

Tridentine Community News

November 11, 2007

Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament

One of the most encouraging developments on the liturgical scene over the last ten years has been the growth of Eucharistic Adoration, and in conjunction with that growth, the return to popularity of Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. At both Assumption in Windsor and St. Josaphat in Detroit, we hold Benediction following the Tridentine Mass once per month, typically on the first or second Sunday. At St. Josaphat, Benediction is also held every Monday evening after the 7:00 PM Tridentine Low Mass.

According to the Extraordinary Form, Benediction is considered a special liturgical service with its own specific rubrics and regional customs. It is not a part of Mass, but often (as in our case) follows Mass. The priest or deacon who is the minister of Benediction vests in a cope, as the use of the chasuble or dalmatic is reserved for Holy Mass itself. The cope must be white or the liturgical color of the day, if Benediction follows Mass.

The altar must be free of all non-essential objects. When Benediction follows Mass, the chalice, altar cards, and missal stand are removed. On the altar must be a burse containing a corporal (square linen cloth), and two candelabras holding six candles apiece.

As we have mentioned in previous columns, one often has to make do with what one has. At Assumption, we do not have the usual small candelabras that are placed on the altar. Instead, we use two larger versions of those candelabras that stand on the floor to the left and right of the altar. At St. Josaphat, we do have altar candelabras, however they only have five candles apiece. Yet another item for our checklist of to-dos!

A corporal must be spread on the altar, to catch any particles of the exposed Host that may fall off as the Host is placed into the monstrance. During exposition, the monstrance is placed either on the main altar stone or on a throne of some sort. At St. Josaphat, the monstrance is placed in the niche above the tabernacle, and in that niche is placed a smaller version of a corporal.

In the tabernacle is kept an extra, large Host, consecrated at a Mass on the same paten as the main Host that the priest consumes at Mass. This Host is kept inside a lunette, a small glass container.

The priest exposes the Blessed Sacrament by placing the lunette containing the Host inside the monstrance. A locking door ensures that the lunette will not fall out of the monstrance. The hymn *O Salutaris Hostia* is sung, typically to one of two popular melodies. During this hymn, the priest descends from the altar and puts incense into the thurible. While the altar servers hold the edges of his cope aside, the priest incenses the Blessed Sacrament with three double swings.

If the Benediction service is part of a novena or prayer service, prayer(s) appropriate to that service are now said. At St. Josaphat's Monday evening Benediction service, a Litany is

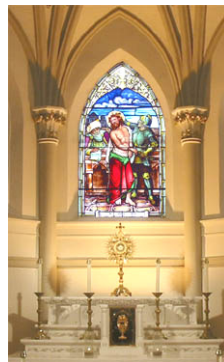
typically recited. If the Benediction service stands alone, there is a moment of silence.

The hymn *Tantum Ergo* is then begun. At the second line, "*venerémur cernui*" (we adore the Host), the priest and servers bow. Then the priest stands and adds more incense to the thurible and again incenses the Blessed Sacrament with three double swings.

The priest stands and sings a set of prayers in Latin, after which a Humeral Veil is draped around his shoulders. The purpose of the veil is to ensure that his hands, imperfect and sinful that they may be, do not directly come into contact with the monstrance during this most sacred action of blessing the people with our Lord really present. As the priest makes the sign of the cross over the people with the Blessed Sacrament, the bell is rung three times as the Blessed Sacrament is incensed with three double swings.

After placing the monstrance back on the altar, the priest descends and recites the Divine Praises. The form of the Divine Praises has changed somewhat over the years, so one will hear "Holy Ghost" at one church and "Holy Spirit" at another. The lines "Blessed be His Most Precious Blood" and "Blessed be the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete" were added in the latter part of the 20th century and may not be present in older hand missals.

The priest then ascends the altar, reposes the Blessed Sacrament, and places the corporal back into the burse. At this point, the rubrics recommend singing *Adorémus in aeternum* with the psalm *Laudate Dóminum*, or another suitable hymn. In North America, we often sing Holy God, We Praise Thy Name. In an effort to adhere to the standard recommendations, we will, on occasion, sing *Adorémus in aeternum* at the conclusion of our Benediction services. When this is done, the Closing Hymn will be sung at the conclusion of Holy Mass, while the celebrant is changing into the cope and the altar is cleared for Benediction.



Those of our readers who attend the Tridentine Mass at Assumption Church in Windsor should note that the parish has its own Adoration Chapel: Adjacent to the main church on the west side is Assumption's "Rosary Chapel", built in 1907 and retaining a traditional layout with communion rail and high altar. It is used today for weekday (Novus Ordo) Mass. Outside of Mass hours, the Rosary Chapel is open for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The monstrance used at Assumption's monthly Benediction after the Tridentine Mass is actually an historic object: Prior to our arrival, this monstrance was kept in the rectory in a display case. In recognition of the historicity of the Extraordinary Form, Fr. Walsh has given us permission to use it for its original purpose. We invite you to come to the sacristy after Mass on a Sunday after Benediction and take a close look at this work of art.