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POPE LEO XIV AND THE EMBODIED FAITH WE NEED

WHEN Pope Leo XIV posted on X recently, his message struck a chord far deeper than a passing comment about social media. He wrote, “In recent years, many young people have approached the faith through social media, successful programs, and popular online Christian witnesses. The danger is that a faith discovered online is limited to individual experiences, which may be intellectually and emotionally reassuring, but never ‘embodied.’ Such experiences remain ‘disembodied,’ detached from the ‘ecclesial body.’”

There is something profoundly prophetic in those words. At a time when so many are discovering faith through online platforms, the Pope is not dismissing those encounters but reminding us that faith cannot live as an abstraction. Christianity is not an idea; it is an incarnation. To know Christ is to know Him in the flesh, in the community of believers, in the Eucharist, and in the faces of those who walk beside us. The Holy Father’s warning is not about technology itself but about the danger of isolation masquerading as connection. Faith cannot be downloaded; it must be lived, breathed, and shared.

We live in a moment when countless people first meet Jesus through a YouTube testimony or an Instagram reflection. For some, it’s a podcast that opens their heart; for others, it’s a series like *The Chosen* that stirs something deep within. I know someone personally who told me that after watching *The Chosen*, they felt something shift inside, they said, “I don’t know what happened, but I suddenly wanted to take my faith seriously.” That’s the power of storytelling and the reach of grace: God can enter through any doorway, even a digital one. These experiences matter. They awaken curiosity, reignite hope, and plant seeds of conversion in hearts that might otherwise remain untouched. But if those encounters never take root in a parish, if they never lead to the sacraments, to a pew, to confession, or to prayer shared in community, then something essential is missing. As Pope Leo reminds us, a “disembodied faith” risks remaining only emotional or inspirational, never fully maturing into discipleship.

The Church has always understood faith as communal. From the very beginning, the disciples were sent out two by two. The Acts of the Apostles tells not a story of solitary believers but of a living community, breaking bread, praying, forgiving, and growing as one body. Christianity was never meant to be “Jesus and me”; it has always been “Jesus and us.” And yet, our digital habits often pull us in the opposite direction. We scroll alone. We comment alone. We even pray alone before a screen, mistaking content consumption for communion.



In recent years, many young people have approached the faith through social media, successful programs and popular online Christian witnesses. The danger is that a faith discovered online is limited to individual experiences, which may be intellectually and emotionally reassuring, but never “embodied.” Such experiences remain “disembodied,” detached from the “ecclesial body.”

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Pope Leo's phrase "detached from the ecclesial body" should give us pause. The Church is not a virtual network of followers but a body, the Body of Christ. And bodies need presence. They need voice, touch, gesture, and the shared rhythm of human life. When faith becomes an online experience alone, it loses what makes it Christian: its sacramentality, its rootedness in the flesh. Ours is the faith of the Incarnation, the proof that God works through what is tangible, visible, and human.

For those of us called to shepherd souls, this message carries real pastoral weight. How do we engage digital platforms without letting them replace real community? How do we reach the generation that lives online while calling them back to the altar, to the confessional, to the parish hall? The key, I believe, is to keep the hierarchy of encounter clear: digital spaces can introduce someone to Christ, but only embodied spaces can sustain that relationship. Online content can spark faith, but it cannot replace the sacraments. Livestreamed Mass is a blessing, but it is no substitute for the Eucharist received in communion with the Body of believers. A homily on a podcast can inspire, but it cannot absolve.

As a pastor, I wrestle with this daily. I'm constantly asking how we can reach our people, how we can nurture their faith, and how we can help them encounter Christ amid the noise of modern life. Like many priests, I've tried to think creatively, to use social media wisely, to make the Gospel accessible to those who might never step into a church. And yet, what the Holy Father reminds us so wisely is that while creativity is valuable, the essence of our mission never changes. His message is not a critique of innovation; it is a call to stay rooted. We can and should use every tool available to us, but those tools must always lead people home: to the altar, to the parish, to the living Body of Christ where faith becomes flesh.

