

*BENE ET FIRMITER:*

## A SHORT HISTORY OF RESERVATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Cassian Folsom, OSB

For the purpose of trying to discern major shifts in the theory and practice of the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, the history of the tabernacle can be divided into four sections: the patristic period until Carolingian times, the Carolingian period until the Council of Trent, the Council of Trent to Vatican II, and Vatican II to the present.

**The Patristic Period until Carolingian Times<sup>1</sup>**

The evidence from this early period deals with two kinds of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament: 1) the private reservation of the Eucharist in the homes of the faithful, and 2) the reservation of the Eucharist in the church for the sake of giving Communion to the sick or the dying.<sup>2</sup> In the first category, the homes of the faithful, there is very little information about how or where the Eucharist was reserved, although some sources indicate that it was reverently wrapped in a piece of white linen, or placed in a special chest or contain-

er.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in churches, the Apostolic Constitutions, c.VIII, no.13 indicate that the deacons should bring what was left over of the Eucharistic species consecrated during the Mass to a special room called the *Pastoforio*. In the Oriental churches, this was situated on the south side of the altar. In the West, it had the name *secretarium* or *sacrarium*. The deacon had the keys since the administration of the Eucharist was his special charge. In this room there was a special wardrobe or chest called a *conditorium*. An example of this can be seen in the fifth-century mosaics of the Galla Placidia mausoleum in Ravenna.<sup>4</sup> In pre-Carolingian times, however, there is no evidence for the use of the *altar* as a place for the reservation of the Eucharist.<sup>5</sup>

From the ninth century onward, the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the church becomes the norm, while the practice of keeping the Eucharist in the homes of the faithful disappears. This is one of those fundamental shifts which merits greater attention. Giambattista Rapisarda offers three reasons for such a significant change in Eucharistic practice: 1) the rise of major Eucharistic controversies about the nature of Christ's presence, starting with Paschasius Radbertus (+859) and Ratramnus (+868); 2) the spread of a different spirituality reflected in the new genre of apologetic prayers which manifested enormous respect for the Eucharist and a sense of profound unworthiness before so great a mystery, and 3) the conversion of barbarian peoples en masse with the danger of profanation of the Eucharist on the one hand and superstition on the other.<sup>6</sup>

**The Carolingian Period until the Council of Trent**

The six or seven centuries we are dealing with in this second period contain notable developments in Eucharistic theology and practice. Mention must be made of Berengarius (+1088) and the Eucharistic controversy that raged around him; the de-



*Thirteenth century Eucharistic Dove, Limoges, France*

Photo: The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD

velopment of a new Eucharistic piety manifested in the desire to see the Host, with the resultant introduction of the elevation first of the Host, then of the Chalice at the Consecration of the Mass; the scholastic precisions about transubstantiation; the diffusion of the feast of Corpus Christi; the decline in the reception of Communion, and so on. Some of these factors contribute to new ways of reserving the Eucharist (the Sacrament-towers, for example). At other times, the force of custom results in the retention of more traditional forms. Righetti distinguishes five basic ways of reserving the Blessed Sacrament during this period:<sup>7</sup>

1) *Propitiatorium*: a container or small chest which was placed on the altar; hence a kind of portable tabernacle. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215-1216) prescribed that it should be locked and kept secure. This system was rather widespread in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

2) *Sacristy*: In many places, the Eucharist was kept in the sacristy, in some kind of special chest or cupboard. In many places, this practice continued until the Council of Trent.

3) *Eucharistic dove*: around the



*Conditorium depicted in Ravenna mosaic*

Photo: Holly Hayes, Art History Images, flickr.com

eleventh century: a metal dove (symbolizing the Holy Spirit), hollow, of modest proportions, was suspended over the altar from the ciborium (if there was one), or placed on a small table next to the altar. This system was frequently used in France and England, but rarely in Italy.

4) Wall tabernacles: From the thirteenth century onward this was the system most commonly used, especially in Italy and Germany, because it was more practical and more secure. On the Gospel side of the altar, a tabernacle was built into the wall. A fine example of such a tabernacle can be seen in San Clemente in Rome (thirteenth century). From the seventeenth century onward, with the development of the tabernacle on the altar, these wall tabernacles were then used to reserve the sacred oils.

5) *Sakramentshäuschen* or Sacrament-towers: This was a specialty of northern Europe (Germany, Low Countries, and northern France) from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. It was usually in the shape of a tower, built close to the altar, the consecrated host kept in a glass container protected by a metal grate of some kind. This responded to the popular piety developing at the time: the desire to see the host. These “towers” were actually a kind of monstrance, with a kind of permanent exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. One notes a great deal of variety according to time and place. At this time there is no standard practice for the universal Church.

### The Council of Trent to Vatican II

What changed Catholic practice radically in this third period was the Protestant denial of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the re-

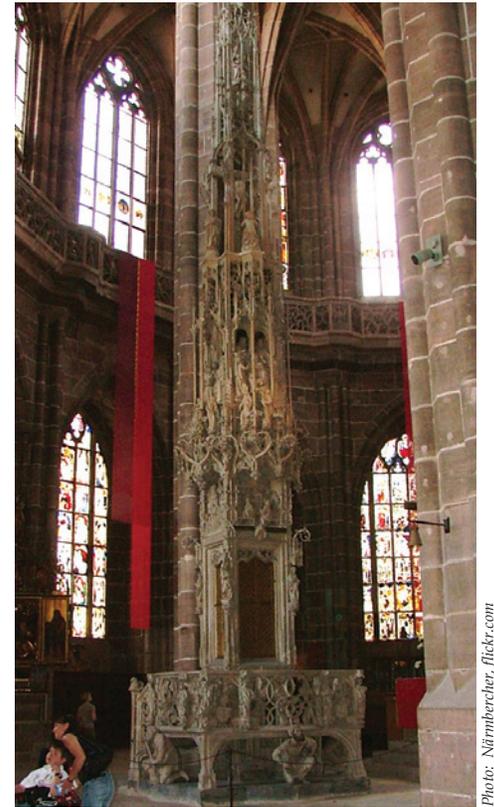


Photo: Nürnberg, flickr.com

*Sakramentshäuschen* by Adam Kraft,  
Lorenzkirche, Nürnberg, 1493  
(now an *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche*)



Photo: Peter Viktor Jurik

The sanctuary at San Clemente, Rome, with a wall tabernacle located at the right side

sponse of the Counter-Reformation to this challenge. While the Council of Trent affirms against the Reformers that the Blessed Sacrament should be reserved,<sup>8</sup> the canon in question is not very specific, mentioning the place of reservation in passing as the *sacrarium*. Popular piety and two bishops will play an important role in establishing a new form of Eucharistic reservation. In the sixteenth century, even before the Council of Trent, Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti of Verona (+1543) ordered that the Eucharist should be reserved in a tabernacle on the main altar: “The tabernacle should be placed on the main altar, and should be installed permanently (*bene et firmiter*) in such a way that it can by no means be carried off by sacrilegious hands.”<sup>9</sup> This eventually caught on in the neighboring diocese of Milan, such that in 1565, at the First Provincial Synod of Milan, it was decreed that: “The bishop should diligently see to it that in the cathedral, in collegiate churches, in parishes and all other kind of churches, where the most holy Eucharist is usually reserved or where it should be reserved, it be placed on the main altar, unless it seems to him otherwise, on account of some necessary



Photo: Antonio Perez Rico

Tabernacle and altar, Duomo of Santa Maria Nascente, Milan, Italy

or serious reason."<sup>10</sup> In 1576, another synod of Milan prohibited wall tabernacles, and ordered their destruction. Saint Charles Borromeo lent his new custom the full weight of his moral and spiritual authority. In the duomo of Milan, he transferred the Blessed Sacrament from the sacristy, where it had been kept up until then, to the main altar of the church. In 1577 Cardinal Borromeo's book *Instructionum Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiae Libri II* was published,<sup>11</sup> a work which was to have enormous influence in shaping church architecture and design in the centuries to come. Concerning the tabernacle he simply argues from authority, without providing any other justification. Since the provincial synod of Milan in 1565 decreed that the tabernacle should be on the main altar, if possible, Saint Charles assumes that this practice will be followed, and gives instructions concerning the materials to be used, style, decorative motifs, measurements, etc. Because the *Rituale Romanum* of 1614 incorporated this practice into its "praenotanda" in the section of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist (Titulus IV, c.1, par.6),<sup>12</sup> the custom of reserving the Blessed Sacrament in a tabernacle on the altar became known as "the Roman custom." The placement on the main altar was not absolute, however, since it was foreseen that another altar might be more worthy or

more suitable. Because the *Rituale* was not obligatory, the "Roman custom" of placing the tabernacle on the main altar spread only gradually, while other European countries maintained their local customs, sometimes for centuries.<sup>13</sup> But the section on the tabernacle of Charles Borromeo's *Instructions* had more influence than perhaps any other section of that work, and by the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, the

altar tabernacle that is found almost everywhere is the tabernacle of Saint Charles Borromeo.<sup>14</sup>

The extremely important shift that took place after the Council of Trent can be explained by a number of factors: 1) the Protestant denial of the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament and the Church's affirmation of her doctrine in the clearest possible way by placing the tabernacle in the center of the high altar; 2) the resultant increase in Eucharistic devotions such as adoration and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; 3) the flourishing of Baroque architecture, especially in Rome, manifesting a larger-than-life enthusiasm and pride in the Catholic faith in the Eucharistic Presence; 4) the standardization of liturgical books (in this case the Roman Ritual) and the gradual standardization of liturgical practice as a result.

