

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

(Corpus Christi)



Liturgical Resource – Year B

Acknowledgements:

This suggested liturgical resource is in accord with the diocesan guidelines *Concerning Eucharistic Adoration, Exposition, and Benediction* (promulgated June 12, 2001) and the ritual text *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* © 1992, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017-1194. Published by The Liturgical Press, © 1993 by The Order of St. Benedict, Inc., Collegeville, MN 56321.



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INTRODUCTION

Since the Second Vatican Council, this solemnity has been called “*The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.*” The name change is significant. The emphasis is not the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle and presented for adoration by the faithful. The emphasis is on the celebration of the Eucharist, which is why the preface from Holy Thursday is used. In the Collect (Opening Prayer), we ask that we may “*revere the sacred mysteries*” of the Body and Blood of Christ in such a way that we may “*experience in ourselves the fruits of your redemption.*”

As part of the Eucharistic Revival initiative, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have asked that dioceses and parishes celebrate this solemnity with great festivity and joy. This will include, of course, the worthy celebration of the Mass with its assigned texts.

It might also include a eucharistic procession after the principal Mass, a Holy Hour, an extended period of exposition, or a renewed invitation to spend time with the Lord in adoration. It may be the perfect day for pastors to commission Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (*Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63).

This solemnity is a golden opportunity to familiarize the faithful with the way the Church envisions and regulates eucharistic devotional practices. In recent decades, and particularly during the pandemic, many parishes developed practices which, while they may have been pursued in good faith, carried the possibility of distorting the Church’s teaching on the Eucharist and the Real Presence. At times, when enthusiasm might have overwhelmed solemnity, practices might have minimized the import of the Blessed Sacrament and its profound effect on the life of the faithful. Good intentions and motives are always improved by careful attention to the Church’s instructions regarding eucharistic rituals.

The following resources and guidelines are meant to assist your preparations for this Solemnity.

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the source from which all her power flows.”

Sacrosanctum concilium, 10



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ANNUAL SOLEMN EXPOSITION

The *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* (1992) instructs: “In churches and oratories where the eucharist is reserved, it is recommended that solemn exposition of the blessed sacrament for an extended period of time should take place once a year, even though this period is not strictly continuous. In this way the local community may meditate on this mystery more deeply and adore. This kind of exposition, however, may take place only if there is assurance of the participation of a reasonable number of the faithful” (11).

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is a rite of the church and as such is governed by liturgical rubrics. An extended period of exposition is to include readings from sacred Scripture, hymns, preaching, intercessory prayer, periods of silent prayer, and benediction. Celebrating portions of the Liturgy of the Hours during this time is also appropriate and encouraged. *The Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist (OSEHE)* was published specifically as a collection of rites and texts to be used during exposition.

EUCCHARISTIC PROCESSIONS

It is not permitted to process with the eucharist merely within the body of a church: “Processions within the body of a church are no longer permitted. A procession with the blessed sacrament should go from one church to another. Nevertheless, if local circumstances require, the procession may return to the same church where it began” (*OSEHE*, 20). This procession must go “through the streets solemnly with singing” so that the faithful may “give public witness of faith and to their devotion toward this sacrament” (*OSEHE*, 17).

PLANNING THE CELEBRATION OF THE MASS

The liturgical color for this solemnity is white. Funeral masses are permitted on this day, but Ritual and Votive masses are not permitted. Due to the nature of this feast and the Scripture readings, music selections should have an emphasis on the Eucharist.

If exposition or a procession is to immediately follow Mass, the concluding rites of dismissal are omitted (*cf.* Roman Missal, The Order of Mass, 146). Also, “Along with the hosts necessary for communion, the host that will be used for exposition [or a procession] should be consecrated at this Mass” (*OSEHE*, 30).

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The readings are for **Year B** (Lectionary for Mass #168): Exodus 24:3-8; Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18; Hebrews 9:11-15; Mark 14:12-16, 22-26.

There is an optional Sequence (*Laud, O Zion*).



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SAMPLE PETITIONS FOR THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER

These are provided by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions:

- For the Church, fed by the sacrament of unity, that it may be a beacon of unity to the world, we pray.
- For all priests, who generously offer the sacraments and offer themselves for their flock, we pray.
- For all those who serve as Ordinary and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, may their reverent service bear witness to the truth of Christ's abiding love, we pray.
- For all Christians, that we may one day be reunited around the Lord's Table, we pray.
- That the grace of this Eucharist will motivate us to serve all those who hunger and thirst, we pray.
- For all those who doubt the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, that their faith may be strengthened and their hearts may be healed through the grace of the sacrament, we pray.
- For all those who seek spiritual nourishment, may we share the Good News with them and invite them to the Lord's bountiful Table, we pray.
- For all who serve our liturgical assemblies, that we may worthily celebrate the Eucharist in all its fullness, we pray.
- For our neophytes, our First Communicants, and for all those who recently have joined us at the Lord's Table for the first time, may they always rejoice in the nearness of the Lord, we pray.
- For those who are absent from our assembly today and for all those who bring Holy Communion to them, we pray.
- For all those in religious communities who pray before the Blessed Sacrament on behalf of the whole Church, we pray.
- For those who have died and who in this life were nourished by the Eucharist, may they rejoice forever at the heavenly banquet, we pray.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

There are two options for the Preface: The Preface of the Day (*Preface I of the Most Holy Eucharist*, which is also Holy Thursday's Preface) or *Preface II of the Most Holy Eucharist*.

