

DECRETUM: URBIS ET ORBIS

SANCTISSIMAM EUCHARISTIAM maximo cum decore asservare sedula ac vigilantia cura semper studuit sancta Mater Ecclesia. Haec tamen sollicitudo diversimode per saecula in rem deducta est. Exinde percrebescens in dies Eucharistica fidelium pietas, locum, ubi Dominicum asservatur Corpus, florescentis Christianae vitae centrum effecit.

Ad praecavendos vero abusus, et ut omnia secundum ordinem fierent, nonnulla documenta, decreta aut leges competens Auctoritas pluries emanavit, quibus locus, forma, usus Eucharistiae asservandae determinarentur. Quae omnia Codex Iuris Canonici ita colligit et exprimit: Can. 1268, s.2: “Sanctissima Eucharistia custodiatur in praecellentissimo et nobilissimo Ecclesiae loco, ac proinde regulariter in altari maiore.” Can. 1269 s.1: “Sanctissima Eucharistia servari debet in tabernaculo inamovibili in media parte altaris posito.”

Novissime autem, Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Pius Pp. XII, in sermone ad eos qui Congressui Internationalis liturgiae pastoralis Assisi interfuerunt, die 22 Septembris an. 1956 habito [cfr. A.A.S. vol. XXXXVIII pag. 711ss.] potiora quaedam capita circa doctrinam et praxin Ecclesiae de reali praesentia Christi Domini in tabernaculo lucide exposuit, modernos quosdam errores reppulit, et pietatis exercitia erga Eucaristicum Sacramentum in tabernaculis asservatum, iuxta probatam Ecclesiae traditionem summopere commendavit.

His prae oculis habitis, Sacra haec Rituum Congregatio, vi facultatum sibi a Ssmo D. N. Pio divina Providentia Papa XII tributarum, haec decrevit:

1. Normae a Codice Iuris Canonici circa Ss. Eucharistiam asservandam statutae (Cann. 1268, 1269) sancte religioseque servandae sunt; nec omittant locorum Ordinarii de hac re sedulo invigilare.

2. Tabernaculum adeo firmiter cum altare coniungatur, ut inamovibile fiat. Regulariter in altari maiore collocetur, nisi aliud venerationi et cultui tanti sacramenti commodius et decentius videatur, id quod ordinarie contingit in ecclesiis cathedralibus, collegiatis aut conventualibus, in quibus functiones chorales peragi solent; vel aliquando in maioribus sanctuariis, ne propter

Translator’s notes: 1. *modernus* is rendered ‘modish’; modern would be *hodiernus*.

Decree: Of the City and of the World

With diligent and watchful care, Holy Mother Church has always been concerned to reserve the most holy Eucharist in the most becoming way. Yet this solicitude has taken effect in various ways through the centuries. Then the daily increasing Eucharistic piety of the faithful caused the place where the Lord’s Body is reserved to be made the centre of flourishing Christian life.

But for guarding against abuses, and that everything should be done in an orderly way, the competent Authority has frequently emanated many documents, decrees or laws, whereby might be determined the place, form and use of reserving the Eucharist. And the *Codex Iuris Canonici* gathers all these things and expresses them thus: Can. 1268 s.2 “The most Holy Eucharist should be guarded in a most distinguished and most noble place in a Church, and therefore normally on a high altar”. Can/ 1269 s.1: “The most Holy Eucharist should be reserved in an immovable tabernacle set in the middle part of an altar.”

But most recently Our most Holy Lord Pope Pius XII, in a sermon delivered on 22 September 1956 to the participants in the International Liturgical Congress held at Assisi (cf. Acta Apostolicae Sedis XXXXVIII, 711ff) has lucidly expounded some stronger principles about the doctrine and praxis of the Church concerning the real presence of Christ the Lord in the tabernacle, has rejected some modish errors,¹ and has in the highest degree commended the exercises of piety towards the Eucaristic Sacrament reserved in tabernacles, according to the Church’s tested tradition.

Keeping these things in view, this Sacred Congregation of Rites, with the power of the faculties granted to it by Our most Holy Lord Pius XII by divine Providence Pope, has decreed as follows:

1. The norms laid down by the *Codex Iuris Canonici* about reserving the most Holy Eucharist (Canons 1268, 1269) are to be scrupulously and religiously observed; nor should the local Ordinaries fail to be diligently watchful about this matter.