### Vatican II to the Present

The fifty years that have elapsed since the Second Vatican Council have been characterized by enormous changes in liturgical theology and practice. The placement of the tabernacle in relation to the altar has been a topic of heated debate. What was normative in the post-Tridentine period has been largely rejected in the post-Vatican II period. While there has been general consensus about where the tabernacle should not be (on the main altar), there has been little consensus about where

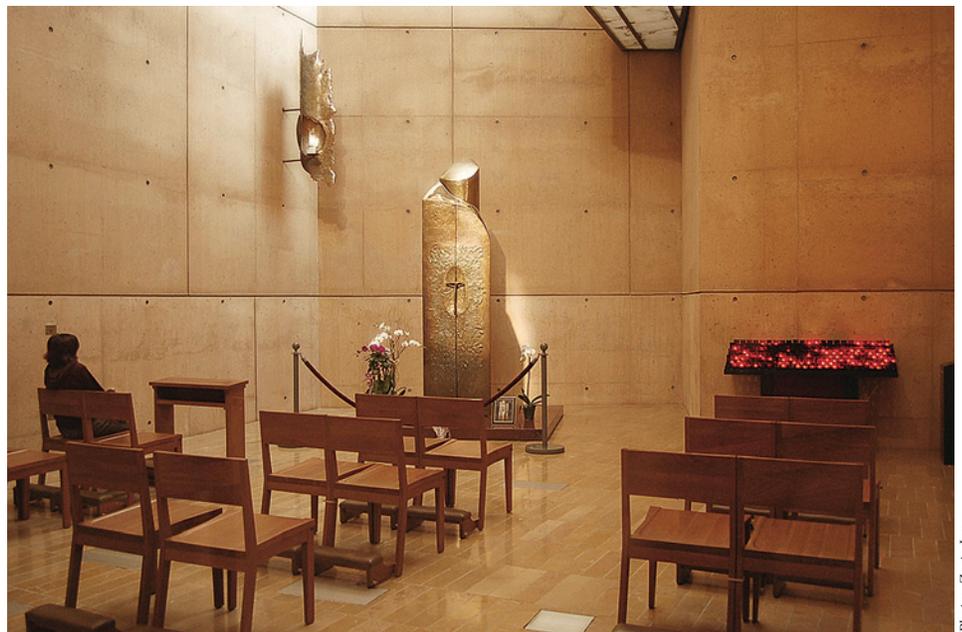


Photo: Zsolt Jones

Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, CA

it should be. Theological disagreement about these issues has led to a rather confusing and sometimes contradictory pastoral practice. These changes will be traced in detail in a subsequent article on Liturgical Norms. (to be published in *Sacred Architecture* 23 Spring 2013)

There were two main reasons for the enormous shift that has taken place. The theological motivation was to restore emphasis on the altar and the Eucharistic action of the Mass, as opposed to the adoration and worship of the reserved Sacrament (a kind of dichotomy between the Eucharist seen as sacrifice and the Eucharist seen as sacrament). The result in practice has been a decline in Eucharistic devotion. The pastoral motivation was to promote active participation by placing the altar *versus populum*. In older churches a common solution has been to place a new altar in front of the old altar, thus creating a certain cognitive dissonance in the worshipper, at least at the subconscious level. The dilemma of where to put the reserved Blessed Sacrament has been frequently resolved by creating a side chapel. While that has been the practice for centuries in great basilicas and cathedrals and is eminently suitable under those conditions, many modern renovations have been less than felicitous, and small and crowded Blessed Sacrament chapels can seem inadequate and even irreverent. The revised General Instructions of the 2002 Roman Missal attempts to resolve some of these dilemmas by proposing a new model.



Born in 1955 in Massachusetts, The Very Rev. Cassian Folsom, O.S.B. has been a monk since 1979 and a priest since 1984. He served as the pro-President of the Pontificio Istituto Liturgico at the Athenaeum of Sant'Anselmo from 1997 to 2000, and is the founding prior of the Monastery of San Benedetto, located in Norcia, Italy, the birthplace of St. Benedict. Father Cassian is also a member of the Society for Catholic Liturgy, and is the author of numerous studies on Roman Catholic liturgy. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI named Father Cassian as a consultor to the Congregation on Divine Worship and the Disciple of the Sacraments. The second part of Very Rev. Folsom's article, Liturgical Norms, will be printed in the Spring 2013 issue of *Sacred Architecture*.

(Endnotes)

1 Cf. H. Leclercq, "Réserve Eucharistique" *DACL* XIV.2 (1948): 2385-2389. For useful insights about the importance of the Carolingian period for Eucharistic development, cf. Adalbert DeVogüé, "Eucharistie dominicale, eucharistie quotidienne," *La Maison-Dieu* 242 (2005/2): 33-44.

2 The First Council of Nicea (325), c.13, refers to the reservation of the Eucharist (in the church) for the sake of viaticum. There are also many hagiographical texts which speak of bringing communion to the sick or dying. For an excellent anthology of patristic texts concerning both reservation in homes (89-94) and in churches (94-97), cf. Giambattista Rapisarda, "La Custodia Eucaristica," in *Gli spazi della celebrazione rituale* (Milan: Edizioni O.R., 1984), 89-108.

3 Mario Righetti, *Storia Liturgica*, Milano, Editrice Ancora, 1964 (edizione anastatica 1998) Vol. 1, 547.

4 Cf. Righetti, 546-547.

5 Joseph Braun, *Der Christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, München, Alte Meister Guenther Koch & Co., 1924, 582.

6 Rapisarda, 96.

7 Cf. Righetti, 549-552. Rapisarda expands on this description (97-100) but for the most part follows Righetti.

8 Session XIII of the Council of Trent, canon 7: "Si quis dixerit, non licere sacram Eucharistiam in sacratio reservari, sed statim post consecrationem adstantibus necessario distribuendam; aut non licere, ut illa ad infirmos honorifice deferatur: ans." (DS 1657).

9 "Tabernaculum super altare magno collocetur, et ita bene et

firmiter stabilietur, ut inde per sacrilegas manus avelli nullo modo possit." Cf. Silverio Mattei, "La custodia eucaristica," in *Eucaristia: Il mistero dell'altare nel pensiero e nella vita della Chiesa*, ed. A. Piolanti (Roma, 1957), 897-906. Citation on p. 902.

10 "Episcopus diligentissime curet, ut in cathedrali, collegiatis, parochialibus et aliis quibusvis ecclesiis, ubi sacrosancta Eucharistia custodiri solet vel debet, in maiore altari collocetur, nisi necessaria vel gravi de causa aliud ei videatur." *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, ed. A. Ratti, vol. II (Milan, 1892), col.46.

11 Charles Borromeo, *Instructionum Fabricae et Suppellectilis Ecclesiasticae Libri II*, Monumenta Studia Instrumenta Liturgica 18 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000). The section on the tabernacle is in Book I, c.13, 37-38.

12 "Hoc autem tabernaculum conopaeo decenter operturn, atque ab omni alia re vacuum, in Altari majori vel in alio, quod venerationi et cultui tanti Sacramenti commodius ac decentius videatur, sit collocatum . . ."

13 Examples of the gradual "conquest" of the Roman custom can be seen in two synodal documents. The Synod of Constance in 1609 allowed the Blessed Sacrament to be conserved "vel in ipso altari, secundum morem romanum, vel in latere sinistri chori prope altare." The Synod of Paderborn in 1688 stated: "Tabernaculum, ubi nondum est, sollicitus sit rector ut id conficitur, quod fiat vel in medio altari, vel in pariete iuxta altare." Citations taken from Silverio Mattei, "La Custodia Eucaristica," 902.

14 Joseph Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, 646-647.

## STEPHEN VAN O'MEARA

Goldsmith . Silversmith . Sculptor



602-277-5868

P.O Box 726, Scottsdale, Arizona 85252

www.OMearaSterling.us . Steve@OMearaSterling.com

*BENE ET FIRMITER:*

## LITURGICAL NORMS REGARDING THE RESERVATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Cassian Folsom, OSB

In this second section on the location of the tabernacle, liturgical norms of various levels of authority will be cited from liturgical books, canon law, papal documents and instructions from dicasteries of the Roman curia. In each case, the document will be cited with its date of publication and a brief commentary given.

1. 1600 *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*, book 1, c. 12

...another similar [faldistorium should be prepared] in front of the altar, or in front of another place where there is the Most Holy Sacrament, which (place) is usually different from the main altar, and from the altar at which the Bishop or someone else is about to celebrate a Solemn Mass. Now although the most excellent place in the church and the most noble of all is most suitable for the sacrosanct Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of all the sacraments, nor are we able with human effort to venerate and adore as much as it deserves and as much as we ought, nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that it not be placed on the main altar or on another altar at which the Bishop or someone else will solemnly celebrate Mass or Vespers, but that it be placed with all decorum and reverence in another chapel or suitable adorned place. Because if it should be found placed on the main altar or on another altar on which the celebration will take place, it must certainly be transferred from that altar to another, lest on that account the rite and order of ceremonies which must be observed in Masses and Offices of this kind be disturbed. This would happen without a doubt if [the Blessed Sacrament] remained there, since neither the incensation of the altar, nor the action of the celebrant, nor the movement of the ministers could be observed or take place properly, for it would be necessary every time we cross before [the Blessed Sacrament] to



High altar from 1609-1668 at Sant' Agostino, Rome

genuflect; nor would it be proper for the celebrant to stand in front of it or sit with his miter on. If it sometimes happens for [these rites] to be celebrated in the presence of a bishop, or by the bishop himself with the Most Holy Sacrament present on the altar – such as on Holy Thursday *in caena Domini*, and Good Friday, and at the Mass which is celebrated on the feast of the Most Holy Corpus Christi before the procession begins – then all the genuflections and reverences must be observed to the letter, and the bishop can never sit or stand without his miter, as it is prescribed in [the rubrics]. And therefore, it is not unbecoming, but rather most becoming if [solemn Masses] are not celebrated on an altar where the Most Holy Sacrament is located,

which we see to have been the custom in antiquity. Or at least, celebrating on such an altar either solemn or simple Masses, the above-mentioned reverence and genuflections must absolutely be observed.<sup>1</sup>

It is useful to cite this text in full, because Godfrey Diekmann refers to it in a 1966 article to argue that Mass should never be celebrated at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. That does not seem to be the intention of the text, however, which can be summarized as follows:

a. Because highest honor must be given to the Blessed Sacrament, including such ritual prescriptions as genuflecting before the reserved Eucharist.

b. It is strongly recommended that solemn liturgical celebrations (especially Episcopal ceremonial) should not be carried out at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

c. If Solemn Mass is celebrated there, all the rubrics about the proper reverence to the Blessed Sacrament are to be observed *ad unguem* (with exactitude).

d. Ancient tradition is cited to support the argument that it is most fitting for Masses not to be celebrated at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

It would be interesting to explore the context of these instructions. Perhaps the new practice of placing the tabernacle on the main altar, supported so enthusiastically by Saint Charles Borromeo, was making inroads, and the Roman document describes a conservative reaction against this innovation. It should be noted, however, that the issue is not less honor to the Blessed Sacrament, but more, since the complex ceremonial actions of Episcopal celebrations would be irreverent if they ignored the presence of the Reserved Sacrament.

