

**DIOCESAN PROTOCOL
FOR USE AND DISPOSITION OF
CONSECRATED ELEMENTS AND RESERVED SACRAMENT
ADOPTED MARCH 17, 2010**

Introduction: The purpose of this document is to provide a standard for the clergy of the Diocese of Florida as regards the proper use and storage of the consecrated bread and wine. These protocols are based on three specific principles:

1. We are members of the Church Catholic, from which we inherit certain policies and procedures in keeping with sound ecclesiastical tradition. Our treatment of the consecrated elements and our use of the reserved sacrament must conform to that of the greater Church.
2. We are believers in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Thus our use of the consecrated elements and storage of the reserved sacrament must reflect this theological and spiritual truth. We treat the consecrated elements with reverence and respect.
3. We are upholders of the truth of the scriptures which clearly declare a primary purpose of the Eucharist to be the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ until He comes again. Thus our reception of the sacrament should normally occur within the context of this proclamation, ensuring that our personal piety does not overshadow this biblical revelation regarding the appropriate use of the sacrament.

A. The Use of the Reserved Sacrament in a Private Setting

1. The traditional purpose of reserving the sacrament is to communicate those who otherwise would not be able to receive Communion, i.e., the sick and shut in. When administering Communion from the Reserved Sacrament the consecrated elements are to be transported in either a pyx or a private communion kit specifically designed for this purpose. Common containers are not suitable for this purpose including plastic bottles or zip lock bags.

2. In the case of an ordained member of the clergy, he may prepare the communion kit or pyx personally. In the case of a Licensed Liturgical Minister, an ordained member of the clergy should prepare the communion kit or pyx and deliver it into his hands. The Licensed Liturgical Minister should proceed directly to the residence of the communicant and administer the Sacrament. The cleansed vessels may then be returned at a later time. At no time should a lay member of the congregation have long term possession of the consecrated elements.

3. It is highly recommended that a brief ceremony be included as part of the corporate worship service, during which time the communion kit is prepared at the altar and the Licensed Liturgical Minister is sent out with the priest's blessing. This keeps everyone in mind that the private administration of the sacrament is an extension of the corporate worship service.

B. The Use of the Reserved Sacrament in a Public Setting

1. The Reserved Sacrament is also used publically to provide the Eucharist at those parishes wherein a priest is not available and a deacon is celebrating a "Deacon's Mass." A form for such a celebration is available at the Cathedral office and is to be used for all celebrations by a deacon in the diocese. At no time, and under no circumstances, may a layman celebrate a public service using the Reserved Sacrament unless specific permission is obtained from the Bishop.

2. Whenever the celebrant of the Eucharist in a public setting is a priest, it is inappropriate for him to omit the Prayer of Consecration and make use of pre-consecrated elements. The only occasion where this is permissible is on Good Friday for the Mass of the Pre-sanctified. Otherwise the celebrant is to include the full Prayer of Consecration beginning with the Sursum Corda. The reason for this is simple. The focus of the Mass is, and always should be, the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection. The reception of the body and blood of Christ occurs within the context of this celebration. This is true even when the Reserved Sacrament is taken to the sick and shut-in; they are participating in the public celebration of the Eucharist by extension. When a priest administers from the Reserved Sacrament during a public service of worship the focus changes from the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection as commemorated in the Prayer of Consecration to the reception of the elements. This in turn reduces the public celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ to an act of personal piety and devotion.

3. The same can be said concerning the practice of using the Reserved Sacrament for frequent, if not daily, reception by clergy in their private devotions. Thus this practice is prohibited. If a priest desires to receive daily Eucharist, he is to celebrate the Mass using the Prayer of Consecration. In this regard, it is to be understood that private masses are likewise forbidden for theological and traditional reasons. A priest must have at least one other person present in order to celebrate the Eucharist.

C. The Storage of Consecrated Elements

1. Whenever the Sacrament is reserved, tradition dictates that great care be taken to ensure respectful treatment of the consecrated elements. This is not a matter of foolish superstition, but of genuine piety. The doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist which undergirds how we treat the consecrated elements during worship ought also to undergird how we treat the consecrated elements outside worship. Our intent is to honor and respect the Lord in everything we do. Proper treatment of the Sacrament, evidences proper reverence of the Lord.

2. The consecrated elements are to be reserved in an ambry or tabernacle suitable for this purpose. Said ambry or tabernacle should be consecrated by the Bishop and located in the sanctuary of the Church building, preferably in a prominent place behind the altar reflecting and symbolizing the presence of the Lord in the position of rule and reign in the church. A red or white sanctuary light must be burning whenever the Reserved Sacrament is present. Should circumstances prohibit the storage of the consecrated elements in the sanctuary, the Bishop's permission must be obtained for storage elsewhere. It will be at his discretion as to whether or not an alternative location for reservation of the sacrament meets the standard of proper reverence and respect. This is true whether the proposed alternative location is in an office or a home.

3. While it is often necessary for the clergy to retain possession of the consecrated elements for longer periods of time, it should not be for indefinite periods of time when no known ministry need is immediately present. It is strictly inappropriate, therefore, for the Reserved Sacrament to be carried about by the clergy for extended periods of time either on their person or in their vehicle. This is not simply a matter of spoilage, but of reverence. The clergy are to keep the consecrated elements in the ambry or tabernacle until they are needed for ministry purposes. Care should be taken not to allow the elements to spoil. Though varying conditions make it difficult to set a specific guideline in this regard, the elements should be checked, and, if necessary, replaced on a monthly basis.

D. The Disposition of Consecrated Elements

1. It is also important to dispose of any consecrated elements reverently and respectfully, as well as properly cleansing the vessels in which those elements resided. All remaining wine and bread should be consumed unless reserved in an ambry or tabernacle.

2. If at any time a piece of consecrated bread is dropped, the person administering the sacrament should immediately consume it. Should it have been partly consumed by the communicant, as is sometimes the case in a nursing home or hospital, the remaining portion should be placed in suitable container, such as an empty bread box, pyx, or purificator, for disposal later. Spilled wine should likewise be retrieved as much as possible with a purificator. Under ordinary circumstances both the bread and the wine should be consumed. Under extraordinary circumstances, however, the consecrated elements may be buried in the ground. Partially consumed hosts, or desecrated wine would qualify for extraordinary circumstances.

3. All vessels and purificators should be carefully cleansed according to common custom. This generally includes an initial cleansing of the vessels by the clergy during the service, known as ablutions, followed by a second cleansing by the altar guild. In the initial cleansing, the clergy consume the water used to cleanse the vessels. In the subsequent cleansing by the altar guild, the water used to cleanse the vessels is either poured onto the ground or into a piscina. The vessels may then be further cleansed in the normal manner. The linens likewise receive an initial rinsing to clean out the wine, the residue being poured onto the ground or into the piscina. The linens can then be laundered in the normal manner.

E. The Use of Consecrated Elements by the Laity

Since the sacramental ministry is especially associated with the ordained offices, the use of lay ministers to distribute the consecrated elements should be limited to those times and occasions wherein insufficient clergy are available for this purpose. This includes administering the elements during public services of worship, as well as taking the reserved sacrament to the sick and shut in.

Attested this date, March 17, 2010

The Most Reverend David R. Simpson, Bishop