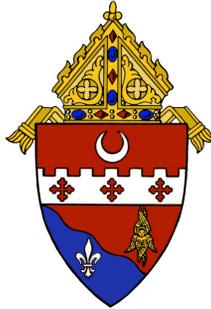




NORMS FOR THE
PLACEMENT & DESIGN
OF THE TABERNACLE
IN THE DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

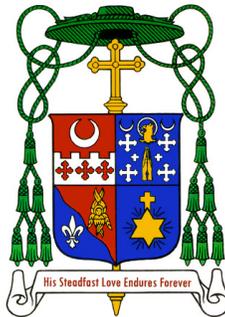




THE DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE–SOUTH BEND

JUNE 14, 2009

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST



THE MOST REVEREND JOHN M. D'ARCY

BISHOP OF FORT WAYNE–SOUTH BEND

Cover Image:
Tabernacle at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, Indiana

PROMULGATION OF DIOCESAN NORMS

June 14, 2009
Feast of Corpus Christi

To Priests, Deacons, Religious, and to All the Faithful,

The presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is at the center of our faith and of the devotional life of our Catholic people.

In recent years, the place of the tabernacle in our churches has become a source of controversy. This should not be. The Eucharist, whether we are referring to its celebration or to the place of reservation, should always be a means of unity and communion, and never of division.

The place of the tabernacle in our church should reflect our faith in the real presence of Christ, and should always be guided by Church documents.

My experience is that our people, with their instinct of faith, have always desired that the tabernacle be central and visible. They find it confusing when the tabernacle in their churches is not visible, and if possible, central.

Because of my responsibility to foster the devotional life of our people, and to keep it sound, I have asked our Office of Worship to prepare norms for the placement and design of the tabernacle in this diocese. These norms were brought before the Presbyteral Council, the Liturgical Commission, and the Environment and Arts Committee. Suitable refinements and improvements were prepared.

PROMULGATION OF DIOCESAN NORMS, CONT.

These norms are promulgated to the Diocese of Fort Wayne–South Bend on June 14, 2009, the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of the Lord. They will be effective on August 4, 2009, the Feast of Saint John Mary Vianney, the patron saint of priests, in whose honor the present Year for Priests has been dedicated by the Holy Father Benedict XVI.

I urge all priests to follow these norms carefully and completely, and most importantly - to foster devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

With every best wish and prayer, I remain

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John M. D'Arcy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend John M. D'Arcy
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

NORMS FOR THE PLACEMENT & DESIGN OF THE TABERNACLE IN THE DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE—SOUTH BEND

1. The placement and appearance of the tabernacle, which houses the Blessed Sacrament, is of tremendous importance in the design of our churches, because the church is “the privileged place for adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.”¹ In fostering the Church’s liturgical and devotional life, “a favorable place is not a matter of indifference for true prayer.”²

2. These norms for the placement and design of tabernacles in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend are founded upon the liturgical mandate that “the tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved is to be situated in some part of the church or oratory which is distinguished, conspicuous, beautifully decorated, and suitable for prayer.”³ In this manner, we may ensure that the distinctive Eucharistic presence of Jesus Christ in our churches will bear much spiritual fruit and serve as a treasure for future generations.

LOCATION

3. The Church teaches that the tabernacle is to be situated “in a most worthy place with the greatest honor.”⁴ Pope Benedict XVI emphasized this idea in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*: “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.”⁵

Only one tabernacle may be used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament within a single building.⁶ The determination of the positioning of the tabernacle is entrusted to “the judgment of the Diocesan Bishop.”⁷

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2691.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 938 §2; Cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM], 314.

4. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1183; Cf. Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei* (1965), 66-68.

5. Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), 69.

6. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 938 §1.

7. GIRM, 315; Cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 69: “final judgment on these matters belongs to the Diocesan Bishop.”

4. In the Diocese of Fort Wayne–South Bend, the Bishop has judged that the tabernacle is normally to be prominently located in the sanctuary of the church, along the central axis behind the main altar. Under this arrangement, the tabernacle should be at an elevated, open location in the apse area, or in another central place in the sanctuary that is equally conspicuous.⁸ Where a high altar with a tabernacle remains in place, it is appropriate to continue using this noble structure for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.⁹

5. This prescription is to be observed in all future construction or restoration projects involving places of sacred worship (including all churches, oratories, and private chapels) in the Diocese. Any exception to this norm must be approved by the Diocesan Bishop, and should clearly demonstrate itself as a worthy alternative that would accentuate the sacramental nature of the church building and contribute to the spiritual life of the worshipping community.