Our task as pastors and lay leaders is not to reject the digital world but to sanctify it, to make it a threshold, not a destination. The goal is to invite people from the glow of their screens back into the warmth of human fellowship. The next step after watching a talk online should be joining a Bible study, volunteering at a service project, or sitting down at a parish dinner. Faith flourishes not in isolation but in belonging. And belonging always leads to mission. Our faith was never meant to be static or private; it's meant to be shared, to be lived in relationship. Every authentic encounter with Christ sends us outward, toward the other, toward the wounded, toward the world in need of grace. A Christian who lives the faith alone risks missing the heart of discipleship. Connection may happen through pixels, but communion happens

through presence.

Pope Leo's message is both a warning and an invitation: a warning against disembodied belief, and an invitation to rediscover the faith that lives in the Body, the Church. And perhaps that is the most urgent call for us today: to remember that the faith we profess is not meant to live on a timeline, but at the table of the Lord, where hearts, not algorithms, are changed.

That brief X post from the Pope struck me like lightning. It was one of those rare moments when a single sentence can reorient an entire ministry. It reminded me, and I hope it reminds all of us in pastoral life, that our mission is not to build audiences, but to form disciples. May his words take root in us, shaping not only what we do, but how we live, love, and lead the people God has entrusted to our care. -RJV

- Fr. Vigoa



Technology and Confessions



RECENTLY, a situation came to the Archbishop's attention that I think is worth bringing to all of us, not to point fingers but simply to remind ourselves of the world we now serve in. A priest, trying to help a penitent with whom he shared no common language, decided to use a translation app on his phone inside the confessional. His intention was good. He wanted to understand the person in front of him. Afterward, he deleted the recording. But as we all know, with the technology we carry around today, "delete" doesn't always mean what we think it means. Phones back things up automatically. Cloud services store data even when we don't ask them to. And this is where the real concern lies.

Canon law is very clear about this: 1386 § 3. Without prejudice to the provisions of §§ 1 and 2, any person who by means of any technical device makes a recording of what is said by the priest or by the penitent in a sacramental confession, either real or simulated, or who divulges it through the means of social communication, is to be punished according to the gravity of the offense, not excluding, in the case of a cleric, by dismissal from the clerical state.

The Church uses strong language here because the seal isn't simply a rule; it is the protection of the penitent's dignity. If the faithful begin to feel that their words could end up on a server somewhere, even unintentionally, the trust that allows people to confess honestly evaporates.

Most of us have been in situations where we wish we spoke the language better. It's uncomfortable to be sitting with someone whose heart is open, and we're struggling to understand what they're saying. But the solution cannot be technological. If the confessor and the penitent truly cannot communicate sufficiently, then the sacrament cannot take place at that moment. There's nothing unkind about saying, "I'm sorry, I can't hear your confession properly, let me help you find someone who can." It honors the sacrament more than trying to patch things together with a phone in hand.

I know none of us would ever deliberately put the seal at risk. But sometimes we forget how much these devices actually capture and where that information goes. The safest practice, and really the only prudent practice, is to keep phones and anything capable of recording or transmitting outside the confessional entirely. Not on the shelf, not in the pocket, not on silent mode.

The Archbishop makes a good point in that canon law does allow the use of a person who is a translator (presuming that penitent agrees to it). That translator is under the confessional seal just like the priest.

We all know how easy it is, especially in the rush of ministry, to make a quick decision that feels harmless in the moment but can carry real consequences. This is simply a fraternal reminder to slow down and be attentive. We all want to serve well; we all want to understand the people who come to us. But there are boundaries we must respect for the good of the sacrament itself.

It's important that we make an intentional choice to protect the seal. Nearly everything today is captured or backed up without our awareness, and the confessional has to remain the one place where nothing is carried out but God's forgiveness.-RJV



Recovering the Sacred Waiting: Giving Advent Its Voice

EVERY year, around mid-November, the Church begins her quiet turn toward a new liturgical year. The readings shift, the lectionary's tone changes. The final weeks of Ordinary Time grow more apocalyptic in language, urging us to stay awake, to be ready, to keep our lamps burning. Yet in many parishes, Advent barely starts before Christmas trees begin to appear in the sanctuary, and the season meant for waiting is lost in the rush to rejoice.

