

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION WORKSHOP
ST. ELIZABETH SETON
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CHAPEL LOCATION AND SET UP

"A PLACE FOR QUIET WORSHIP"

Our Experience and Thoughts

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Hello, my name is Andy Cirmo and I am a member of our parish Eucharistic Adoration Committee. When another member of the small group who started the perpetual adoration movement in our parish called me almost three years ago I was surprised, sort of excited and a bit overwhelmed with the thought of it. As they gained our pastor's approval to proceed and we began to meet to formalize our approach with the help of *The Real Presence Association* organization, the thought of us actually having a special place for Eucharistic adoration seemed such a challenge, such a huge undertaking, such a long way to reach. But we did it, and here we are today talking with you about expanding Eucharistic Adoration and even establishing perpetual chapels in your parishes.

All I can say is "Praise Be to God. . . for HE does wondrous things for those who love Him!!!"

It's likely that the core group got me involved because of my connections to the men of our parish through our parish men's organization the Knights of Columbus. We have lovingly provided the time and labor to many parish projects over the years and are a ready resource. But I already knew these wonderful faith filled people through meeting them at Mass, and at parish commissions and committee meetings. And I guess I'm not afraid to say that I wear my devotion to the Holy Eucharist on my sleeve and find myself directing people to the Eucharist at every opportunity. So when the call came.. . there I went... "into the deep" as our Holy Father would say, to help make it happen.

When the time came to actually begin to consider space, location and physical requirements I was fortunate to become merely a part of the building project due to the networking we and our pastor did to call forth skilled people to coordinate the physical construction and décor. So I am not speaking from the viewpoint of one who made it all happen, but of one who was deeply involved, worked mentally and physically on it and helped to bring together the human resources to make it physically happen. I am not a contractor, a carpenter, an electrician, an engineer, or a designer, but do have some planning and organizing skills I'm told; so now the rest of the story ...

What I intend to take you through are our thoughts and discussions, and the development and evolution of our process and decision making. I will share our experience, reasoning and rationale; what we considered, and what we learned while we researched, located, designed and built a place for quiet worship.

I will break this presentation into two parts: **Location** and **Setup**, and I will provide all of you with a step by step location and setup list to take back with you for your use which includes: things to consider, things required, things desired, and what we learned.

Before We Located A Space ...What Was It We Wanted To Do?

Let's talk about what a Eucharistic Adoration Chapel is:

It is "a place for quiet worship" of the Holy Eucharist in exposition, and a place to listen to the voice of Our Lord ... whether it is 24 hours a day or a select few days or hours per week. It is a place where one can worship based on our innate desire to pray before the Blessed Sacrament just as early Christians were drawn to as early as the fourth century described as "compositio loci" or *composition of place-the placing of one's self in the presence of God*. (1)

Since our worship space (which was at that point being remodeled) has a reservation tabernacle right behind the altar, and because the physical layout of the church is wide open, there was no possibility of using space adjacent to the existing worship space for a chapel. According to canon law 941 section 2: *Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may not take place while Mass is being celebrated in the same area of the church or oratory*. (2)

Prior to our renovation we had a small reservation chapel off the entry narthex with space for about four people. This space would not fill our needs for perpetual exposition. Based on this information, our search for a less obvious location began.

Research

A Road Trip...

So, parallel with all our activities to educate our parish about Eucharistic Adoration: through bulletin articles, bulletin boards, handouts, word of mouth, extension of first Friday hours to midnight then all night, etc... to get started to look for space and location we (our small group) decided to get a feel for what adoration chapels look like. Together with our pastor we all decided on a road trip. We took a day off and as a group traveled to seven nearby adoration chapels to get a real feel for their physical location, their capacity, access, décor, layout, and as many other things we could think of. In some of the chapels we toured, we had a chance to talk with the pastor or a staff member about the chapel, the adoration program, and the impact on the parish. Great information.

With an eye for minute detail for the task at hand, I took a lot of pictures, notes and observations about what we saw and compiled a list for the committee of physical details of every chapel we visited. We took this list and literally broke it into two lists... "must haves" and "like to haves". This at least gave us a starting point, a framework.