2. A tabernacle should be firmly conjoined with an altar so that it is immovable. Normally it should be located on a high altar, unless another one may seem more convenient and fitting for the veneration and worship of so great a sacrament, which normally does occur in cathedral churches, collegiate churches or conventual churches, churches in which choral functions are

peculiarem fidelium devotionem erga obiectum veneratum, summus latriae cultus Ss.mo Sacramento debitus obnubiletur.

3. In altari ubi Ss.ma Eucharistia asservatur, habitualiter Sacrificium Missae celebrandum est.

4. In ecclesiis, ubi unicum exstat altare, hoc nequit ita aedificari, ut sacerdos celebret populum versus; sed super ipsum altare, in medio, poni debet tabernaculum ad asservendam Ss.mam Eucharistiam, ad normam legum liturgicarum constructum, forma et mensura tanto Sacramento omnino dignum.

5. Tabernaculum sit undequaque solide clausum, et adeo in omni sua parte securum, ut quodvis profanationis periculum arceatur.

6. Tabernaculum, tempore quo sacrae species in ipso asservantur, conopaeo sit copertum ac, iuxta ecclesiae antiquae traditionem, lumen perenne ante ipsum ardeat.

7. Tabernaculum, quoad formam, stilo altaris et ecclesiae conveniat; ab illis in usu hucusque receptis haud nimis discrepet; non reducatur ad speciem simplicis capsae, sed verum habitaculum Dei cum hominibus quoddammodo repraesentet; non ornatur symbolis vel figuris inusitatis, vel quae fidelium admirationem moveant, vel erronee interpretari possint, vel quae relationem ad Ss.mum Sacramentum non habeant.

8. Districte vetantur tabernacula eucharistica extra ipsum altare posita, ex. gr. in pariete, aut ad latus, vel retro altare, aut in aediculis seu columnis ab altare separatis.

Contraria consuetudo, sive quoad modum Eucharistiae asservandi, sive quoad formam tabernaculi, praesumi nequit, nisi agatur de consuetudine centenaria vel immemorabili (cf. Can. 62, s.2), uti ex. gr. in casu quorundam tabernaculorum ad modum turris vel aediculae aedificatorum. Hae tamen formae reproduci nequeunt.

Contrariis quibuslibet minime obstantibus.

Romae, 1 Iunii 1957.

C. Card. Cicognani, *Praefectus*

L. + S.

A. Carinci, Archiep. Seleuc., *a Secretis*

usually carried out; or sometimes in greater sanctuaries, so that the supreme worship of latria due to the most Holy Sacrament should not be obscured on account of the special devotion of the faithful towards the object venerated.

3. On an altar where the most Holy Eucharist is reserved, the Sacrifice of the Mass is to be habitually celebrated.²

4. In churches where only one altar exists, this cannot be constructed so that the priest may celebrate towards the people; but on that very altar, in the middle, a tabernacle for reserving the most Holy Eucharist should be located, constructed according to the norm of liturgical laws, entirely worthy in shape and size of so great a Sacrament.

5. A tabernacle should be completely closed on every side, and so secure in its every part that all risk of profanation be prevented.

6. A tabernacle, while the sacred species are reserved in it, should be covered by a veil,³ and in accordance with the tradition of the ancient church an unceasing light should burn before it.

7. As to its shape, a tabernacle should conform to the style of the altar and the church; it should not be too greatly out of tune with those accepted for use until now; it should not be reduced to the appearance of a simple box, but it should in a way represent the true dwelling of God with men; it should not be decorated with unfamiliar symbols or figures, or those that may stir the wonderment of the faithful, or that can be interpreted erroneously, or that do not have reference to the most Holy Sacrament.

8. Strictly prohibited are Eucharistic tabernacles located away from an actual altar, for example on a wall, or alongside, or behind an altar, or in shrines, or on columns separate from an altar.

A contrary custom cannot be accepted, whether in respect of the method of reserving the Eucharist or in respect of the shape of a tabernacle, unless with a centuries old or immemorial custom (cf. Canon 62 s.2), as for example in the case of certain tabernacles constructed in the manner of a tower or a shrine. However, these shapes cannot be reproduced.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Rome, 1 June 1957.

C. Cardinal Cicognani, *Prefect*

Place + of the Seal

A. Carinci, Archbishop of Seleucia, *Secretary*

2. 'Habitualiter' is a neologism presumably from the Italian *abituale*.

3. A tabernacle veil is presumably intended, though 'canopea' more literally means a fine net.