## 2. 1614 *Rituale Romanum*, tit. IV, c.1, n.6

“Now this tabernacle, suitably covered with the tabernacle veil (*conopaeo*) and empty of any other thing, should be placed on the main altar, or on another which is seen to be more appropriate and suitable for the veneration and worship of so great a sacrament, in such a way that it presents no obstacle to other sacred functions or ecclesiastical services.”<sup>2</sup>

The *Rituale* seems to be making a compromise: on the one hand, recommending that the tabernacle be placed on the main altar; on the other hand stressing that its placement should not impede other liturgical services in the sense already given in the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* of 1600. Hence the recommendation is for the placement of the tabernacle on the main altar or on some other altar if it seems more worthy for the veneration and worship of so great a Sacrament.

## 3. 1863 Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites

On August 21, 1863, the Sacred Congregation of Rites established that it was not licit to depart from the prescriptions of the *Rituale Romanum* for the reservation of the Eucharist. This would mean that the Blessed Sacrament must be reserved on the main altar or on some other altar; other older forms (such as the Eucharistic dove, the Eucharistic tower, the wall tabernacle) seem to be excluded.<sup>3</sup>

## 4. 1917 *Codex Iuris Canonici* 1265-1269

c.1268 §1: The Most Holy Eucharist may not be continually or habitually reserved unless on one altar only of the same church.

§2: It should be reserved in the most excellent and most noble place of the church and therefore normally on the main altar, unless another [altar] is seen to be more appropriate and more fitting for the veneration and worship of so great a sacrament, maintaining the prescriptions of the liturgical laws which pertain to the last days of Holy Week.

§3: But in cathedral, collegiate, or conventual churches, in which choral functions are carried out at the main altar, lest [this arrangement] present

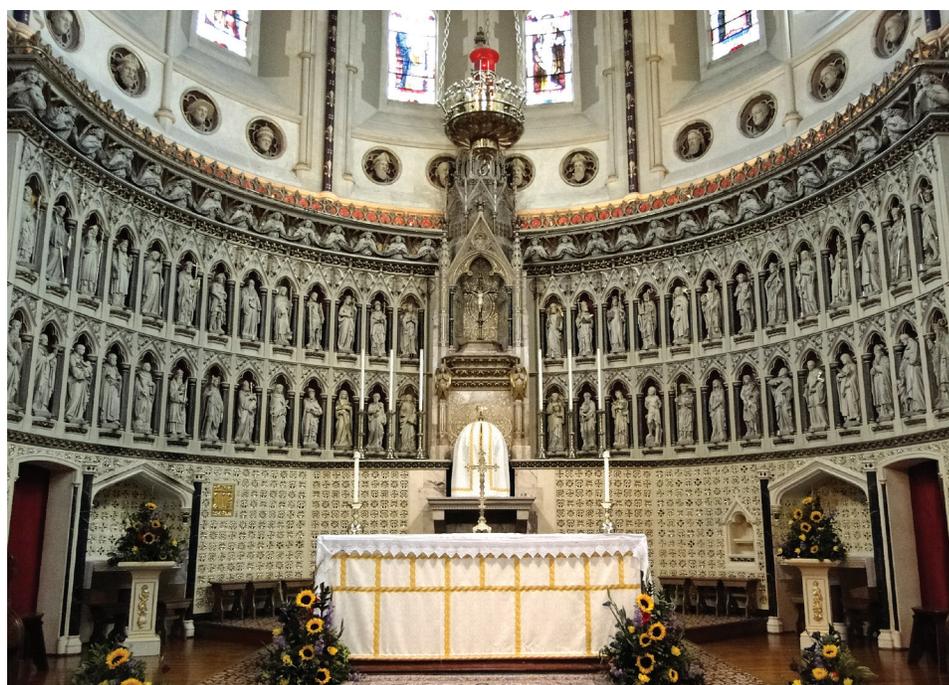
an obstacle to the ecclesiastical offices, it is suitable that the Most Holy Eucharist not be reserved at the main altar, as a rule, but in another chapel or altar.

§4: Let rectors of churches see to it that the altar on which the Most Holy Sacrament is reserved be adorned above all the other altars, in such a way that by its very decor it might more greatly move the piety and devotion of the faithful.

c.1269 §1: The Most Holy Eucharist should be reserved in a fixed tabernacle placed in the center of the altar.<sup>4</sup>

Canon 1268 specifies that the Blessed Sacrament should be located in the most exalted and noble place of the church. That usually means at the main altar, unless it is more fitting for it to be elsewhere. The canon reflects the concern of the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* that in cathedral churches, collegiate churches or conventual churches where functions in choir would impede fitting honor to the Eucharist, it is best that the Blessed Sacrament not be kept habitually (*regulariter*) at the main altar, but rather in a side chapel or at another altar for the sake of greater reverence.

Canon 1269 §1 affirms that the tabernacle must not be reserved in another form than in a tabernacle and on an



Oxford Oratory, 1875 by Joseph Hansom, where Cardinal Newman preached

altar, thus repeating the 1863 directives.

The other canons in this section cover the following areas:

- i. Placement
- ii. Construction
  - a. Security
  - b. Materials
  - c. Exterior form
  - d. Exterior ornamentation
  - e. Interior ornamentation
- iii. The tabernacle in relation to other objects of the altar
  - a. Inside
  - b. Above
  - c. In front of
- iv. *Conopeo* (Tabernacle covering)
  - a. Obligatory
  - b. Type of cloth
  - c. Color

**5. 1938 Sacra Congregatio de Disciplina Sacramentorum, *Instructio de Sanctissima Eucharistia sedulo custodienda*, May 28, 1938: AAS 30 (1938): 198-207**

“At no time whatsoever has the Apostolic See omitted to recommend to local Ordinaries the protectiveness and caution with which the Most Holy Eucharist, which is reserved in our churches either by common law or by indult, should be diligently safeguarded, lest it should remain in danger of any profanation.”<sup>5</sup>

This instruction is a commentary on the 1917 code, with the goal of promoting a more exact observance of the canons. Once again, it would be interesting to explore the context, for an instruction is necessary only when something is not being done. The main preoccupation seems to be the theft of sacred vessels and the profanation of the Blessed Sacrament, hence the emphasis on the construction of the tabernacle and the necessity for guarding it with the greatest care. This document is cited in a footnote to paragraph 317 of the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* 2002.

**6. 1956 Pope Pius XII, discourse to the participants of an international liturgy conference at Assisi (Sept. 22, 1956)**

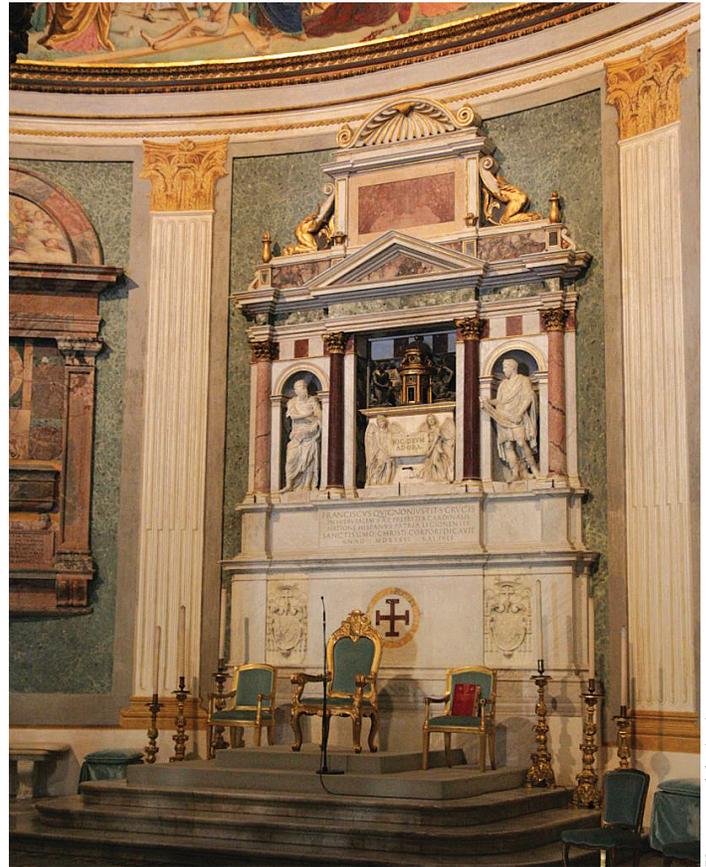
“The issue is not so much the material presence of the tabernacle on the altar, as a tendency to which we would like to call your attention: that of a lesser appreciation for the

presence and the action of Christ in the tabernacle. We content ourselves with the sacrifice of the altar, and we diminish the importance of Him who accomplishes it... The way in which one could place the tabernacle on the altar without impeding the celebration facing the people is subject to different solutions, about which the specialists will give their judgment. The essential thing is to have understood that on the altar and in the tabernacle the same Lord is present.”<sup>6</sup>

Pius XII discerns in the liturgical movement certain trends that alarm him, in particular, a kind of divorce between the presence of Christ in the liturgical action and the presence of Christ in the reserved Sacrament. This theological dilemma could be summarized perhaps as the tension between sacrifice and sacrament, left unresolved by the Council of Trent. This problem will flare up again and again in subsequent years. The immediate issue, however, seems to be the practical problems that arise with the use of a free-standing altar *versus populum*. What to do with the tabernacle in such a case? Since liturgical law prescribed that the tabernacle must be on the altar, the liturgists found themselves in a quandary.

**7. 1957 Sacra Congregatio Rituum, *Decretum de Tabernaculo ad Sanctissimam Eucharistiam abservandam*, AAS 49 (1957): 425-426**

1. The norms established by the Code of Canon Law concerning the reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist (cc. 1268, 1269) are to be observed devoutly and religiously,



Wall tabernacle at the Basilica of Santa Croce, Rome, 1536 by Jacopo Sansovino

nor should local Ordinaries neglect to exercise vigilance over this matter.

2. What is more, the tabernacle must be firmly joined to the altar, such that it is immovable. Normally it should be placed on the main altar, unless another altar is seen as more fitting and more suitable for the veneration and worship of so great a sacrament. This situation ordinarily arises in cathedral, collegiate or conventual churches, in which choral functions are usually carried out, or sometimes in major sanctuaries, lest – on account of the special devotion of the faithful to some object of veneration – the highest worship of *latria* due to the Most Blessed Sacrament be obscured.

3. On the altar where the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved, the sacrifice of the Mass should be habitually celebrated.

4. In churches where there is a single altar, this should not be so constructed that the priest celebrates

*versus populum*, but the tabernacle should be placed on the same altar, in the middle, for the reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist, [a tabernacle] constructed according to the norm of liturgical laws, in its form and dimension completely worthy of so great a sacrament.

