



Celebrant's Guides: Benediction

Major Resources

There are many on-line resources which will assist in preparing a time of Exposition and Benediction. The England & Wales Bishops' Conference Liturgy Office has its own celebrant's guide available in [A4](#) and [A5](#), which are abbreviated versions of the official ritual book in two volumes (which is not itself fully published on-line), *Holy Communion & Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (hereafter HCWEOM: all references are to Volume I unless otherwise stated). The British Edition numbering used here may differ from other territories; an excerpt using American numbering is [online](#). **Particularly worth reading are the "Pastoral Points" on pp. 83-85.**

There is also a [Guide for Musicians](#) and a [selection of texts](#) which could be sung to simple chants, or set to music by a more skilled musician. For the "Year of the Eucharist" in 2005, the Liturgy Office [produced](#) seven thematic services, and other services can be found on pp. 88-95 of Volume I of HCWEOM. Since Adoration is a kind of devotion, the [Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy](#) (hereafter DPPL) should also be consulted – see nn. 164-165.

The Mind of the Church

A period of exposition blurs the boundary between formal liturgy and informal devotion. The Church offers very few rules for what can or cannot be done during the period of adoration. But it is noteworthy that the Church:

ENCOURAGES ([DPPL](#) 165; HCWEOM 58 & 65)

- Readings of Scripture – personal ([DPPL](#) 165) and communal (HCWEOM 58);
- Brief homilies, exhortations to encourage a prayerful spirit (HCWEOM 65);
- "Songs" in general which direct the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord;
- Celebration of the Divine Office;
- Hymns and canticles from the Divine Office;
- Hymns and canticles appropriate to the liturgical season;
- Periods of silence.

PERMITS

- Recitation of the Rosary, understood as a Christocentric meditation ([DPPL](#) 165) – see also the relevant [Letter](#) from the Vatican.

DISCOURAGES

- Other forms of devotion, especially to Our Lady and the Saints. ([DPPL](#) 165; HCWEOM, note on p. 54)

HCWEOM n. 58 expects that even a "short" period of exposition has time for, and contains, readings from Scripture, songs, prayers and silent prayer. Exposition for the sole purpose of imparting Benediction is expressly forbidden.

In the past, it was customary to give special reverence to the Blessed Sacrament when exposed by genuflecting on both knees (a “double genuflection”). The Church now asks for a single genuflection (one knee only: HCWEOM n. 53), to emphasise that Christ is present in the same way whether exposed or reposed.

It is normative (HCWEOM n. 54) that when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in a monstrance, incense should be used and 4 or 6 candles be lit. The norm presupposes that the same number of candles, at least 4, are customary for Mass – the mind of the Church is clearly that for simple Exposition, the number of candles should be the same as for a simple Mass. In England & Wales, it is common practice that only two altar candles are used for Mass, and the omission of the rubric requiring at least 4 candles for a monstrance in the recent [Guide](#) should be taken as implying that in such cases, only 2 candles should be used for exposition – though strictly the law seems to require the restoration of at least 4 candles for Mass.

In the new [GIRM](#), n. 277 specifies that the Blessed Sacrament is to be honoured by “three swings of the thurible”. Double swings are not specified, nor is it ever prescribed that the chains should clink when swung. Three distinct, and silent, single swings of the thurible suffice to fulfil the current rite, though three double swings would also be permissible, and in keeping with past practice. The symbolism is visual and olfactory, not audible; incense should visibly rise from the thurible. There are no rubrics concerning the use of a bell in the current rite of Benediction. Nor do the current rubrics specify the [old practice](#) (still presumed) that the incense is not to be blessed when in the presence of the exposed Sacrament.

For exposing or simply reposing the Blessed Sacrament, a cleric should wear a stole over an alb or over a cassock and surplice (HCWEOM n. 57). The minister spends a brief time in adoration and says a prayer with the faithful present. For giving Benediction, a cleric uses a *white* cope and humeral veil (HCWEOM n. 61). An extraordinary minister of holy communion may expose and repose the sacrament, but not give a blessing (HCWEOM n. 60); unless there are diocesan policies, such a minister [may](#) wear an alb or appropriate normal clothing.

There are slightly different rubrics in HCWEOM for “exposition in the ciborium”. I have not related those here because this custom is rarely used except on Maundy Thursday.

There are also [norms for Eucharistic processions](#).

