

The Church has a rich tradition of conducting Eucharistic processions as one method for venerating the Blessed Sacrament. Eucharistic processions are also an act of public witness to our faith.

However, not every circumstance is favorable for a public procession, and the diocesan Bishop is given the authority to decide “on both the advisability of such processions in today’s conditions and on the time, place, and plan for them that will ensure their being carried out with decorum and without loss of reverence toward the Blessed Sacrament” (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 386).

As with Exposition and Adoration, there are official rubrics for Eucharistic processions, and they are contained in the same ritual book: *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass*, specifically in paragraphs 101-108. (Elaborations may be found in the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, paragraphs 386-394).

Whenever Eucharistic processions are celebrated, they are golden opportunities to familiarize the faithful with the way these devotional practices are envisioned and regulated by Church documents. In the last 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.

Q. When is a eucharistic procession conducted?

A. It is preferred that the procession immediately follow a Mass at which the host is consecrated; in this way, the action can be seen as flowing from our Eucharistic celebration, emphasizing the Mass as the source and summit of our faith. However, it is permitted to begin a 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). Ideally, scout a few places along the route where you can set up “stations” and pause for prayer.

Prior preparation 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?

(On the Order of Procession, see below.)

Q. What requisites should we prepare?

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

- a large host (one that is the proper size for your monstrance), in addition to the one from which the presider will consume during Mass. Place the larger hosts in the ciboria of hosts which will be presented and consecrated at Mass.
- a monstrance (and a stand for the monstrance, if available)
- a humeral veil
- two thuribles, charcoal, the incense boat, and matches
- candles or torchieres for servers (with glass followers or chimneys to protect the flame)
- candles for those in the procession who are not carrying something already

Q. Will 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.

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 happens after the Communion Rite?

A. The following order should be followed:

- During the distribution of Communion to the faithful, a monstrance is set on the altar, to one side of the corporal.
- When the Communion procession is completed and smaller hosts have been reserved in the tabernacle, the deacon or priest celebrant places the larger host in the lunette and places it in the monstrance. He sets it on the corporal, facing the people, and genuflects.
- The presider says the Prayer after Communion. The Concluding Rites are omitted.
- The presider may remove his chasuble and don a white cope.
- All (except the cross bearer and the candle bearers) genuflect, then kneel. A hymn of adoration is sung.
- The Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance is incensed.
- The humeral veil is brought to the presider.
- Wearing the humeral veil and with his hands covered, he takes the monstrance.
- He moves to his place in the procession, holding the monstrance slightly above eye level.
- All stand.

THE ORDER OF PROCESSION

Crossbearer

Server w/Candle Server w/Candle

Clergy in choir dress (those who did not concelebrate)

Concelebrants of the Mass (in chasubles)

MC

Server Thurifer 1 Thurifer 2 Server

Celebrant,
wearing chasuble or cope,
carrying monstrance
Deacon Deacon

Deacon Deacon

Choir and Music Ministers

The Faithful

NOTES

- Singing and chanting may accompany the procession, with printed worship aids to assist the people, and members of the choir in the procession to support the singing.
- The celebrant may offer prayers or bless the people with the monstrance at various stations along the way. This will look different in each community and depends upon what stops may be convenient or appropriate.
- Some processions may go from church to church or include shrines, etc., along their route.
- The procession ends with Solemn Benediction, either at the church where it began or at another church “or other suitable place” at the end of the route.
- All the faithful arrive at the terminus of the route, kneel, and sing a hymn of adoration.
- Benediction occurs as usual.
- More silent adoration may occur, or the Blessed Sacrament may be reposed at this point.
- If the Divine Praises are used, they are recited before the reposition.