It's a habit born of good intentions. Parishioners are eager to decorate, choirs want to sing familiar carols, and the culture around us begins celebrating Christmas sometime after Halloween. But as pastors and liturgical leaders, we must ask ourselves a hard question: What are we teaching our people when we skip over Advent?

Advent is not a prelude to Christmas, it is a season unto itself, rich with its own tone, theology, and grace. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal describes it as a time of "devout and joyful expectation," when the Church prepares to celebrate the coming of the Lord in both remembrance and hope. It is a time marked not by the bright light of fulfillment, but by the steady glow of longing. The prayers of the Missal, the readings of Isaiah, the haunting beauty of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" all draw us into a holy tension between what has already come and what is still yet to be revealed.

To rush through Advent is to rush through desire itself. And desire is the soul of faith. We are meant to ache for the Savior, to feel the poverty of our own hearts so that His coming may truly fill us. That is why the Church gives us this time of stillness and restraint before the exuberance of Christmas.

Advent's power lies precisely in what it withholds. The Gloria falls silent. The liturgical color shifts to violet, the tone of penitence and royalty. Even the environment of the church should feel different: simpler, quieter, expectant. As the *Directory on Popular Piety* reminds us, Advent "should be presented to the faithful as a time of expectant waiting and of conversion."



But this can only happen if we let Advent breathe. When a parish fills the sanctuary with poinsettias and nativity scenes in early December, we blur the line between the promise and its fulfillment. The beauty of Christmas depends on Advent's restraint; otherwise, everything feels like one long party without a reason to celebrate.

Pastorally, this requires courage. It's not easy to resist cultural pressure or to explain to parishioners why the nativity scene is not yet displayed in full, or why we might save the Christmas carols for the Christmas season itself, which, liturgically, begins *after* December 24 and continues through the Epiphany. But if we, as leaders, model patience, we teach something countercultural and profoundly Christian: that holiness grows in waiting, that God reveals Himself not on our schedule but in His time. At St. Augustine's, we've made a conscious decision to live that rhythm intentionally. We don't decorate for Christmas until the very end of Advent, the evening of the 23rd or even the morning of the 24th (depending on what day it falls in the week). Until then, the church remains simple and reverent, clothed sparse quiet beauty. The effect is powerful. When the sanctuary finally bursts into light and color on Christmas Eve, when the poinsettias appear, the Nativity scene is unveiled, and the "Gloria" returns to the liturgy, the joy feels earned, almost electric. You can see it in people's faces: the sense that something holy has arrived, that the waiting mattered. It's not about withholding beauty; it's about letting the heart prepare for it.

Advent is not a season of absence; it is a season of attentiveness. It is the Church's invitation to make space, for silence, for prayer, for confession, for charity. This is the time to rekindle the communal practices that have grown dormant: Advent vespers, evening adoration, the lighting of the wreath at home, parish retreats on hope or watchfulness. Imagine if, instead of racing to decorate, our communities gathered one evening each week simply to pray together by candlelight, to let Isaiah's words echo in the dark: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

So perhaps this November, as we begin again the cycle of the Church's year, we can renew our pastoral commitment to the wisdom of the liturgy. Resist the urge to fill the space too soon. Let Advent be Advent. Let longing teach us again how to love the Lord who comes not in noise but in stillness.

As priests, deacons, and parish ministers, our task is not to keep up with the world's calendar, but to help our people live in God's time. The world rushes toward Christmas; the Church waits for Christ. That difference, if we protect it, might just be the greatest gift we offer our people this year.

Roles at the Doxology: Who Elevates the Chalice in the Roman Rite

EVERY year, around mid-November, the Church begins her quiet turn toward a new liturgical year. The readings shift, the lectionary's tone changes. The final weeks of Ordinary Time grow more apocalyptic in language, urging us to stay awake, to be ready, to keep our lamps burning. Yet in many parishes, Advent barely starts before Christmas trees begin to appear in theOne of the most visually and spiritually powerful moments of the Mass is the doxology at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, "through him, and with him, and in him...", when the priest elevates the gifts and the assembly responds "Amen." Because of its significance, the Church has carefully defined who performs each gesture in this moment. Yet in practice, confusion sometimes arises, especially in celebrations with concelebrating priests and no deacon present.