Above all, remember that the Church expects reverent silence to be a significant part of Eucharistic Adoration; and the security of the Blessed Sacrament is paramount.

Additional insight for the rite of Benediction may be gained from Chapter 11 of Peter Elliott’s [Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite \(Volume I\)](#) – which does not simply give the liturgical law of the Church, but also fills in details which are not specified in official documents, in the light of past tradition and customary practice.

THE NORMATIVE PATTERN FOR BENEDICTION IN THE MONSTRANCE

Preparation

Incense is prepared – the lit thurible near the altar of adoration if there is no thurifer. The altar is prepared with a corporal (and throne), and a suitable number of candles. The cleric vests in alb or cassock & surplice, with a white stole. The sanctuary and body of the church are suitably illuminated. Any booklets, hymnals, etc., needed for Benediction are distributed beforehand.

If there is a long distance to carry the Blessed Sacrament from its tabernacle to the altar, the minister should use a humeral veil and be accompanied by candles.

Opening

A song *may* be sung while the minister comes to the altar. The minister exposes the Blessed Sacrament on the altar. After a moment of personal adoration, the minister sings or says a prayer. The minister incenses the Blessed Sacrament with three swings. He may then withdraw, or remain throughout adoration.

During

According to what HCWEOM says “should” take place, the content should include:

- Readings from Scripture
- Brief homilies and exhortations
- Songs
- Prayers
- Periods of silence.

Benediction

The minister approaches the altar, genuflects, and kneels. While the congregation sings a Eucharistic Song, the minister, kneeling, incenses the Blessed Sacrament. After the song, the minister stands, and says “Let us pray.” After a pause, he prays one of the seven collects given at HCWEOM 68; it is presumed that his hands are in the *orans* position. The minister puts on the humeral veil, genuflects, and takes the monstrance. He makes the sign of the Cross over the people in silence.

Conclusion

The minister who gave Benediction, or another cleric, replaces the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Meanwhile, the people *may* (but needn’t) sing or say an acclamation. There is no ritual reason to place the monstrance back on the altar, but the practicalities of removing the Blessed Sacrament from the monstrance may require this.

After replacing the Sacrament in the tabernacle, the reposing minister genuflects. After reposition, it is commendable for the celebrant to lead the congregation to an image of the Blessed Virgin for a hymn or antiphon in her honour, followed by a traditional prayer.

At the end of the service, the minister leaves without further ceremony.

Traditional Forms

The following elements are traditionally included, but none of them are specified in the current rite:

(a) *Tantum Ergo*

Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui:
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui:
Praestet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui.

Genitori, Genitoque,
Laus et jubilatio.
Salus. honor. virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio;
Procedenti ab utroque;
Compar sit laudatio.

The *Tantum Ergo*, part of the Mass of the Lord's Supper and often used as the Eucharistic Hymn immediately before Benediction, is actually the last two verses of St Thomas Aquinas' hymn *Pange Lingua*. In current liturgical use it is usually sung to one of two tunes: the [plainchant tone of the Pange Lingua](#) or the tune *St Thomas* from S. Webbe's 1792 *Mottetts or Antiphons*. Confusingly, there is also a lesser-used [tune](#) called *Tantum Ergo*, also by Webbe. It could also be sung to other [87.87.87](#) tunes, notably [Picardy](#) (known for the words *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*). These tunes are also valuable for the Office Hymns at Morning Prayer and the Office of Readings on Good Friday.

The full text of the *Pange Lingua* can be found in English and Latin in many hymn books: see under "Sing, my tongue, the Savior's glory" or "Of the glorious body telling" for common translations, also "Come adore this wondrous presence" for just the *Tantum Ergo* verses. The full text is also available in Welsh, to the same metre, n. 32 in the 2006 *Emynau Catholig*, ISBN 0-9552697-0-9.

(b) Short Responory

The following versicle and response is often used as a bridge between the *Tantum Ergo* and the Collect. In practice, few people seem to know the English form, and it exists in popular memory in subtly different translations.

☩ *Panem de caelo praestitisti eis.*

☩ **Omne delectamentum in se habentem.**

☩ *You have given your people bread from heaven.*

☩ **The bread which is full of all goodness.**

(c) The Divine Praises

The following acclamations may be spoken by the celebrant and whole congregation together, or said first by the celebrant and echoed by the people. Common practice is that they are said after Benediction and before the repose of the Blessed Sacrament, even though the version of HCWEOM for England & Wales does not specifically allow for prayers to be said at this point. For a discussion of the proper place of the Divine Praises, see [McNamara](#).