6. In those existing places of sacred worship where the tabernacle is currently located elsewhere in the sanctuary or the main body of the church, a liturgical consultation with the faithful and with the Diocese should begin, regarding the possibility of moving the tabernacle to a central position in the sanctuary. Especially if the tabernacle in a particular church was central at one time and then was moved, it should be returned to its original location.

7. If a separate, previously approved tabernacle chapel is to remain in use at a particular church, its location must somehow be made obvious and “readily visible to the Christian faithful”¹⁰ who enter the church.

A legitimate and historical tradition does exist for designating separate chapels for the reservation of the Holy Eucharist. This practice is appropriately adopted where such a side chapel is “organically connected” with the main nave of the church.¹¹ Proposed exceptions for future separate reservation chapels will be evaluated along these lines, and if approved, must feature a centrally located tabernacle along with a substantial amount of seating and kneelers for adoration.

8. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 69.

9. *Ibid*; Cf. GIRM, 315a.

10. GIRM, 315b.

11. *Ibid*.

8. It is the duty of the Diocesan Environment & Art Committee to assist the Bishop in reviewing proposals for the placement or repositioning of tabernacles. All such proposals must be submitted to the Diocesan Office of Worship for review by the aforementioned Committee, and for ultimate approval by the Diocesan Bishop.¹²

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR SUCH PLACEMENT

9. As expressed in the introduction, the church is the “privileged place for adoration” of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and location is “not a matter of indifference for true prayer.”¹³ Thus, the prescription for a central placement of the tabernacle is grounded in a spiritual reality.

The church, which is “both the house of God on earth (*domus Dei*) and a house fit for the prayers of the saints (*domus ecclesiae*),”¹⁴ itself possesses a sacramental dimension—by its very structure it should aid worshipers to enter into an encounter with Christ. The honored presence of the Blessed Sacrament helps lend a Catholic church building its particular sacramental character. That is why Pope Paul VI commended the Lord’s presence in the tabernacle as the “living heart of each of our churches.”¹⁵

10. In addition, although we live now in an imperfect world tainted by sin, our sacramental worship always must strive to image heavenly perfection. Generally speaking, order and symmetry in sacred design are employed precisely to emulate divine perfection, and the tabernacle’s enthronement along the central axis helps to accomplish this purpose.

11. While it is true that the actual Holy Sacrifice of the Mass should not be conflated with the Eucharist reserved outside the liturgy, they are certainly not mutually exclusive.

Pope Pius XII said of the altar and the tabernacle, “An awareness of their unity is more important than a realization of their differences. It is one and the same Lord who is immolated on the altar and honored in the tabernacle, and who pours out his blessings from the tabernacle.”¹⁶ This

12. Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 126; *Code of Canon Law* c. 1216.

13. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2691.

14. USCCB, *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship* (2000), 16.

15. Pope Paul VI, “Credo of the People of God,” June 30, 1968.

16. Pope Pius XII, *Address to the International Congress on Pastoral Liturgy on the Liturgical Movement*, II, 2. “*Praesentia Christi*,” September 22, 1956.

thinking was reflected in the *Lineamenta* before the 2005 Bishops' Synod on the Eucharist: "There is no conflict of signs between the tabernacle and the altar of Eucharistic celebration."¹⁷

As such, although the altar deserves ritual and symbolic primacy during the liturgy,¹⁸ the placement of the tabernacle in the sanctuary should not be understood as detracting from the celebration of the Mass. Indeed, if the tabernacle is significantly isolated from the place of the routine public celebration of the sacred liturgy, then the possibility exists of the reserved sacrament gradually slipping from the parish or communal consciousness and being visited privately only by a few.

CONSTRUCTION

12. In accord with liturgical law, "the one tabernacle should be immovable, 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."¹⁹

13. The security of the tabernacle is a very serious matter. It should not be constructed with a lightweight or fragile material, but rather with a dignified, robust material that adequately shields its contents. The tabernacle should be firmly attached or bolted upon whatever surface it is placed.