After the distribution of Holy Communion and the purification of the sacred vessels, when exposition or a procession will take place after Mass: "Immediately after the distribution of communion, the monstrance is placed on the altar. The deacon (or in his absence, a priest) places the host in the monstrance. If desired, the monstrance may be placed on a throne" (*OSEHE*, no. 31).



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Then, “The celebrant returns to the chair and, after a brief period of silent prayer, stands and says the prayer after communion. The concluding rites of the Mass are omitted” (*OSEHE*, 32).

Finally, “The celebrant then goes to the altar and, after placing incense in the censer, kneels and incenses the holy eucharist. Meanwhile, a suitable song [*eg. O salutaris hostia*] may be sung by the people. A period of silent prayer may also be observed” (*OSEHE*, 33).

QUESTIONS REGARDING EUCHARISTIC PROCESSIONS

Q. When is a eucharistic procession conducted?

A. The procession should immediately follow a Mass at which the host is consecrated; in this way, it can be seen as flowing from the Eucharistic celebration, emphasizing the Mass as the source and summit of our faith. However, it is permitted to begin this procession after a period of exposition.

Q. Where do we walk in procession?

A. Since processions bear public witness to our faith in the Real Presence, they are conducted in public places. They are not held within the church itself. They may be held on church grounds or they might move from one Catholic church to another (especially if a merged parish has multiple worship sites).
Prior planning and clear organization will be essential. Identify a clear route well in advance. Receive any necessary permits or permissions from civil authorities. You may need assistance from police to provide security, limit traffic access, etc.
How will you ensure a safe and reverent event? Will the elderly or persons with disabilities encounter steps or steep hills? Will the route be too long? Will the weather be too hot for a long procession? Will the surrounding neighborhood have potential for profanation?

Q. What should be prepared beforehand?

A. Before Mass, the sacristan and ministers should prepare:

- a host for the monstrance, in addition to the one that the celebrant will consume during Mass
- a monstrance (and a stand for the monstrance, if available)
- a humeral veil
- a thurible, charcoal, the incense boat, and matches/lighter
- candles for servers (with glass followers to protect the flame)
- optional: candles for those in the procession

Q. Do we need a canopy?

A. Ideally, the parish should have a canopy, but it is not necessary. If it is used, the canopy and poles should be prepared outside the sanctuary. Canopy Bearers should rehearse how they will move together in unison and turn corners. Torches, too, if used, may be readied outside the sanctuary.



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Q. Should we also prepare images of Mary or our patron saint?

A. While these may be carried in other festivals during the year, they are not appropriate in a eucharistic procession. "Never to be carried in this procession are images of Our Lady or the saints" (*Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite*, 697).

Q. What is the order for a eucharistic procession?

A. The cross-bearer, followed by servers with candles, followed by concelebrants (in chasubles), followed by the thurifer and incense bearer

[Then, under the canopy: the celebrant (wearing chasuble -or- cope, carrying the monstrance), followed by the deacon]

Then the choir or music ministers, followed by the faithful.

Q. How does the procession conclude?

A. The procession ends with solemn Benediction, either at the church in which it began or at another church. Once the faithful have all arrived at the end of the procession, all kneel and sing a hymn of adoration [*eg. Tantum ergo sacramentum*]. Benediction follows as usual according to the norms found in *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*

AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF EXPOSITION

The parish may choose to have an extended period of eucharistic exposition, where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in the monstrance. "During the exposition there should be prayers, songs, and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to worship Christ the Lord" (*OSEHE*, 15).

To encourage participation throughout the period of exposition, certain groups within the parish could be approached ahead of time and invited to make a commitment to be present in silent prayer and adoration together during a specific time period.

THE CLOSING CELEBRATION

The *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* provides guidance for a liturgical celebration to close out an extended period of Eucharistic exposition with a monstrance (see Chapter 5: Closing Celebration Outside Mass.)

MUSIC CONSIDERATIONS

Appendix III of the *Order of Solemn Exposition of Holy Eucharist* gives many music suggestions, both traditional and contemporary. Other songs or hymns could be selected from a parish's hymnal under the headings "Eucharist" or "Communion."