Blessed be God.

Blessed be His Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most Holy.

Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her Glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the Name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints.

(d) O Salutaris

This common Latin hymn was [traditionally used](#) at the time of opening the tabernacle or placing the Blessed Sacrament on the altar. It is often used with the tune [Melcombe](#) though other [Long Metre](#) tunes are possible. For English versions, see hymnals under “O Saving Victim”.

O salutáris hôstia

Quae caeli pandis ôstium

Bella premunt hostilia

Da robur, fer auxilium.

Uni Trinóque Domino

Sit sempitérna gloria

Qui vitam sine término

Nobis donet in pátria.

(e) Adoremus in Aeternum

Another common Latin hymn. The people may sing the whole text, or complement a cantor with the initial and final stanzas and the response to the *Gloria Patri*.

Adorémus in aetérnum

santissimum Sacraméntum.

Laudáte Dóminum, omnes gentes;

Laudáte eum omnes pópuli.

Quóniam confirmáta

est super nos misericórdia ejus;

et véritas Dómini manet in aetérnum.

Glória Patri et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saécula saeculórum. Amen.

Adorémus in aetérnum

santissimum Sacraméntum.

THE TRADITIONAL PATTERN FOR BENEDICTION IN THE MONSTRANCE

Preparation, opening and prayers during Exposition proceed as above, using O Salutaris as the opening song.

O salutáris hôstia
Quae caeli pandis óstium
Bella premunt hostilia
Da robur, fer auxilium

Uni Trinóque Domino
Sit sempitérna gloria
Qui vitam sine término
Nobis donet in pátria.

Benediction

The minister approaches the altar, genuflects, and kneels.
While the congregation sings the *Tantum Ergo*, the minister, kneeling, incenses the Blessed Sacrament with three double swings.

Tantum ergo Sacraméntum
Venerémur cernui:
Et antiquum documéntum
Novo cedat ritui:
Praestet fides suppleméntum
Sénsuum deféctui.

Genitori, Genitoque,
Laus et jubilatio.
Salus. honor. virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio;
Procedénti ab utroque;
Compar sit laudátio.

After the song, the minister stands, and leads the responsory:

Ÿ *Panem de caelo praestitisti eis.*

Ŕ **Omne delectamentum in se habentem.**

OR

Ÿ *You have given your people bread from heaven.*

Ŕ **The bread which is full of all goodness.**

He then says “Let us pray:” / “Oremus:”

After a pause, he prays the following collect with hand in the *orans* position:

Deus qui nobis sub Sacramento mirabilis passionis tuae memoriam reliquisti,
tribue quaesumus, ita nos corporis et sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari;
Ut redemptionis tuae fructum in nobis iugiter sentiamus.
Qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

OR

O God, who in this wonderful sacrament has left us a memorial of your passion, Help us so to reverence the sacred mysteries of your body and blood that we may always experience in our lives the effects of your redemption. Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

The minister puts on the humeral veil, genuflects, and takes the monstrance. He makes the sign of the Cross over the people in silence. He then returns the monstrance to the altar and leads the people in the Divine Praises.

Blessed be God.
Blessed be His Holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.
Blessed be the Name of Jesus.
Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most Holy.
Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her Glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the Name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints.

The minister who gave Benediction, or another cleric, now replaces the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Meanwhile, the people *may* (but needn't) sing or say an acclamation, perhaps *Adoremus in Aeternum*.

Adorémus in aetérnum
santissimum Sacraméntum.

Laudáte Dóminum, omnes gentes;
Laudáte eum omnes pópuli.

Quóniam confirmáta
est super nos misericórdia ejus;
et véritas Dómini manet in aetérnum.

Glória Patri et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saécula saeculórum. Amen.

Adorémus in aetérnum
santissimum Sacraméntum.

After replacing the Sacrament in the tabernacle, the reposing minister genuflects.

After reposition, it is commendable for the celebrant to lead the congregation to an image of the Blessed Virgin for a hymn or antiphon in her honour, followed by a traditional prayer. At the end of the service, the minister leaves without further ceremony.