14. Since a tabernacle may not be transparent, it may not be constructed out of glass. Nor may it be constructed even with opaque glass, which does not convey a sense of durable permanence or security. The contents should never be visible when the tabernacle is closed.

15. Every tabernacle must also be equipped with a functioning lock, and its key should be safeguarded diligently.²⁰

17. Synod of Bishops, XI Ordinary General Assembly. "The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church." *Lineamenta* (2004), 57.

18. Pope Pius XII, *Praesentia Christi*: "the Lord offers Himself in sacrifice only on the altar during the celebration of Holy Mass, not after or outside the Mass." See also GIRM, 274: "[If] the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is present in the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself."

19. GIRM, 314; Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 938 §3.

20. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 938 §5.

PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

16. A church's tabernacle should be beautifully decorated or adorned, and suitable for prayer. These two qualities are closely related, for a sacramental and Incarnational beauty raises the spirits of the faithful and invites them to contemplate the things of Heaven.

17. An Old Testament foreshadowing of the Eucharistic tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant and the "Shekinah," which was associated with God's very presence among the Israelites. The Ark was plated and adorned with pure gold, and surrounded by cherubim.²¹ Another Eucharistic prefigurement was the "bread of the presence," which had to be placed on a "pure gold table."²² The Lord commanded the Israelites always to keep the Ark and the bread of the presence in a sanctuary tent along with a "pure gold lampstand," which was to burn perpetually.²³

From this we see the Jewish origins of our traditional tabernacle lamp, which is "kept alight to indicate and honor the presence of Christ."²⁴ But more importantly, we recognize that the Lord's presence was held in such high esteem that the Israelites gave of their finest materials to make a fitting dwelling place for the divine to reside in their midst.²⁵ How tremendous, then, is our responsibility to craft a worthy dwelling for the sacramental fulfillment of these ancient archetypes. The profound and dynamic divine Presence that dwelt upon the Ark in the Holy of Holies now resides in our church sanctuaries. The design of the tabernacle should therefore draw upon the Church's best insights into sacred art.

18. The tabernacle should be crafted of noble, non-synthetic material, such as metal, marble, or certain types of wood. Any metal used should be polished and radiant, while also rustproof and not easily prone to tarnishing. The interior and exterior may be plated with a brilliant metal.

19. Options for providing an elevated location include placing the tabernacle upon a handsomely designed pillar or pedestal, so that it may be freestanding and stately. Additional options include erecting a sizable ornamental canopy or baldachin over the tabernacle, or setting the

21. Exodus 25.

22. Leviticus 24:6; Cf. Exodus 25.

23. Leviticus 24:4; Cf. Exodus 25.

24. GIRM, 316; *Code of Canon Law*, c. 940.

25. Exodus 25:2-7.

tabernacle within the apsidal wall or against the backdrop of a decorated reredos. Such arrangements can greatly help to accentuate the tabernacle by lending mass and beauty to its presence.

20. The visibility of the tabernacle should not be obstructed by the placement of chairs or other liturgical appointments. The tabernacle should be a visible focal point from the main body of the church, but not so ostentatious as to overshadow the altar at all times. The scale of the church and its furnishings must be taken into consideration.

21. Tabernacle lamps should also be of noble design, complementing the tabernacle. These lamps may be set into a wall or reredos, or suspended from a bracket or the ceiling—as long as they are visibly situated in the immediate vicinity of the tabernacle to denote its location.

22. The use of a veil outside or within the tabernacle is an old custom, hearkening to the Old Testament imagery of the sanctuary tent and the Temple. When employed, tabernacle veils should be woven of fine material and serve to indicate the presence of the tabernacle.²⁶ Colors should correspond to the liturgical seasons.

23. A skilled student of sacred art can ensure that tabernacle iconography will “be chosen from the rich treasury of symbolism that is associated with the Eucharist.”²⁷ Pope John Paul II noted that a “heightened sense of mystery” and a deeply theological reverence have guided the Church’s Eucharistic devotion throughout her history: “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.”²⁸ Thus, the appearance of the tabernacle must convey a sense of divine transcendence, speaking a truth about Christ as the divine Son of God who comes to encounter humanity through the Incarnation.