5. Eucharistic tabernacles placed outside the altar itself are strictly prohibited: for example, in the wall, or on the side, or behind the altar, or in a tower or column separated from the altar.<sup>7</sup>

This follows up on the discourse of Pope Pius XII in Assisi had as its purpose “*ad praecavendos vero abusus, et ut omnia secundum ordinem fierent.*”<sup>8</sup> It repeats the prescriptions of CIC 1917. To the list of those churches where it is best that the Blessed Sacrament not be on the main altar, the 1957 instruction adds pilgrimage churches or shrines where relics or sacred images on the main altar might detract attention from the Blessed Sacrament. The decree prohibits the placement of the tabernacle anywhere else but on an altar (although it can be on an altar different from the high altar) contrary to other practices of the past, and explicitly denies the possibility of an altar *versus populum* without the tabernacle if there is but one altar in the church. To those who were hoping for a loosening of the liturgical law in question, the decree came as a great disappointment.<sup>9</sup>

**8. 1963 Sacrosanctum Concilium, Dec. 4, 1963: AAS 56 (1964): 97-138**

128: Along with the revision of the liturgical books, as laid down in Article 25, there is to be an early revision of the canons and ecclesiastical statutes which govern the disposition of material things involved in sacred worship. These laws refer especially to the worthy and well-planned construction of sacred buildings, the shape and construction of altars, the nobility, location, and security of the Eucharistic tabernacle, the suitability and dignity of the baptistery, the proper use of sacred images, embellishments, and vestments. Laws which seem less suited to the reformed liturgy are to be brought into harmony with it, or else abolished; and any which are

helpful are to be retained if already in use, and introduced where they are lacking.<sup>10</sup>

While the conciliar text includes the legislation about the tabernacle as something to be reexamined, it does not give any directives as to what specific direction to take. The broad sweep of paragraph 128, however, gives the green light to significant change.

**9. 1964 Inter Oecumenici, Sept. 26, 1964: AAS 56 (1964): 877-900**

95. The Eucharist is to be reserved in a solid and secure tabernacle, placed in the middle of the main altar or on a minor, but truly worthy altar, or, in accord with lawful custom and in particular cases approved by the local Ordinary, also in another, special, and properly adorned part of the church. It is lawful to celebrate Mass facing the people even on an altar where there is a small but becoming tabernacle.<sup>11</sup>

This paragraph on the tabernacle is from chapter 5 of *Inter Oecumenici*, on the construction of churches and altars to facilitate the active participation of the faithful. The context, then, expresses one of the key motives behind the major changes soon to take place: active participation. The options given here lift the restrictions of the 1957 Instruction, which limited the placement of tabernacles to an altar. This text will be interpreted by the reformers as a radical change. Biffi refers to the new emphasis on the altar as the center of the liturgical celebration: this is the theological motivation behind these changes.<sup>12</sup>

**10. 1965 Dubia concerning Inter Oecumenici: Notitiae 5 (May 1965)**

Ad n.92 (9): Some priests think that the best place for the celebrant and ministers is behind, in the apse; but lest the altar hide them, they say the chair should be placed higher by at least three steps, so that the people can see them, and so that it is clear that the celebrant is truly presiding. Can this opinion be maintained, especially if in the same apse the throne for exposing the Most Holy Eucharist is placed?

Resp: In response to the first part, affirmative, according to

*Instructionem* 92. In response to the second part, if the tabernacle is in the apse, or if the throne for exposing the Most Holy Eucharist is placed there, the presidential chair should be placed to the side of the altar, somewhat elevated.<sup>13</sup>

Various *dubia* were submitted about the Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, and the *Consilium ad exsequendam* responded in its journal *Notitiae*, stressing that the solutions proposed were not official and had only “*valorem orientativum.*” Permission was given for a portable altar to be placed in front of the former high altar, so as to allow the celebration of Mass *versus populum*. Questions were raised about the place of the celebrant’s chair in relation to altar and tabernacle.

Ad n.95 (10): When Mass is celebrated on an altar placed between the main altar and the people, can the Most Holy Eucharist be reserved on the main altar, even if the celebrant turns his back on the Most Holy Eucharist?

Resp: Affirmative, as long as a) there is truly significant space intervening between the two altars and b) the tabernacle on the main altar is placed at such a height that it is above the head of the celebrant who stands at the foot of the intermediary altar.<sup>14</sup>

Given the possibility of a double altar with Mass celebrated facing the people, the question arises about disrespect if the priest has his back to the Blessed Sacrament reserved on the former high altar. The *dubium* is addressed by talking about distance and height, but in actual practice, these qualifications were often not taken into consideration.

(11) Whether the tabernacle can be placed on the left side of the altar *versus populum*, and on the other side the cross of the book of Sacred Scripture?

Resp: Negative. One should rather pay attention to art. 95 of the Instruction, according to which “in special cases approved by the local ordinary” the tabernacle can be placed “also in another part of the church which is truly noble and properly adorned,” for example on

the right side of the sanctuary or in the apse.<sup>15</sup>

One sees here the danger of setting up parallel foci of attention whereby the reserved Sacrament gets the same treatment as the cross or the Bible. Wide latitude is given as to the placement of the tabernacle.

**11. 1965 “Le renouveau liturgique”:** Letter of Card. Lercaro to presidents of the conferences of bishops, June 30, 1965: *Notitiae* 1 (1965): 257-264

7. An issue closely linked to that of the altar is the tabernacle. We can hardly give here prescriptions of a general and uniform character. An attentive study needs to be made in each case, with due attention to the material and spiritual circumstances proper to each place.

Artists will little by little suggest the best solution. But it is the business of priests to advise them and call attention to the principles that must safeguard the respect and honor due to the Eucharist. It is important to contribute to the development of Eucharistic worship, which should continue under all those genuine forms recognized by the Church as embodying true Christian piety.

Particularly in larger churches, a chapel specially set aside for the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist is advisable and might well be used for the Eucharistic celebration during the week, when there are fewer of the faithful participating.

Whatever the solution chosen from among those recommended by the Instruction (*Inter Oecumenici*) n.95, the greatest care should be devoted to the dignity of the tabernacle. If the local Ordinary agrees to its location away from the altar, the place should be truly worthy and prominent, so that the tabernacle is readily visible and is not hidden by the priest during the celebration of the Mass. In a word, the location should make it possible for the tabernacle to serve unmistakably as a sign and to give a sense of the Savior’s presence in the midst of his people.

It is therefore pertinent to take note of solutions sometimes proposed or already in effect that *do not seem really to achieve a satisfactory result*. They would include the following: tabernacles permanently inserted into the altar table or retracted automatically at the time of celebration; tabernacles placed in front of the altar, sometimes on a slightly lower pedestal, sometimes on another altar at a lower level and used in conjunction with the altar of celebration; finally, tabernacles built into the wall of the apse or those placed upon an already existing altar having the celebrant’s chair in front of or below it.<sup>16</sup>

Cardinal Lercaro’s letter to presidents of the conferences of bishops is an elaboration on *Inter Oecumenici*. Section #7 on the tabernacle is immediately preceded by a paragraph on the altar, in which he says, among other things: “[the desire for celebration of Mass *versus populum*] must not lead to the rash, often mindless rearrangement of existing churches and altars at the cost of more or less irreparable damage to other values, also calling for respect.”

In terms of the tabernacle, Lercaro does not pretend to establish universal norms, although he clearly favors a side chapel. He stresses the nobility of the tabernacle and clearly describes various unsatisfactory solutions which had come to his attention. Some of those unsatisfactory solutions, thought

to be temporary in 1965, have lasted forty-five years, and are still in place today.

**12. 1965 *Dubia* concerning *Inter Oecumenici*: *Notitiae* 7-8 (July-August 1965)**

ad n.95 (63): Whether, if the main altar is constructed *versus populum*, the Most Holy Eucharist, according to the mind of the Constitution and n.95 of the Instruction, should be reserved on a minor altar distinct from the main altar?

Resp: Affirmative.<sup>17</sup>

Once the custom was established of celebrating Mass *versus populum*, the preference is clearly given to reserving the Blessed Sacrament on a different altar.

**13. 1965 Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, September 3, 1965: AAS 57 (1965): 753-774**

“Moreover let them not neglect making a visit to the Most Holy Sacrament during the day, reserved in the most noble and most honorable place in the churches, according to the liturgical laws, inasmuch as [such a visit], for the sake of Christ the Lord, present in the [Blessed Sacrament] is an increase of the grace of the soul, a pledge of love and the duty of adoration we owe Him.”<sup>18</sup>



*The Blessed Sacrament is reserved at a side altar in this 1960s example.*

In his Encyclical Letter, Pope Paul VI responds to increasing confusion about the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. He mentions the tabernacle only in passing and in a generic way, referring the reader to the liturgical legislation then in force.

**14. 1966 "L'heureux développement": Letter of Card. Lercaro to presidents of the conferences of bishops, January 25, 1965: *Notitiae* 2 (1966): 157-161**

6. Altars *versus populum* and tabernacles

"I have already spoken about this in my letter of 30 June 1965, but by your leave I intend to return briefly to the same subject.

The altar *versus populum* certainly makes for a celebration of the Eucharist which is truer and more communal; it also makes participation easier. Here too, however, prudence should be our guide. Above all because for a living and participated liturgy, it is not indispensable that the altar should be *versus populum*: in the Mass, the entire liturgy of the word is celebrated at the chair, ambo or lectern, and therefore, facing the assembly; as to the Eucharistic liturgy, loudspeaker systems make participation feasible enough. Secondly, hard thought should be given to the artistic and architectural question, this element in many places being protected by rigorous civil laws. It should not be forgotten that many other factors, on the part of the celebrant and on the part of the ministers and surroundings, are required to make the celebration genuinely worthy and meaningful.

Provisional altars, constructed in front of the main altars for celebration *versus populum*, should gradually disappear, giving way to a more permanent arrangement of the place of sacrifice.

In making these necessary arrangements regarding the altar where Mass is normally celebrated on Sundays and feast days, special care should be taken concerning the positioning of the tabernacle, giving it a place completely worthy of it according to the indications

and norms already given by this Consilium. In each and every case where it is intended to put the tabernacle in a place other than on the altar, the Ordinary must judge whether or not all requirements are met in the alternative proposal. It is therefore excluded that a decision of this nature be left to the liturgical commissions, national or diocesan, and even less to individual priests."<sup>19</sup>

Seven months after his previous letter to the presidents of the conferences of bishops, Cardinal Lercaro addressed various new questions that had arisen. The construction of altars *versus populum* represents one model of liturgical theology, the post-Tridentine practice of placing the tabernacle on the main altar represents another. Trying to reconcile these two models will prove to be an intractable problem. The Cardinal seems to be trying to stem a tide of unrestrained liturgical innovation taking place without any episcopal control.