According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM ¶180), when a deacon is assigned to the Mass, then at the concluding doxology "the deacon stands next to the priest and holds the chalice elevated while the priest elevates the paten with the host, until the people have acclaimed, Amen." In this scenario, the elevating of the chalice is clearly the function of the deacon, not the concelebrating priest. The gesture is more than practical: it expresses the distinct ministry of the deacon at the altar and visually manifests his service to the priest and the gathered Church.

What then happens when there is no deacon assisting? The same GIRM (¶151) states that in such cases "the priest takes the paten with the host and the chalice and elevates them both." The text leaves no room for a concelebrating priest to carry out the specific role of chalice elevation normally reserved for the deacon. All elevating is done by the principal celebrant alone. Past liturgical commentary has emphasized that concelebrants do not step into the deacon's function of chalice elevation at this point. In other words, if there is no deacon, the celebrant alone elevates both the paten and the chalice.

That said, many of us have seen situations where, out of courtesy or a desire to include others, the principal celebrant instinctively offers the chalice to a concelebrating priest standing beside him. It can feel awkward to leave another priest "empty-handed" in such a visible moment, and the impulse to share the gesture

often comes from genuine fraternity. Still, this is one of those instances where good intention can blur the clarity of the rite. The General Instruction is unambiguous: in the absence of a deacon, the principal celebrant lifts both elements himself.

How, then, can this be handled gracefully? The best approach is quiet preparation. Before Mass, the celebrant or master of ceremonies can gently explain that the doxology will follow the prescribed form, that he will lift both the paten and chalice alone, and invite the concelebrants to maintain the gesture of prayerful reverence. Framed positively, this avoids embarrassment while modeling obedience to the Church's norms. In the end, fidelity to the rubrics need not feel like exclusion; it is an act of humility, a sign that all of us, celebrants and concelebrants alike, stand under the authority of the liturgy we serve.

Why does this matter? On the surface it might seem a small technicality, but in fact it touches the integrity of the liturgy. The Mass is not simply a collection of tasks to be divided arbitrarily. Each gesture, posture and assignment of ministry carries theological meaning. The diaconal elevation of the chalice is an expression of the diaconate's service at the altar; the exclusive elevation by the presiding priest, in the absence of a deacon, preserves the logic of ordained ministry. When concelebrating priests assume the deacon's role, the symbolic grammar becomes unclear. It can undermine the clarity of hierarchical roles and, by extension, obscure the unity and distinctiveness built into the rite.

As priests, our task is not only to do things well, but to do them faithfully. The beauty of the Mass is amplified when the gestures follow the text and the theology embedded in the rite. So, whether you are an altar server, a master of ceremonies, a deacon, a concelebrating priest, or part of the assembly, let us attend carefully and reverently to this moment in the Eucharistic Prayer.

In practical terms:

- If a deacon is present, the celebrant elevates the paten, the deacon elevates the chalice.
- If no deacon is present, the celebrant alone elevates both the paten and chalice; concelebrants do not elevate the chalice.
- This is not a local custom but the universal norm of the Roman Rite.

May our attention to such details reflect our love for the Eucharist, love for the ordained ministries of the Church, and love for the people entrusted to our care. When the liturgy is celebrated in faithfulness to its text and tradition, deeper encounter with Christ becomes possible.- RJV

Beauty, Moderation, and Mystery: Advent and Christmas in the Parish Environment

EVERY year as Advent approaches, pastors and liturgy coordinators face familiar questions: *How much decoration is appropriate? When should the Nativity scene be displayed? Can it be placed within the sanctuary?* These are good and important questions, because they touch the heart of how we celebrate the mysteries of faith through beauty, reverence, and restraint.

The Church gives clear but pastoral guidance. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (no. 305) reminds us that “moderation should be observed in the decoration of the altar.” During Advent, floral arrangements and visual ornamentation should reflect the quiet, expectant character of the season, without expressing prematurely the full joy of Christmas. The point is not to make the church feel barren, but to let simplicity preach. As we mentioned before, Advent’s beauty is one of restraint, a quiet anticipation that prepares the heart to recognize the Word made flesh.

