

**Guidelines on the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament**  
Archdiocese of Atlanta  
December, 2008

**Where may the Blessed Sacrament be reserved?**

In virtue of law, the Blessed Sacrament *must* be reserved in certain locations:

- In the cathedral church of a diocese (c. 934 §1,1<sup>o</sup>)
- In every parish church (c. 934 §1,1<sup>o</sup>)
- In the church or oratory attached to a house of a religious institute or house of apostolic life<sup>1</sup> (c. 934 §1 1<sup>o</sup>)

In virtue of law, the Blessed Sacrament *may* be reserved in one additional location:

- In the private chapel of the bishop (c. 934 §1.2<sup>o</sup>)

The *permission of the local ordinary* is required for reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in other locations:

- In other churches, oratories, and chapels (c. 934 §2)

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. (c. 935)

**What is necessary for the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in a church, oratory, or chapel?**

- An individual must be entrusted with the care of the Blessed Sacrament (c. 934 §2)
- A priest should celebrate mass in the place at least twice a month (c. 934 §2)
- A church in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved should be open to the faithful for prayer for at least a period of hours each day (c. 937)
- The tabernacle in which the Blessed Sacrament is placed should be in a part of the church or oratory which is distinguished, conspicuous, fittingly adorned, and fit for

<sup>1</sup> This refers to houses of a religious community legitimately erected with the prior written consent of the Bishop, (c. 609) and not simply to a building in which religious happen to reside.

prayer (c. 938 §2)

- The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle that is immovable, solid, not transparent, and locked securely against profanation (c. 938 §3)
- The person in charge of the church or oratory should see that the key to the tabernacle is kept with the greatest diligence (c. 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 (c. 939)  
A lamp is to be kept burning perpetually before the tabernacle<sup>2</sup> (c. 940)
- The presence of the Eucharist in the tabernacle is to be shown by a veil or in another suitable way determined by the competent authority. (*Roman Ritual: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass*, 11)
- In churches or oratories where permission has been given to reserve the Blessed Sacrament, there should be a solemn period of Eucharistic Adoration at least yearly. (c. 942)
- The Blessed Sacrament may be reserved in only one tabernacle of any church or oratory (c. 938 § 1).

**What constitutes an oratory or chapel appropriate for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament?**

- An oratory is a place permanently set aside for divine worship by the permission of the local ordinary for the convenience of some community or group of the faithful (c. 1223)
- A private chapel is a place set aside for divine worship by the local Ordinary for the convenience of one or more individuals (c. 1226)
- Once an oratory or private chapel has been designated, it may only be used for divine worship, and must be freed from all domestic use (c. 1229)
- Before granting the permission to establish an

<sup>2</sup> If at all possible, this lamp should be fueled by oil or wax (*Roman Ritual: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass*, 11)

oratory, the ordinary is to inspect the place in question, either personally or through a representative (c. 1224 §1)

- Once the permission has been given to establish an oratory in a place, it can not revert to secular use without the authority of the same ordinary (c. 1224 §2)
- Before becoming a sacred place, the oratory or chapel must receive the blessing established in the liturgical books. (c. 1205) This blessing must be given by the local ordinary or his delegate (c. 1207) (see the *Rite of Blessing of a Church*)<sup>3</sup>
- In addition to being established as an oratory or chapel, the ordinary must grant an additional permission before the Blessed Sacrament may be reserved in that place<sup>4</sup> (c. 934)
- In addition to its establishment, the ordinary must grant an additional permission before Mass or other sacred celebrations can take place in a private chapel. (c. 1228)

### **What about chapels in rectories?**

Only a bishop possesses the right of reserving the Blessed Sacrament in his residence by virtue of law. (c. 1227) For the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in a rectory, a chapel must be established as described above, and the ordinary must give permission for Mass to be celebrated and the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in that place.

### **What to do about improper reservation of the Blessed Sacrament?**

If the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a parish church, or in a oratory or chapel by the permission of the ordinary, but some required element is lacking, it is sufficient to correct the problem and supply the missing element. Otherwise it would be necessary to remove the Blessed Sacrament.

### **What if the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a place that does not have the proper permission or blessing?**

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. Archbishop Gregory is happy to grant appropriate requests to designate chapels or oratories, and to see that the place in question is properly blessed. A request to designate or bless a chapel or oratory, and to grant the permissions necessary to reserve the Blessed Sacrament, should be addressed in writing to Archbishop Gregory.

### **What if I am unsure if a place has been designated as a chapel or oratory?**

In the case of uncertainty as to whether a place has been designated as a chapel or oratory, whether it has been blessed in accord with the liturgical rites, or whether permission has been given to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in that place, one should contact the Office of the Chancellor at the Archdiocese, which maintains records of these designations.

### **What if I have a chapel or oratory that I would like to return to secular use?**

An oratory may not be converted to secular use without the permission of the local ordinary. (c. 1224) Likewise, a decree of the ordinary removing the blessing of any sacred place is necessary before it be given over to secular or domestic use. (c. 1212) This should be requested of Archbishop Gregory in writing.

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3 Oratories receive a blessing according to the *Rite of Blessing of a Church*, and not the dedication given to parish churches.

4 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.