**15. 1967 *Eucharisticum Mysterium, Sacra Congregatio Rituum*, May 25, 1967: AAS 59 (1967): 539-573; *Notitiae* 3 (1967): 225-260**

After the publication of Pope Paul VI's encyclical on the Eucharist, *Mysterium Fidei*, it was the task of the Sacred Congregation of Rites to issue concrete directives for its implementation. This is the fundamental text that later documents will frequently cite in regard to the tabernacle.

THE TABERNACLE

52. Where the Eucharist is allowed to be reserved in keeping with the provisions of law, only one altar or location in the same church may be the permanent, that is, regular place of reservation. As a general rule, therefore, there is to be but one tabernacle in each church and it is to be solid and absolutely secure.

CHAPEL OF RESERVATION

53. The place in a church or oratory where the Eucharist is reserved in a tabernacle should be truly a place of honor. It should also be suited to private prayer so that the faithful may readily and to their advantage continue to honor the Lord in this

sacrament by private worship. Therefore, it is recommended that as far as possible the tabernacle be placed in a chapel set apart from the main body of the church, especially in churches where there frequently are marriages and funerals and in places that, because of their artistic or historical treasures, are visited by many people.

The preference for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in a side chapel, stated by Cardinal Lercaro in "*Le renouveau liturgique*," is here reiterated.

TABERNACLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ALTAR OR IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CHURCH

54. The Eucharist is to be reserved in a solid and secure tabernacle, placed in the middle of the main altar or on a minor, but truly worthy altar, or else, depending on lawful custom and in particular cases approved by the local Ordinary, in another, special, and properly adorned part of the church.

It is also lawful to celebrate Mass facing the people even on an altar where there is a small but becoming tabernacle.

TABERNACLE ON AN ALTAR WHERE MASS IS CELEBRATED WITH A CONGREGATION

55. In the celebration of Mass the principal modes of Christ's presence to his Church emerge clearly one after the other: first he is seen to be present in the assembly of the faithful gathered in his name; then in his word, with the reading and explanation of Scripture; also in the person of the minister; finally, in a singular way under the Eucharistic elements. Consequently, on the grounds of the sign value, it is more in keeping with the nature of the celebration that, through reservation of the sacrament in the tabernacle, Christ not be present eucharistically from the beginning on the altar where Mass is celebrated. That presence is the effect of the consecration and should appear as such.

The question of the various presences of Christ (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7) is the theological issue behind this

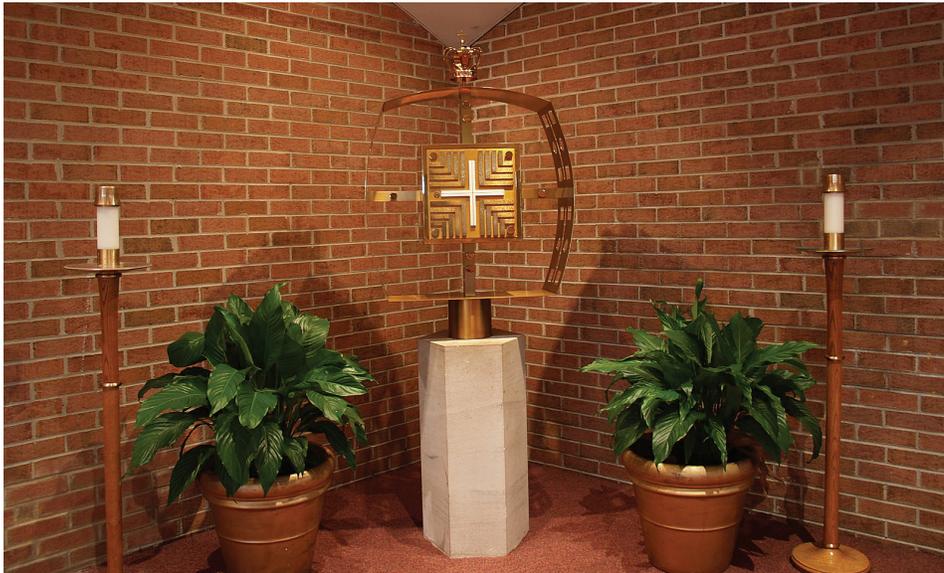


Photo: sojournslouis.blogspot.com

*The Blessed Sacrament reserved in a private chapel at a parish in Virginia*

paragraph. The notion of “sign value” is mentioned here for the first time.

#### THE TABERNACLE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CHURCHES AND IN THE REMODELING OF EXISTING CHURCHES AND ALTARS

56. It is fitting that the principles stated in nos. 52 and 54 be taken into account in the building of new churches. Remodeling of already existing churches and altars must be carried out in exact compliance with no.24 of this Instruction.

Paragraph 24 of the Instruction stressed, among other things, that “care should be taken against destroying treasures of sacred art in the course of remodeling churches. On the judgment of the local Ordinary, after consulting experts and, when applicable, with the consent of other concerned parties, the decision may be made to relocate some of these treasures in the interest of the liturgical reform. In such a case this should be done with good sense and in such a way that even in their new locations they will be set up in a manner befitting and worthy of the works themselves.

#### MEANS OF INDICATING THE PRESENCE OF BLESSED SACRAMENT IN THE TABERNACLE

57. Care should be taken that the faithful be made aware

of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle by the use of a veil or some other effective means prescribed by the competent authority. According to the traditional practice, a lamp should burn continuously near the tabernacle as a sign of the honor shown to the Lord.<sup>20</sup>

#### 16. 1970 IGMR, *Missale Romanum*, March 26, 1970

##### RESERVATION OF THE EUCHARIST

276. It is highly recommended that the holy Eucharist be reserved in a chapel suitable for private adoration and prayer. If this is impossible because of the structure of the church or local custom, it should be kept on an altar or other place in the church that is prominent and properly decorated.

277. The Eucharist is to be kept in a solid, unbreakable tabernacle, and ordinarily there should be only one tabernacle in a church.<sup>21</sup>

The 1970 General Instructions clearly prefer the placement of the Blessed Sacrament in a side chapel, while leaving other options open.

#### 17. 1973 *De Sacra Communionem et De Cultu Mysterii Eucharistici extra Missam*, (June 21, 1973)

##### II. Purpose of Eucharistic Reservation

5. The primary and original reason for reservation of the Eucharist outside Mass is the administration of viaticum. The secondary ends are the giving of communion and the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ present in the sacrament. The reservation of the sacrament for the sick led to the praiseworthy practice of adoring this heavenly food which is reserved in churches. This cult of adoration has a sound and firm foundation, especially since faith in the real presence of the Lord has as its natural consequence the outward, public manifestation of that belief (cf. *Eucharisticum mysterium*, 49).

6. In the celebration of Mass the chief ways in which Christ is present in his Church emerge clearly one after the other. First, he is present in the very assembly of the faithful, gathered together in his name, next, he is present in his word, with the reading and explanation of Scripture in the church, also in the person of the minister; finally, and above all, in the Eucharistic elements. In a way that is completely unique, the whole and entire Christ, God and man, is substantially and permanently present in the sacrament. This presence of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine “is called real, not to exclude the other kinds of presence as though they were not real, but because it is real par excellence” (*Mysterium fidei*, 39). Consequently, on the grounds of the sign value, it is more in keeping with the nature of the celebration that, through reservation of the sacrament in the tabernacle, Christ not be present eucharistically from the beginning on the altar where Mass is celebrated. That presence is the effect of the consecration and should appear as such.

7. The consecrated hosts are to be frequently renewed and reserved in a ciborium or other vessel, in a number sufficient for the communion of the sick and of others outside Mass.

8. Pastors should see that churches and public oratories where, in conformity with the law, the holy Eucharist is reserved, are open every day for a least several hours, at a convenient time, so that the faithful

may easily pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

### III. Place of Eucharistic Reservation

9. The place for the reservation of the Eucharist should be truly preeminent. It is highly recommended that the place be suitable also for private adoration and prayer so that the faithful may readily and fruitfully continue to honor the Lord, present in the sacrament, through personal worship. This will be achieved more easily if the chapel is separate from the body of the church, especially in churches where marriages and funerals are celebrated frequently and in churches where there are many visitors because of pilgrimages or the artistic and historical treasures.

10. The holy Eucharist is to be reserved in a solid tabernacle. It must be opaque and unbreakable. Ordinarily there should be only one tabernacle in a church; this may be placed on an altar or if not on an altar, at the discretion of the local Ordinary, in some other noble and properly ornamented part of the church. The key to the tabernacle where the Eucharist is reserved must be kept most carefully by the priest in charge of the church or oratory or by a special minister who has received the faculty to give communion.

11. 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. According to traditional usage, an oil lamp or lamp with a wax candle is to burn constantly near the tabernacle as a sign of the honor shown to the Lord.<sup>22</sup>

This document is a useful summary of the theological discussion about the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. It repeats many earlier documents, especially *Eucharisticum Mysterium* of 1967.

### 18. 1977 *Ordo Dedicacionis Ecclesiae et Altaris* (May 29, 1977)

#### INAUGURATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL

79. The inauguration of a chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is to be

reserved, is carried out appropriately in this way...

81. When the procession comes to the chapel of reservation, the bishop places the pyx on the altar or in the tabernacle, the door of which remains open. Then he puts incense in the censer, kneels, and incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Finally, after a brief period during which all pray in silence, the deacon puts the pyx in the tabernacle or closes the door. A minister lights the lamp, which will burn perpetually before the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>23</sup>

The Ordo presupposes that there will be a Blessed Sacrament chapel. No other option is described in the rite.

### 19. 1980 *Inaestimabile Donum*, April 17, 1980; AAS 72 (1980): 331-343

24. The tabernacle in which the Eucharist is kept can be located on an altar, or away from it, in a spot in the church which is very prominent, truly noble and duly decorated, or in a chapel suitable for private prayer and for adoration by the faithful.

25. The tabernacle should be solid, unbreakable, and not transparent. The presence of the Eucharist is to be indicated by a tabernacle veil or by some other suitable means laid down by the competent authority, and a lamp must perpetually burn before it, as a sign of honor paid to the Lord.