The same paragraph goes on to state that “floral decorations should always be done with moderation and placed around the altar rather than on its *mensa*.” This distinction matters. The altar itself is Christ; it should remain free of clutter or competition. Flowers and greenery, when used, should draw attention toward the altar, not away from it.

When Christmas finally arrives, the tone changes completely. Then, and only then, the Church’s joy bursts forth in full color and song. The poinsettia, so often used during the Christmas season, becomes a sign of that joy, its red flowers recall the Incarnation and the precious blood of Christ. left hanging, without the voice of the Church’s ordained minister bringing it to completion.

As for the placement of the Christmas crèche, there are no official universal norms, but tradition and good pastoral sense provide guidance. Many parishes choose to situate the Nativity scene off to one side of the sanctuary or in another visible area where the faithful can approach, pray, and reflect. The goal should be accessibility and devotion, not distraction.

In some churches, particularly those with generous space, the Nativity scene finds a beautiful home in a side chapel or a dedicated devotional area. What matters most is that the faithful can come close, kneel, and contemplate the

mystery of Bethlehem. The crèche is not merely decoration; it is catechesis in wood and straw. It preaches the humility of God who chose to be born among the poor and the forgotten.

Another pastoral question arises around Christmas celebrations involving children, particularly pageants or dramatizations of the Nativity. These can be wonderful tools of catechesis, but we must be careful about where and when they take place. *The Directory for Masses with Children* provides helpful parameters. While children should be encouraged to participate in the liturgy, serving, reading, bringing up the gifts, singing, the Mass itself is not a stage for dramatization. Processions, gestures, and visual symbols are encouraged as ways to engage the senses and imagination of children, but theatrical performances belong before or after the liturgy, not within it.

The purpose of these norms is not to restrict creativity, but to protect the integrity of the sacred action. The liturgy is always an encounter with Christ in mystery, not a reenactment of history. When we blur those lines, we risk replacing contemplation with entertainment.

Advent teaches us that beauty has a rhythm, that the heart needs silence before song. Our churches should mirror that wisdom. By observing moderation, by honoring the slow unfolding of the liturgical year, we allow our people not just to see Christmas, but to feel it, like light breaking into darkness, like hope finding its home. -RJV



The Priest's Vestments and the Integrity of the Eucharist

EVERY element of the sacred liturgy, even what may seem small or merely practical, carries meaning. Recently a priest asked me about the proper vesture of a priest when celebrating Mass privately, whether, for the sake of convenience, he may celebrate wearing only an alb and stole, without a chasuble.

The Church's answer is clear: the chasuble is not optional.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) and the instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (no. 123) both reaffirm that the chasuble is the *proper vestment* of the priest celebrant at Mass, to be worn over the alb and stole. It is not merely decorative; it signifies the priest's unique participation in the sacrifice of Christ. As the stole represents priestly authority, the chasuble represents charity, the virtue that "covers all things" (1 Pet 4:8) and that must enfold every priest as he acts *in persona Christi*.

Only in those rare instances when the Holy See has expressly granted a dispensation, such as for reasons of persecution, missionary necessity, or severe hardship, may a priest omit the chasuble. Even in private Masses or small settings, the rubrics call for the same dignity and visible sign of the sacred action. The Eucharist is never "private" in the ordinary sense; it is always the act of Christ and His Church.

The attention given to vesture is not clerical fussiness but theological integrity. The external signs help the faithful, and the priest himself, recognize that something extraordinary is taking place. Each element, from the vestments to the vessels, communicates that what happens at the altar is unlike anything else on earth: it is the re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary in sacramental form.

In the words of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*:

"The vestment proper to the priest celebrant at Mass... is the chasuble, worn over the alb and stole. Ordinaries should be vigilant that all contrary practices be eradicated."