After we looked at a number of adoration chapels it became quite evident that there was a nice synergy between the environment of the parish worship space and the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel in terms of style and décor. That synergy is important to understand as you look at your own requirements to be sure that a chapel doesn't clash or compete with, but actually fits with the faith community's existing architecture, décor and spirit.

More Research

It was interesting to research what the actual Church requirements for an Exposition Chapel are. Basically, some of them are: permission of the local pastor, approval of the Bishop, establishment of a separate "order of the faithful" to maintain this lay ministry, ongoing presence of two or more adorers, separation from the church worship space, use of a monstrance with four to six candles or a ciborium with two candles - the monstrance or ciborium are "placed upon the table of the altar which is covered with a cloth." (3)

(But most importantly: The committee must work closely with their pastor as a source of information, guidance and of course, approval on all the details).

Is There Guidance, Guidelines or Rules?

When preparing a perpetual Eucharistic adoration chapel one should consult the following:

Canon Law :

- Can. 941** 1 In churches or oratories which are allowed to reserve the blessed Eucharist, there may be exposition, either with the pyx or with the monstrance, in accordance with the norms prescribed in the Liturgical books.
- 2 Exposition of the blessed Sacrament may not take place while Mass is being celebrated in the same area of the church or oratory.
- Can. 942** It is recommended that in these churches or oratories, there is to be each year a solemn exposition of the blessed Sacrament for an appropriate, even if not for a continuous time, so that the local community may more attentively meditate on and adore the eucharistic mystery. This exposition is to take place only if a fitting attendance of the faithful is foreseen, and the prescribed norms are observed.
- Can. 943** The minister of exposition of the blessed Sacrament and of the eucharistic blessing is a priest or deacon... (4)

Liturgy Documentary Series 11 / Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist (May be ordered from EWTN or from the United States Catholic Conference at 800-235-8722. In Washington metropolitan area or from outside the United States, call 301-209-9020). Contents:

- **Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist** (Introductions)
- **Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*** (Selections)
- **Particular Responses of the Sacred Congregation of Rites to Questions Regarding Exposition of the Eucharist**
- ***The Roman Ritual: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass***

- Decree
- General Introduction
- Chapter III: Forms of Worship of the Holy Eucharist
 1. Exposition of the Holy Eucharist
 2. Eucharistic Processions
 3. Eucharistic Congresses
- **Instruction *Inaestimabile donum*** (Selections)
- **Responses of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments Regarding Perpetual Exposition of the Eucharist** (5)

Mysterium Fidei – Paul VI :

In the course of the day the faithful should not omit to visit the Blessed Sacrament, which according to liturgical laws must be kept in churches with great reverence in a most honorable location. (6)

Inaestimabile Donum – John Paul II :

#24 ... a spot which is very prominent, truly noble and duly decorated, or in a chapel suitable for private prayer and for adoration by the faithful (6)

There are also many good reference books referring to history such as: *The History of Eucharistic Adoration - Development of Doctrine in the Catholic Church* by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. and *In the Presence of Our Lord, The History, Theology and Psychology of Eucharistic Adoration* by Benedict Groschel and James Monti. Using references and historical studies such as these can be helpful as history shows us what to do in many ways. It's fascinating that in the 4th century in Lugo Spain to see the earliest history of perpetual adoration; that in the 11th century we see the beginnings of the use of monstrances; and in the 15th century the use of what is referred to as "sun burst" type monstrances in which rays of the sun radiate out from the Eucharist. That is the type we have in our chapel here at St. Elizabeth Seton. Adoration chapels have appeared in private oratories, churches, monasteries, and are experiencing a new resurgence because of the clear wishes of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II.

High Level Overview - Human Resources

Looking back at our own story here, at this point in our process we had completed the research, the movement was picking up steam in terms of adorers committing to time, and we needed to get moving. We had completed our field research, worked in close conjunction with our Pastor, did a lot of reading, brought in help to organize our process, and began to sort out our requirements and our "would like to have's".