26. The venerable practice of genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament, whether enclosed in the tabernacle or publicly exposed, as a sign of adoration, is to be *maintained* (cf. *De Sacra Communionem*, n.84). This act requires that it be performed in a recollected way. In order that the heart may bow before God in profound reverence, the genuflection must be neither hurried nor careless.<sup>24</sup>

By the time Pope John Paul II was elected, Eucharistic piety had fallen on hard times. He moved right away to try to correct the situation in his letter *Dominicae Cena* (Feb. 24, 1980). *Inaestimabile Donum* is the instruction from the Congregation issued to follow up on the Holy Father's letter. The explicit

mention of reverence and genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament seems to reflect the deep Eucharistic piety of Pope John Paul II. It is extremely interesting to note that the order of preference for the placement of the tabernacle has changed here. In the first place, the body of the church is mentioned; either on an altar or not on an altar. In the second place, the possibility of a side chapel is given.

### 20. 1983 *Codex Iuris Canonici*, cc. 934-944, especially c.938

938 §1: The blessed Eucharist is to be reserved habitually in only one tabernacle of a church or oratory.

938 §2: The tabernacle in which the blessed Eucharist is reserved should be situated in a distinguished place in the church or oratory, a place which is conspicuous, suitably adorned and conducive to prayer.

938 §3: The tabernacle in which the blessed Eucharist is habitually reserved is to be immovable, made of solid and non-transparent material, and so locked as to give the greatest security against any danger of profanation.<sup>25</sup>

The indications are extremely generic. It appears that the Code did not wish to take a position concerning the placement of the tabernacle, and hence is content to stress that the place must be truly worthy.

### 21. 1984 *De Benedictionibus* 919-929

#### III. Order for the Blessing of a New Tabernacle

1192: The tabernacle for Eucharistic reservation is a reminder of Christ's presence that comes about in the sacrifice of the Mass. But it is also a reminder of the brothers and sisters we must cherish in charity, since it was in fulfillment of the sacramental ministry received from Christ that the Church first began to reserve the Eucharist for the sake of the sick and the dying. In our churches adoration has always been offered to the reserved sacrament, the bread which came down from heaven.<sup>26</sup>

The description of the blessing of a new tabernacle says nothing about its

placement, although the rite offers two options: a procession from the main altar to some other place where the tabernacle is (1197 American edition, 923 typical edition), or a blessing without a procession, which would seem to indicate that the tabernacle is in the sanctuary (1200 American edition, 927 typical edition).

## 22. 2002 IGMR, *Missale Romanum: Editio Typica Tertia*

314: 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, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer. The tabernacle should usually be the only one, be irremovable, be made of solid and inviolable material that is not transparent, and be locked in such a way that the danger of profanation is prevented to the greatest extent possible. Moreover, it is appropriate that before it is put into liturgical use, the tabernacle be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual.

315: It is more appropriate as a sign that on an altar on which Mass is celebrated there not be a tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved. Consequently, 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 an appropriate form and place, not excluding its being positioned on an old altar no longer used for celebration; b) or even in some chapel suitable for the private adoration and prayer of the faithful and organically connected to the church and readily noticeable by the Christian faithful.

316: In accordance with traditional custom, near the tabernacle a special lamp, fueled by oil or wax, should shine permanently to indicate the presence of Christ and honor it.

317: In no way should any of the other things be forgotten which are prescribed by law concerning the reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist.<sup>27</sup>



*Freestanding altar positioned in front of an old high altar and tabernacle at Saint John the Apostle Church, Leesburg, VA, 2012*

While citing the usual documents which have established theological motives and pastoral precedent, the General Instructions of 2002 introduce a significant innovation. The first choice for the placement of the tabernacle is in the sanctuary, although not on the altar of celebration. The second choice is for a private chapel, with the specification that it must be physically joined to the church and clearly visible to the faithful. This establishes a new model, thus attempting to resolve the tensions between the post-Tridentine discipline and the post-Vatican II rush to a private chapel, with the ensuing confusion. However, with typical Roman prudence, it is the diocesan bishop who decides.

## 23. 2004 *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (March 25, 2004)

130. "According to the structure of each church building and in accordance with legitimate local customs, the Most Holy Sacrament is to be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is noble, prominent, readily visible, and adorned in a dignified manner" and furthermore "suitable for prayer" by reason of the quietness of the location, the space available in front of the tabernacle, and also

the supply of benches or seats and kneelers. In addition, diligent attention should be paid to all the prescriptions of the liturgical books and to the norm of law, especially as regards the avoidance of the danger of profanation.<sup>28</sup>

The context is a long chapter entitled: "The Reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist and Eucharistic Worship outside Mass," in which devotions are highly recommended and abuses are reproved.

In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the papal document preceding this curial document, Pope John Paul warmly encouraged worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass. In section 49 of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, which deals with outward forms contributing to the dignity of the celebration, it says: "The designs of altars and tabernacles within Church interiors were often not simply motivated by artistic inspiration but also by a clear understanding of the mystery." The Congregation for Divine Worship issued *Redemptionis Sacramentum* in order to implement the Holy Father's directives. The discussion on the tabernacle is very general. One of the concerns seems to be to insure that wherever the placement of the tabernacle might be, there be sufficient space for people to pray.

## 24. 2007 *Sacramentum Caritatis*

69. In considering the importance of Eucharistic reservation and adoration, and reverence for the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice, the Synod of Bishops also discussed the question of the proper placement of the tabernacle in our churches. The correct positioning of the tabernacle contributes to the recognition of Christ's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, the place where the Eucharistic species are reserved, marked by a sanctuary lamp, should be readily visible to everyone entering the church. It is therefore necessary to take into account the building's architecture: in churches which do not have a Blessed Sacrament chapel, and where the high altar with its tabernacle is still in place, it is appropriate to continue to use this structure for the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist, taking care not to place the celebrant's chair in front of it. In

new churches, it is good to position the Blessed Sacrament chapel close to the sanctuary; where this is not possible, it is preferable to locate the tabernacle in the sanctuary, in a sufficiently elevated place, at the center of the apse area, or in another place where it will be equally conspicuous. Attention to these considerations will lend dignity to the tabernacle, which must always be cared for, also from an artistic standpoint. Obviously it is necessary to follow the provisions of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* in this regard. In any event, final judgment on these matters belongs to the Diocesan Bishop.<sup>29</sup>

This text tries to take into account the difference of church architecture. In older churches where there is a high altar with its tabernacle, two options are mentioned: a) continuing to use the high altar (as long as the celebrant's chair is not in front of it) and b) using a Blessed Sacrament chapel. In churches of more recent construction, there are two options as well: a) a Blessed Sacrament chapel near the sanctuary, and b) a tabernacle in the sanctuary, preferably in the center of the apse. The order in which these options are listed seems to give preference to a separate Blessed Sacrament chapel, whereas the order given in the IGMR 2002 seems to give preference to the sanctuary.

After surveying twenty-four documents from 1600 to 2007, we are in a position to summarize our results. Leaving theological and pastoral issues for the conclusion of this work, here we wish to simply focus on the question of the placement of the tabernacle. There are three models, consecutive in time: a) 1600-1964, b) 1965-2002, and c) 2002 to the present. Each model contains more than one way of doing things; the important thing is to take note of the order of preference. In addition, each of the three models stresses the general principle that the tabernacle should be placed in the most preeminent and worthy part of the church. The following schema enables one to see at a glance the different models envisaged by different documents.

#### A. 1600-1964

\* The most prominent and the most noble place of all CE 1600, CIC 1917

1. Main altar (*regulariter*). RR 1614, 1863, CIC 1917, 1957, *Inter Oec* 1964

2. Another altar, *commodius ac decentius venerationi et cultui tanti sacramenti* RR 1614, 1863, CIC 1917, 1957, *Inter Oec* 1964

3. Side chapel (*sacellum*)

+ cathedral church (because of ceremonial) CE 1600, CIC 1917, 1957

+ collegiate church (because of ceremonial) CIC 1917, 1957

+ conventual church (because of ceremonial) CIC 1917, 1957

+ pilgrimage churches (because of relics or other objects of devotion) 1957

#### B. 1965-2002

\* In a most noble place, and safeguarded with the greatest honor possible. MF 1965, EM 1967, IGMR 1970, *DeSacCom* 1973, CIC 1983

1. Side chapel. *LeRen* 1965, EM 1967, IGMR 1970, *DeSacCom* 1973, ODC 1977  
+ because of marriages, funerals, artistic works, EM 1967, *DeSacCom* 1973

+ because of pilgrimages. *DeSacCom* 1973

2. Minor altar. *Dubia* 1965, EM 1967, IGMR 1970

3. Main altar. EM 1967

4. Extra altar. *L'heureux* 1965, EM 1967, IGMR 1970

N.B. *Inaestimabile Donum* is somewhat out of character in that the order of preference is changed: first the altar, then a side chapel.

#### C. 2002 to the present

\* In a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer. IGMR 2002, RS 2004

1. Sanctuary  
+ outside the altar of celebration. IGMR 2002

+ In the center of the apse. *SacCar* 2007

+ In older churches, the high altar with its tabernacle still in place. *SacCar* 2007

2. Side chapel. I G M R 2 0 0 2 , *SacCar* 2007 (N.B. *Sacramentum Caritatis* lists first a Blessed Sacrament chapel, then the sanctuary).