Additional Resources

Volume I of HCWEOM contains a wealth of useful material in appendices. Particularly worth reading are the “Pastoral Points” on pp. 83-85. Other material can be found online.

Useful Advice

p. 82 Catechetical Points

p. 83 Pastoral Points – *highly recommended*

It is possible to introduce even young children to Adoration; some useful resources to assist with this may be produced by [Children of Hope](#). In the UK, useful resources have been produced by Jean Merriman in Northampton.

Jean Merriman - presenting Workshop: ‘Let the children come to me’ From the [2006 Celebrate Conference](#)

Mother to 5 grown-up children, Jean became a Catholic at 17. Her Faith was ‘head stuff’ for years. The breakthrough to ‘her heart’ happened one weekend at her Sacred Heart Parish, Northampton, when Fr John Edwards ran a mission to establish ongoing Eucharistic Adoration. During one session Jean became suddenly aware of the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and fell totally in love with Him in that form!

7 years later she experienced Charismatic Renewal, finding the reality of the Lord outside the context, of the Eucharist. The Lord has since led her to draw children to Him in the Eucharist. A teacher and RE and liturgy coordinator for St. Mary’s Catholic Primary School in Northampton, Jean passionately committed to passing on her Faith, leading children into a living relationship with Jesus and facilitating its growth. The challenge is that so many pupils have no religious background and few come from practising Catholic families. With the support of her Head, Jean has modelled, taught and led the school in a variety of ways of praying, believing each effects a response in different children.

An exciting development came from leading a short period of Exposition after a Corpus Christi Mass. It was so well received - with children so attentive - a service with short exposition session now takes place each half term. *‘By far the most important thing we have done. The response is amazing and immediate.’*

Her ‘Let the children come to Me’ workshop encourages adults to do this in their own communities. Jean says: “I am sure there is real hunger in children to be led to the Lord, to spend quality time in his presence, sing to Him, hear His word, be led by guided meditation and just left in silence to enjoy His Presence and His company. I tell them – ‘just enjoy being with Him’ - and they do !”

Content for Exposition Period

p. 62 Responsories

p. 66 Patterns of Exposition

p. 88 Sample Services for different liturgical seasons

See also the [suggestions](#) for the “Year of the Eucharist” in 2005.

p. 80 Meditation Prayers

p. 71 Thematic Scriptures

Volume II contains many more Scripture readings.

The six officially-approved [litanies](#) of the Church can be found at the bottom of this page.

p. 78 Litanies & Acclamations

Traditional Croatian Sung Litany

Hail Body of Jesus, consecrated on the altar

Hail Body of Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit

Hail Body of Jesus, born of the Virgin

Hail Body of Jesus, placed in a manger

Hail Body of Jesus, so greatly tortured

Hail Body of Jesus, nailed to the cross for us

Hail Body of Jesus, buried in a tomb

Hail Body of Jesus, risen on the third day

Hail Body of Jesus, ascended to Heaven

Hail Body of Jesus, glorified throughout the world

Hail Body of Jesus, given to all for our food

Hail Bread, sweeter than honey, food of faithful souls

Hail Trinity in unity, hail Jesus in divinity

Yours be the thanks, the praise, the glory most great.

Jesus, be praised for ever and ever.

Music

p. 59 & 75 Hymns

p. 61 Antiphons

p. 86 Background music

[Guide for Musicians](#)

[Selection of texts](#)

Simple chants can be very effective – a short phrase, easily memorised, means that worshippers don't have to keep looking at hymn books or service sheets when they could be gazing on the Eucharistic Presence of Jesus. While “O Sacrament Most Holy” is well-known, there are many other suitable chants.

Settings of the Eucharistic Acclamations “Lord by Your Cross and Resurrection” (especially on Fridays and in Lent) and “Dying You Destroyed Our Death” could be used appropriately.

In Christmastide, the “O Come Let Us Adore Him” refrain to *O Come All ye Faithful* ([*Adeste Fidelis*](#)) is very suitable.

“[He is Lord](#), [He is Lord](#), He is risen from the dead...” would be very appropriate on Sundays and in Eastertide.

Many [Taizé](#) chants will also be appropriate:

[*Jesus Remember Me*](#)

[*Laudate Dominum*](#)

[*Laudate Omnes Gentes*](#)

[*O Christe Domine Jesu*](#)

[*Ubi Caritas*](#)