In short, vestments matter. They remind us that the liturgy is never about convenience, it is about reverence, mystery, and fidelity to what the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has handed on. -RJV



When Does the Sunday Mass Begin? Understanding the Saturday Evening Liturgy

EVERY Catholic knows or should know the importance of the Sunday Eucharist. Many also know that attending Mass on Saturday evening fulfills the Sunday obligation. Yet, questions often arise: What exactly makes a Saturday evening Mass a Sunday Mass? Is it simply a matter of time? Or do the readings and prayers determine it? And what about weddings or other special liturgies celebrated on Saturdays, do they count?

To answer these questions, we need to look briefly at the Church's tradition and law.

The practice of anticipating the celebration of a feast the evening before is not new. It goes back to ancient Jewish custom, in which a day was understood to begin at sundown, "there was evening and there was morning" (Gen 1:5). The early Church inherited this rhythm. Major feasts, including Sunday, were often begun with evening prayer, known as *First Vespers*.

The Gospels even reflect this understanding. On Good Friday, the body of Jesus was placed in the tomb hastily "before the Sabbath began", what we would still call Friday evening. The Church's eventual practice of celebrating the Sunday Mass on Saturday evening draws from this same ancient sense of sacred time: that the "new day" begins with the setting of the sun.

In our modern liturgical law, this custom is expressed in Canon 1248 §1, which states that "the precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite, either on the holy day itself or on the evening of the previous day."

Practically speaking, this means that any Catholic Mass celebrated after approximately 4:00 p.m. on Saturday can fulfill the Sunday obligation. The Code does not tie the obligation to a particular set of readings or prayers, it is the time of celebration and the intent of the faithful that matter most.

However, while the law provides a minimum standard, pastoral prudence invites us to aim higher. The anticipated Mass should express the spirit of Sunday, not simply the convenience of scheduling. The Church's preference is that the liturgy use the Sunday prayers and readings, clearly marking the transition into the Lord's Day.

This question arises often: If a couple celebrates their wedding on a Saturday evening, does that wedding Mass fulfill the Sunday obligation for those attending?

If the wedding begins after 4:00 p.m., the faithful who participate would fulfill the Sunday precept, even if the readings and prayers are from the Rite of Marriage rather than the Sunday texts. This follows the clear teaching of Canon 1248 §1, which allows participation in *any* Catholic Mass on the evening prior to the holy day to satisfy the obligation.

That said, liturgical and pastoral wisdom suggest something more. While liturgical law permits a Saturday evening wedding Mass to fulfill the Sunday obligation without requiring the Sunday readings, many diocesan guidelines encourage or even require that the Sunday Mass texts, or at least one Sunday reading, be incorporated. This provides clarity to the faithful and preserves the unity of the Church's liturgical rhythm.

For instance, the Diocese of Baton Rouge's "Guide for the Order of Celebrating Matrimony on a Saturday Evening" notes:

"If a wedding Mass is celebrated after the anticipated Sunday vigil Mass, the Ritual Mass and its readings are used. However, if the wedding occurs on a Sunday or solemnity, the Mass propers of the day must be used, though one reading that explicitly speaks of Marriage may be substituted."

This guidance reflects the Church's broader vision: that pastoral practice should balance flexibility with fidelity, ensuring that every liturgy celebrated at the threshold of Sunday draws hearts into the mystery of the Resurrection.

It's worth remembering that these provisions are not about checking a box, but about honoring the sanctity of the Lord's Day. The Saturday evening Mass is meant to help the faithful begin their Sunday worship well, not to reduce it to an obligation of convenience.

The Church gives this flexibility out of pastoral care for her people, but she also invites us to a deeper love of the Eucharist. The goal is not simply to "get to Mass," but to enter into the mystery of Christ's Resurrection, which every Sunday celebrates. Whether our parishioners attend on Saturday evening or Sunday morning, the invitation is the same: to keep the Lord's Day holy, to gather as a family of faith, and to let the rhythm of the week be shaped by the rhythm of grace.- RJV



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The English Edition of the Liturgy of the Hours Receives Vatican Approval

FOR generations, Catholics around the English-speaking world have relied on the four-volume *Liturgy of the Hours*, where scripture, hymnody, and prayer that sanctifies the hours of each day. Now, a new chapter is unfolding: after years of careful work, the English translation of the Liturgy of the Hours has been approved by the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments of the Holy See.