## Conclusion

As this historical and liturgical survey has demonstrated, the praxis of reserving the Blessed Sacrament has changed throughout the centuries, depending on various factors external and internal to the life of the Church. The most recent changes, after the Second Vatican Council, have been caused by shifts in the Church's self-understanding. When all is said and done, the results have been rather mixed. This can be seen clearly by referring to the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the October 2005 Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist:

...the positioning of the tabernacle in an easily seen place is another way of attesting to faith in Christ's Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. In this regard, the responses to the *Lineamenta* request that significant thought be given to the proper location of the tabernacle in churches, with due attention to canonical norms. It is worth considering whether the removal of the tabernacle from the centre of the sanctuary to an obscure,



Transept side altar at San Carlo al Corso, Rome



A marble freestanding altar with the tabernacle in the apse behind, Saint John Neumann Catholic Church, Farragut, TN, 2009

as the pro-President of the Pontificio Istituto Liturgico at the Athenaeum of Sant'Anselmo from 1997 to 2000, and is the founding prior of the Monastery of San Benedetto, located in Norcia, Italy, the birthplace of St. Benedict. Father Cassian is also a member of the Society for Catholic Liturgy, and is the author of numerous studies on Roman Catholic liturgy. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI named Father Cassian as a consultant to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

(Endnotes)

- 1 "...Aliud [faldistorium] simile ante altare, seu alium locum, ubi est sanctissimum Sacramentum. Quid diversum esse solet ab altari maiore, et ab eo, in quo Episcopus, vel alius est Missam solemnem celebraturus. Nam licet sacrosancto Domini nostri Iesu Christi corpori, omnium Sacramentorum fonti, praecellentissimum, ac nobilissimum omnium locus in Ecclesia conveniat, neque humanis viribus tantum illud venerari, et colere unquam valemus, quantum decet, tenemurque; tamen valde opportunum est, ut illud non collocetur in maiori, vel in alio altari, in quo Episcopus, vel alius solemniter est Missam, seu Vesperas celebraturus; sed in alio sacello, vel loco ornatissimo, cum omni decencia, et reverentia reponatur. Quod si in altari maiori, vel alio, in quo celebrandum erit, collocatum reperitur, ab eo altari in aliud omnino transferendum est, ne propterea ritus, et ordo caeremoniarum, qui in huiusmodi Missis, et officiis servandus est, turbetur; quod utique absque dubio eveniret, si illud ibi remaneret; siquidem nec altaris thurificatio, nec celebrantis actio, nec ministrorum operatio rite fieri, aut servari possent; cum necesse sit, quoties ante illud transimus, genua ad terram flectere, nec deceat celebrantem ante illud stare, aut sedere cum mitra. Quod si aliquando contingeret coram Episcopo, vel per ipsum Episcopum celebrari, existente sanctissimo Sacramento super altari, quod feria quinta in caena Domini, et feria sexta in Parasceve, et in Missa quae celebratur in festo sanctissimi corporis Christi, ante processionem evenire solet; tunc omnes genuflexiones, et reverentiae ad unguem observari debent; et Episcopus numquam sedere, sed stare sine mitra, prout suis locis declaratur. Et ideo non incongruum, sed maxime decens est, ut in altari, ubi sanctissimum Sacramentum situm est, Missae non celebrantur, quod antiquitus observatum esse videmus. Aut saltem celebrans in eo, sive solemnes, sive planas Missas, reverentias, et genuflexiones praedictas omnino observet." *Caeremoniale Episcoporum: Editio Princeps (1600)*, ed. A.M. Triacca - M. Sodi, Monumenta Liturgica Concilii Tridentini 4 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), 61-62.
- 2 "Hoc autem tabernaculum conopaeo decenter opertum, atque ab omni alia re vacuum in altari maiori vel in alio, quod venerationi et cultui tanti sacramenti commodius ac decentius videatur, sit collocatum; ita ut nullum aliis sacris functionibus, aut ecclesiasticis officiis impedimentum afferatur." *Rituale Romanum: Editio Princeps (1614)*, ed. M. Sodi - J.J. Flores Arcas, Monumenta Liturgica Concilii Tridentini 5 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), 57.
- 3 "Analecta Juris Pontificii," VII, ser. IV, l, p.628, as cited in Silverio Mattei, *La Custodia Eucaristica*, 903.
- 4 CIC 1917, c.1268:
- §1: Sanctissima Eucharistia continuo seu habitualiter custodiri nequit, nisi in uno tantum eiusdem ecclesiae altari.
- §2: Custodiatur in praecellentissimo ac nobilissimo ecclesiae loco ac proinde regulariter in altari maiore, nisi aliud venerationi et cultui tanti sacramenti commodius et decentius videatur, servato praescripto legum liturgicarum quod ad ultimos dies hebdomadae maioris attinet.
- §3: Sed in ecclesiis cathedralibus, collegiatis aut conventualibus in quibus ad altare maius chorales functiones persolvendae sunt, ne ecclesiasticis officiis impedimentum afferatur, opportunum est ut santissima Eucharistia regulariter non custodiatur in altari maiore, sed in alio sacello seu altari.
- §4: Curent ecclesiarum rectores ut altare in quo sanctissimum Sacramentum asservatur sit prae omnibus aliis ornatum, ita ut suo ipso apparatu magis moveat fidelium pietatem ac devotionem.
- c.1269 §1: Sanctissima Eucharistia servari debet in

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undignified corner or to a separate chapel, or whether to have placed the celebrant's chair in the centre of the sanctuary or in front of the tabernacle – as was done in many renovations of older churches and in new constructions – has contributed in some way to a decrease in faith in the Real Presence.<sup>30</sup>

As has been shown, the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* addressed the issue of the placement of the tabernacle, referring back to the provisions of the IGMR of 2002. The conflicting indications present in these texts are supposed to be resolved by good theology and good pastoral sense. It is precisely here that things tend to break down, however, as many thorny theological and pastoral issues remain.

The primary theological issues can perhaps be summarized in the following list: 1) the relationship between the sacrifice of the Eucharist (the liturgical action of the Mass at the altar) and the sacrament of the Eucharist (the enduring sign of Christ's presence in the tabernacle), 2) the various presences of Christ and their relative sign values, and 3) the true meaning of active participation and the question of the altar *versus populum* in relation to the tabernacle. It seems to me that all the various discussions about where to place the tabernacle and what it means can be reduced to these three general categories.

The pastoral issues are many, but can be perhaps reduced to one: the crisis of God, as it is sometimes called, as a result of both the first and the second enlightenment (1968), to use a phrase of Pope Benedict XVI. In our very secular age, a spirit of secularization has entered the liturgy also, with a concomitant rejection of sacrality. In the Eucharistic celebration, a strong emphasis has been placed on the horizontal dimension of communion with one another, while the vertical dimension of communion with God has suffered loss. In this context, Pope Benedict's teaching on reading the Council<sup>31</sup> and the liturgy<sup>32</sup> with the interpretive key of continuity could provide some of that good theology we are looking for. The *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* (2007) and its accompanying letter, expressing the hope that the reverence and decorum of the Extraordinary Form might have a positive influence on the Ordinary Form, could provide some of that good pastoral sense we are looking for.

The placement of the tabernacle, its artistic form, and its role in the life of the faithful depend on the answers given to these theological and pastoral questions.



*Born in 1955 in Massachusetts, The Very Rev. Cassian Folsom, O.S.B. has been a monk since 1979 and a priest since 1984. He served*