PROPER REVERENCE

24. Aside from tending to the tabernacle itself, we must ensure that the faithful receive proper guidance and formation with respect to reverence before the Blessed Sacrament. Today there are many of all ages who inadvertently do not genuflect or bow in the correct situations.

26. Sacred Cong. for Sacraments and Divine Worship, *Inaestimabile Donum* (1980), 25.

27. *Built of Living Stones*, 73.

28. Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), 49.

Care should be taken to instruct the faithful that genuflection is the appropriate sign of adoration in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, “whether reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for public adoration.”²⁹ Before or after Mass, when the tabernacle is visible somewhere in the church, genuflection should be directed towards it. Although those who genuflect when a tabernacle is not present or when the Blessed Sacrament is clearly removed from the tabernacle (for example, during much of the Sacred Triduum) typically do so out of a commendable pious habit, they should instead bow out of reverence towards the altar.

25. Every church should strive to make the tabernacle accessible for prayer during the day, and to preserve a peaceful setting favorable to prayerful visits. Meetings and other activities without a strictly spiritual purpose should therefore be held elsewhere on the church premises whenever possible. Under extraordinary circumstances, such as if it became necessary for a church to host an event of a purely secular nature, the Blessed Sacrament may be removed from the tabernacle and transferred to the sacristy or another suitable place. The location should be secure, with the ciboria veiled and the Lord’s presence clearly marked.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

26. It is the responsibility of priests, teachers, and other custodians of the faith to catechize the faithful, so that all may appreciate our diocesan norms and the Church’s teaching on the reservation of the Eucharist.

Therefore, parishes and all communities of the faithful are encouraged to study the tabernacle and its theology, as well as the totality of sacred art and architecture, regardless of whether any physical modifications are imminent within their places of sacred worship. Doing so can only serve to deepen a love for Christ, thereby promoting the life of prayer and possibly even vocations among our young people.

27. Above all, “the dignity, placing, and security of the Eucharistic tabernacle should foster adoration before the Lord really present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.”³⁰ When an emphasis on this sacramental reality becomes our priority, it is self-evident that we believe the church building to be the privileged meeting place between Heaven and Earth.

29. Sacred Cong. for Divine Worship, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass* (1973), 84.

30. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1183.

APPENDIX:
EXAMPLES IN PICTURES



Basilica of the Sacred Heart
Notre Dame, Indiana



All Saints Catholic Church
Walton, Kentucky (completed 2003)



Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church
Ann Arbor, Michigan



Saint John Neumann Catholic Church
Farragut, Tennessee (completed 2008)



Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse, Wisconsin (completed 2008)



San Clemente
Rome, Italy (14th Century)



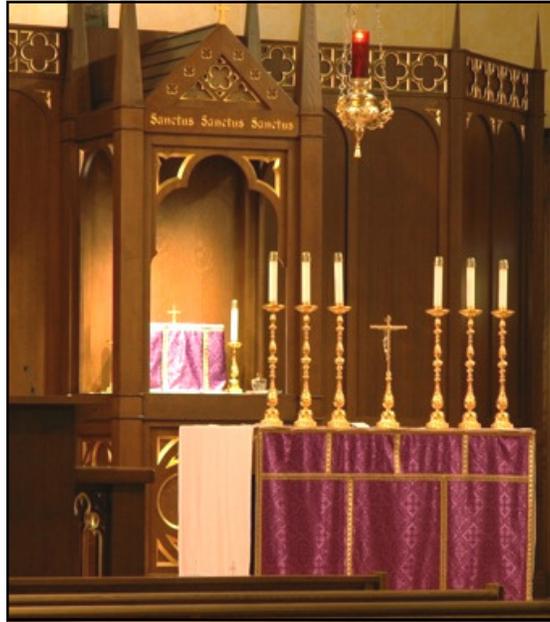
Seton Hall University Chapel
South Orange, New York (renovated 2008)



Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
Sacramento, California



Saint Thomas Aquinas College Chapel
 Santa Paula, California (completed 2009)



Church of the Holy Ghost
 Tiverton, Rhode Island



Veiled Tabernacle
 Saint John Cantius Catholic Church
 Chicago, Illinois



Ark of the Covenant Design
 Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Church
 Houston, Texas