This isn't simply a book being updated for form's sake. The Liturgy of the Hours is the *prayer of the Church*, meant not only for clergy and religious, but increasingly for lay faithful who wish to weave daily encounter with God into the rhythm of their lives. The approved English edition promises greater accuracy, renewed beauty, and renewed accessibility.

The journey to approval has been long and deliberate. In November 2012 the U.S. Bishops committed to a revision of the English edition. Months of work followed: translations, editorial reviews, Vatican recognitions. In May 2025, the manuscript of the Second Edition was transmitted to the Holy See.

Now, the publishing-phase is underway. According to this week's developments, the first volume of the new edition will be released in time for Lent and Easter of 2027.

What We Should Prepare For

- **Formation:** Parishes, campus ministries, and religious communities will need to plan how to introduce the new texts. This is a moment not just of transition, but renewal.
- **Resources:** New bound editions (standard, large-print, premium) are being announced, with publishers like Ascension Press already engaging in preparation.
- **Invitation:** Every baptized person is invited to encounter the Liturgy of the Hours not just as obligation, but as opportunity, a chance to "hold the world in prayer," to let the Church's voice become our voice.

In a world where time slips by, the Liturgy of the Hours invites us to *live the day prayerfully*. Each hour becomes a moment to lift our hearts, join our voices, and align our lives with the one who holds all things together. -RJV



Who May Expose the Blessed Sacrament? A Reflection on Reverence and Right Practice

AMONG the many questions that arise in parish life, few touch the heart of Eucharistic devotion as deeply as this one: Who may expose the Blessed Sacrament for adoration?

At first glance, the answer might seem simple, surely this is the priest's role. Yet, in practice, many parishes today are blessed to have perpetual adoration chapels or extended hours of exposition, where ordained ministers may not always be available. The Church, in her wisdom, foresees these circumstances and provides clear guidance rooted in both reverence and pastoral prudence.

The 1973 instruction *Eucharistiae Sacramentum* offers the foundation for this discussion. It states that the "ordinary minister of exposition of the Eucharist is a priest or deacon." However, when neither is available or if they are lawfully impeded, the Church allows that an instituted acolyte or another extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may publicly expose and later repose the Eucharist for the adoration of the faithful (nos. 91-92).

This permission is not casual delegation; it is an exception governed by deep reverence. Such a minister may open the tabernacle, place the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance, or repose it afterward, but may never give Benediction. That final blessing belongs to Christ acting through the ordained minister.

The Church distinguishes between two forms of adoration:

- Solemn exposition- with incense, candles, and processional rites, is reserved to priests and deacons.
- Simple exposition- the quiet placing of the Eucharist in a monstrance or opening of the tabernacle, may be performed by a properly authorized lay minister, always without incense or blessing.

If a priest or deacon is available, he should always be the one to expose and repose the Eucharist. Delegation is meant for true necessity, not convenience.

The Eucharist is never "ordinary." Even simple exposition must be marked by dignity and prayerful preparation. Familiarity with the Eucharist should not lead to casual handling of what is most holy. Pope St. John Paul II once wrote, "The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love." That sacred waiting deserves our utmost reverence.

Parishes that entrust laypersons with this ministry should ensure proper formation, clear delegation by the pastor or bishop, and a visible spirit of devotion. The Church's goal is not clerical restriction but the protection of mystery, ensuring that every act surrounding the Eucharist reveals faith, not routine.

In many communities, lay ministers have helped sustain Eucharistic adoration where it might otherwise fade. Their quiet fidelity allows countless others to encounter the living Christ. When done according to the Church's norms, their ministry is not a replacement for priestly service but an extension of the Church's desire that "Christ be adored in every place and time."

To expose the Blessed Sacrament is not simply to perform a task, it is to unveil the mystery of love itself. Whether by priest, deacon, or duly authorized layperson, what matters most is the reverence with which the Lord is adored. The beauty of Eucharistic adoration lies not in who exposes the Host, but in the hearts that bow before it.- RJV