- tabernaculo inamovibili in media parte altaris posito.
- 5 "Nullo unquam tempore Apostolica Sedes locorum Ordinarii praesidia et cautelas suppeditare praetermisit, quibus Sanctissima Eucharistia, quae asservatur in nostris ecclesiis sive de iure communi sive ex indulto, diligenter custodiretur neve ulli profanationis obnoxia remaneret." *Instructio*, paragraph 1. AAS 30 (1938): 198.
- 6 "Non si tratta tanto delle presenza materiale del tabernacolo sopra l'altare, quanto di una tendenza sulla quale vorremmo attirare la vostra attenzione: quella di una minor stima per la presenza e l'azione di Cristo nel tabernacolo. Ci si accontenta del sacrificio dell'altare, e si diminuisce l'importanza di Colui che lo compie...Il modo con cui si potrebbe porre il tabernacolo sull'altare senza impedire di Eucaristia nella legislazione della Chiesa," *Ambrosius* 41 (1965): 407-424.
- 7 1. Normae a Codice Iuris Canonici circa Ss. Eucharistiam asservendam statuae (Cann.1268,1269) sancte religioseque servandae sunt; nec omittant locorum Ordinarii de hac re sedulo invigilare.
2. Tabernaculum adeo firmiter cum altari coniungatur, ut inamovibile fiat. Regulariter in altari maiore collocetur, nisi alius venerationi et cultui tanti sacramenti commodius et decentius videatur, id quod ordinare contingit in ecclesiis cathedralibus, collegiatis aut conventualibus, in quibus functiones chorales peragi solent; vel aliquando in maioribus sanctuariis, non propter peculiarem fidelium devotionem erga obiectum veneratum, summus laetiae cultus Ssmo. Sacramento debitus obnubiletur.
3. In altari ubi Ssma. Eucharistia asservatur, habitualiter Sacrificum Missae celebrandum est.
4. In ecclesiis, ubi unicum exstat altare, hoc nequit ita aedificari, ut sacerdos celebret populum versus; sed super ipsum altare, in medio, poni debet tabernaculum ad asservendum Ssmam. Eucharistiam, ad normam legum liturgicarum constructum, forma et mensura tanto Sacramento omnino dignum.
5. Districte vetantur tabernacula eucharistica extra ipsum altare posita, ex gr. in pariete, aut ad latus, vel retro altare, au in aediculis seu columnis ab altare separatis. AAS 49 (1957): 425-426.
- 8 From the introduction to the decree, AAS 49 (1957): 425.
- 9 Cf. Biffi, 414.
- 10 "Canones et statuta ecclesiastica, quae rerum externarum ad sacrum cultum pertinentium apparatus spectant, praesertim quoad aedium sacrarum dignam et aptam constructionem, altarium formam et aedificationem, tabernaculi eucharistici nobilitatem, dispositionem et securitatem, baptisterii convenientiam et honorem, necnon congruentem sacrarum imaginum, decorationis et ornatus rationem, una cum libris liturgicis ad normam art. 25 quam primum recognoscantur: quae liturgiae instauratae minus congruere videntur, emendentur aut aboleantur; quae vero ipsi favent, retineantur vel introducantur." SC 128, AAS 56 (1964): 132.
- 11 International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy* 1963-1879: *Conciliar, Papal and Curial Texts* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 109. (Hereafter cited as *Documents on the Liturgy*.)
- 12 Inos Biffi, "Il posto della conservazione dell' Eucaristia nella legislazione della Chiesa," *Ambrosius* 41 (1965), 416.
- 13 ad n.92:(9) Aliqui sacerdotes putant optimum locum pro celebrante et ministris esse retro, in abside; sed ne altare illos celet, dicunt sedem debere esse in alto positam, saltem tribus gradibus, ut populus eos videre possit et appareat celebrantem vere praeesse. Potestne haec opinio sustineri, praesertim si in ipsa abside ponatur thronus ad exponendam Ss.mam Eucharistiam? Resp.: Ad primam partem, affirmative, iuxta *Instructionem* n.92. Ad alteram partem: si in abside exstat tabernaculum, vel ponitur thronus ad exponendam Ss.mam Eucharistiam, sedes praesidentialis ponatur, parumper elevata, ad latus altaris. *Notitiae* 5 (May 1965): 138.
- 14 Ad n.95: (10) Cum celebratur Missa in altari, posito inter altare maius et populum, potestne asservari Ss.ma Eucharistia in altari maiore, etsi celebrans terga vertat Ss.mae Eucharistiae? Resp.: Affirmative, dummodo a) spatium vere notabile inter utrumque altare intercedat; b) tabernaculum in altari maiore sit tali altitudinis collocatum, ut caput celebrantis, qui stat ad pedes altaris intermedii, superet. *Notitiae* 5 (May 1965): 138.
- 15 (11) Utrum tabernaculum in latere sinistro altaris versus populum poni possit et in alio latere crux vel liber sacrae Scripturae? Resp.: Negative. Attendendum est potius ad art. 95 *Instructionis*, secundum quem "in casibus peculiaribus ab *Ordinario loci probandis*" tabernaculum poni potest "etiam in alia ecclesiae parte vere pernobili et rite ornata", v.gr. in dextera parte sanctuarii, aut in abside. *Notitiae* 5 (May 1965): 138-139.
- 16 *Documents on the Liturgy*, 120-121.
- 17 "ad n.95: (63) Utrum, si altare maius versus populum exstruitur, ad mentem *Constitutionis* et n. 95 *Instructionis* Ss.ma Eucharistia asservari conveniat in altari minori ab altari principali distincto? Resp: Affirmative." *Notitiae* 7-8 (July-August 1965): 251.
- 18 "Insuper visitationem sanctissimi Sacramenti, in nobilissimo loco et quam honorificentissime in ecclesiis secundum leges liturgicas adservandi, interdiu facere ne omittant, utpote quae erga Christum Dominum, in eodem praesentem, sit et grati animi argumentum et amoris pignus et debite adorationis officium." *Mysterium Fidei*, AAS 57(1965): 771.
- 19 *Documents on the Liturgy*, 124-125.
- 20 Sections 52-57 are taken from *Documents on the Liturgy*, 415-416.
- 21 De Sanctissima Eucharistia Asservanda
276. Illud valde commendandum est, locum sanctissimae Eucharistiae asservandae exstare in sacello ad privatam fidelium adorationem et precationem idoneo. Quod si hoc fieri non potest, pro cuiusque ecclesiae structura et iuxta legitimas locorum consuetudines, Sacramentum ponatur aut in aliquo altari aut extra altare in parte ecclesiae pernobili et rite ornata.
277. Sanctissima Eucharistia asservetur in unico tabernaculo solido atque inviolabili. Quare, de more, in singulis ecclesiis, unicum tabernaculum habeatur. ICEL translation, *The Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co.,1974). Cf. *Missale Romanum: Editio Typica* (Vatican City, 1970), 78-79.
- 22 II. De fine asservandae Eucharistiae
5. Primarius ac primigenius finis asservandae Eucharistiae extra Missam est administratio Viatici; secundarii vero fines sunt communio distribuenda atque adoratio Domini nostri Iesu Christi in Sacramento praesentis. Etenim sanctorum specierum conservatio pro infirmis laudabilem induxit morem adorandi caelestem hanc dapem quae in templis reponitur. Qui quidem adorationis cultus valida firmaque ratione nititur, maxime quia fides in praesentiam realem Domini connaturaliter ad eiusdem fidei externam et publicam manifestationem conducit (cf. *Eucharistium mysterium*, 49).
6. In celebratione Missae praecipui illi modi quibus Christus praesens adest in Ecclesia sua gradatim clarescunt, quatenus primo praesens adest in ipso coetu fidelium, in suo nomine congregato: deinde vero in verbo suo, cum Scriptura in ecclesia legitur et explanatur; necnon in persona ministri; demum ac quidem maxime, sub speciebus eucharisticis. Etenim in Eucharistiae sacramento, modo omnino singulari, adest totus et integer Christus, Deus et homo, substantialiter et continenter. Quae praesentia Christi sub speciebus "realis dicitur non per exclusionem, quasi aliae reales non sint, sed per excellentiam" (*Mysterium fidei*). Unde, ratione signi, magis congruit naturae sacrae celebrationis ut in altari ubi Missa celebratur praesentia eucharistica Christi, quae fructus est consecrationis et ut talis apparere debet, non adsit, quantum fieri potest, iam ab initio Missae per asservationem sanctorum specierum in tabernaculo.
7. Hostiae consecratae, ea quantitate quae infirmorum et aliorum fidelium communio extra Missam satis esse possint, frequenter renoventur et in pyxide seu vasculo serventur.
8. Curent pastores ut ecclesiae et oratoria publica, ubi ad normam iuris sanctissima Eucharistia asservatur, cotidie saltem per plures horas, tempore diei opportuniore, pateant, ut facile coram sanctissimo Sacramento fideles orare valeant.
- III. De loco asservandae Eucharistiae
9. Locus sanctissimae Eucharistiae asservandae vere praecellens sit. Valde commendandum est ut ad privatam adorationem et precationem idoneus simul evadat, ita ut fideles facile et fructuose, etiam privato culto Dominum in Sacramento praesentem honorare non desinant. Quod facilius obtineri potest, quando sacellum paratur a media aula seuunctum, praesertim in illis ecclesiis ubi matrimonia aut funera frequentius occurrunt, et in illis, quae ratione peregrinationum vel ob thesaurus artis et historiae a multis invisuntur.
10. Sanctissima Eucharistia asservetur in tabernaculo solido, non transparenti atque inviolabili. De more in singulis ecclesiis unicum tabernaculum habeatur, aut super altare positum aut, de iudicio Ordinarii loci, extra altare, sed in parte ecclesiae pernobili et rite ornata. Clavis tabernaculi, in quo sanctissima Eucharistia asservatur, diligentissime custodiri debet a sacerdote qui ecclesiae vel oratorii curam habet, vel a ministro extraordinario, cui facultas distribuendi sacram communionem data est.
11. Praesentia sanctissimae Eucharistiae in tabernaculo significetur conopaeo vel alio modo apto a competenti auctoritate definito. Secundum traditam consuetudinem, ut signum honoris qui Domino adhibetur, lampas, oleo vel cera nutrienda, iuxta tabernaculum perenniter ardeat." *Documents on the Liturgy*, 693-695; *De Sacra Communione et de Cultu Mysterii Eucharistici extra Missam: editio typica* (Vatican City, 1973), 8-9.
- 23 "Inauguratio sacelli Ss.mi Sacramenti 79. Inauguratio sacelli ubi Ss.ma Eucharistia servabitur, hoc modo convenienter fit... 81. Cum processio ad sacellum repositionis pervenit, Episcopus deponit pyxidem super altare aut in tabernaculo, cuius porta aperta manet et, ture imposito, genuflexus Ss.mum Sacramentum incensat. Denique, post congruum temporis spatium quo omnes silentio orant, diaconus pyxidem in tabernaculo recondit vel ipsius portam claudit; minister autem lapidem accendit, quae ad Ss.mum Sacramentum perpetuo ardebit." *Ordo Dedicacionis Ecclesiae et Altaris: Editio typica*, Città del Vaticano 1977, 56-57.
- 24 Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, *Instruction Concerning Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery: Inaestimabile Donum*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1980, 11.
- 25 938 §1: Sanctissima Eucharistia habitualiter in uno tantum ecclesiae vel oratorii tabernaculo asservetur.
- 938 §2: Tabernaculum, in quo sanctissima Eucharistia asservatur, situm sit in aliqua ecclesiae vel oratorii parte insigni, conspicua, decore ornata, ad orationem apta.
- 938 §3: Tabernaculum, in quo habitualiter sanctissima Eucharistia asservatur, sit inamovibile, materia solida non transparenti confectum, et ita clausum ut quam maxime periculum profanationis vitetur. Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition. Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983, 348.
- 26 Ordo benedictionis occasione data auspicandi novum tabernaculum Eucharisticum
919. Tabernaculum ad Eucharistiam servandam nobis in mentem redigit et Domini praesentiam, quae a Missae sacrificio derivat, et fratres, quos caritate Christi amplecti debemus. Etenim Ecclesia in dispensandis mysteriis sibi a Christo Domino creditis primitus pro infirmis et morientibus Eucharistiam servavit. Hic caelestis cibus, in ecclesiis sacrae repositus, adoratus est. *De Benedictionibus: Editio Typica*. Città del Vaticano, 1985, 350. The American edition has a different numbering, cf. *Book of Blessings*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1989, 439-441.
- 27 314: Pro cuiusque ecclesiae structura et iuxta legitimas locorum consuetudines, Ss.mum Sacramentum asservetur in tabernaculo in parte ecclesiae pernobili, insigni, conspicua, decore ornata, et ad orationem apta (citing EM 54 and *Inter Oecumenici* 95). Tabernaculum de more unicum sit, inamovibile, materia solida atque inviolabili non transparenti confectum, et ita clausum ut quam maxime periculum profanationis vitetur (CIC 938 §3). Convenit insuper ut benedicatur, antequam usui liturgico destinetur, iuxta ritum in Rituali Romano descriptum.
315. Ratione signi magis congruit ut in altari in quo Missa celebratur non sit tabernaculum in quo Ss.ma Eucharistia asservatur. Praesertim proinde tabernaculum collocari, de iudicio episcopo dioecesis: a) aut in presbyterio, extra altare celebrationis, forma et loco magis convenientibus, non excluso vetere altari quod ad celebrationem amplius non adhibetur; b) aut etiam in aliquo sacello ad privatam fidelium adorationem et precationem idoneo, quod sit cum ecclesia organice coniunctum et christifidelibus conspicuum.
- 316: Secundum traditam consuetudinem, iuxta tabernaculum peculiaris perenniter luceat lampas, oleo vel cera nutrienda, qua indicetur et honoretur Christi praesentia.
- 317: Minime obliviscantur etiam cetera omnia quae de asservatione Ss.mae Eucharistiae ad normam iuris praescribuntur. *Missale Romanum: Editio Typica Tertia* (Vatican City, 2002), 71-72; English text from the 2011 translation of *The Roman Missal*.
- 28 Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum on certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist* (Vatican City, 2004).
- 29 Benedict XVI, *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation* Sacramentum caritatis. (Vatican City: Editrice Vaticana, 2007), 106-107.
- 30 "Lineamentum" n.41 in: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Weekly Edition, 29 (20 July 2005), 10.
- 31 Benedict XVI, "Address to the Roman Curia" (22 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006): 44-45.
- 32 In *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict says: "...the changes which the Council called for need to be understood within the overall unity of the rite itself, without the introduction of artificial discontinuities" (6). Note 6 is inserted after this sentence: "I am referring here to the need for a hermeneutic of continuity also with regard to the correct interpretation of the liturgical development which followed the Second Vatican Council."