315).

Parishes building or renovating their churches should feel free to explore every option for the place for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. After consultation with the Liturgical Commission, the Bishop will approve the location of the place for Eucharistic reservation in every case.

The eucharistic reservation chapel should be separate from, but not remote from, the main worship space. It should be accessible from the main worship space and may also be

accessible from outside or from the church building. Ideally, this chapel should be planned so that it can be open during the day for private devotions and meditation, even when the church is closed.

If the location of the place of reservation must remain in the worship space, every effort should be made to set this space apart from the area used during the celebration of the liturgy. “When a tabernacle is located directly behind the altar, consideration should be given to using distance, lighting, or some other architectural device that separates the tabernacle and reservation area during Mass, but that allows the tabernacle to be fully visible to the entire worship area when the Eucharistic liturgy is not being celebrated” (*Built of Living Stones*, n. 80).

3. The Tabernacle

“The tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is habitually reserved is to be immovable, made of solid and opaque material, and locked in such a way that the danger of profanation is avoided as much as possible” (c. 938, §3).

There should be only one tabernacle in a church building. It may be placed in a wall niche, on a pillar or eucharistic tower. It is not to be placed on an altar or anything resembling an altar, for the altar is a place for the eucharistic *action*, not for reservation.

The tabernacle should be well designed, stressing dignity and simplicity so that the reverence for the reserved eucharist, not its container, is maintained.

A well-designed lamp should burn continuously near the tabernacle, signifying the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Approved by the Liturgical Commission
Diocese of Stockton
June 1, 2001

Amended by Bishop Blaire upon consultation with the
Presbyteral Council
September 5, 2001