We now needed to get this initial requirement list and "like to have" list to some resources in our parish community with the skills to pull it together. We needed the help of some higher expertise than ours to know what kind of space requirement our list entailed, do site research and propose options to us. So we networked with our internal organizations in church, and through our pastor, to bring in known resources with engineering, building and general costing, construction and contracting knowledge. Later, once our site and construction needs were detailed out we also contacted known tradesmen in our parish to help. **Your parish community is your single biggest source for volunteer help. Don't be afraid to network through every parish organization to reach the right people.**

With this list in hand our subcommittee of two to three parishioners with some expertise, looked very hard at our church building in places on another level from the worship space, but could not find a way to reallocate existing space without causing a problem rather than a solution. We also looked at existing parish office building offices for opportunities to shift some space or use underutilized space, and found some options in terms of a freestanding garage for possible conversion, and an attached three stall garage which had previously been converted to office space. The cost of converting a freestanding structure was extremely high versus converting an attached structure and remodeling some space, especially in the area of electrical, heat, air conditioning, plumbing and security needs. We decided to clear out the interior of the attached three stall garage which had been converted to offices. Fortunately the office space lost could be absorbed in another parish office building.

Locate Space for a Chapel :

- 1.) Based on Research and Church requirements, decide on what you need and break it apart from what you would like to have.**
- 2.) Retain the services of skilled parishioners who can properly assess options.**
- 3.) All must be done in close coordination with your pastor.**
- 4.) Carefully weigh the questions below before proceeding then come to a consensus.**

Here is a list of questions we considered and the consensus we arrived at based on our information :

- Can the current reservation chapel in or near the worship space be adapted to perpetual adoration so as not to be in the same space and visible during Mass and the Sacraments? Can it be conducive to private and quiet meditation at all times?
 - In our case we couldn't use existing worship space.
- Is there a separate space in the Church building or buildings, but separated far enough so as not to be disturbed by parish worship and activities?
 - In our case we couldn't find workable space in the church building.
- Is there an old convent chapel or a school chapel or room in the school or one of the detached buildings to accommodate a chapel?
 - We had a detached garage and an attached converted garage to use.

- How much space is needed? What kind of space is needed (shape, adjacencies)?
 - Based on our research we felt the need for a minimum of 24 seats and approximately 700 square feet.
- Is there parking? Is it off street or on street? Is it well lit?
 - Our parking lot was adjacent to the proposed spaces and provided adequate parking within sight of the street.
- Is there easy and safe access?
 - There was two-sided access to both buildings we looked at.
- Are there HVAC systems available to connect to?
 - The attached garage could be connected easily, the detached option would have been difficult and costly.
- Is there a bathroom facility available?
 - The attached garage allowed us to use the parish office bathroom with some alterations to the office space to assure security.
- Is there a way to give handicap access?
 - This posed a problem in the attached facility we chose, which we are working on.
- What layout is desired (configuration)?
 - Based on our research we desired an open space wider than it was deep, but certainly would have been open to any space made available.
 - Long and narrow layouts like converted chapels distanced the adorer and we wanted to avoid that by going wide and shallow with a space.
- Can there be a separate outside entrance?
 - Entrances to the chapel could be separated from general entrance doors of the parish office.
- How easily can the space selected be converted to a chapel? (Physical, electrical, HVAC, demolition and redesign)?
 - The space we chose had only sheetrock partitions and little else in terms of difficult demolition, the electrical service, and HVAC of the prior use could be adapted to the needs of a chapel. The space allowed us to partition off a reception/sign-in/resource area at the entrance (very important). We came to a consensus on the desired general layout of the space.
- Can we get the permits to demolish and build?
 - In our case the converted garage space was zoned for offices and meeting space.

- Will the space be close enough to become a physical part of the parish campus and life?
 - We did not have to alter the exterior at all. Even the interior has the feel of our parish.
- What will it cost to demolish existing contents of the space?
 - We used parish volunteers and literally did it in one day with no cost.
- What will it cost to build and furnish the new space?
 - Our space of approx. 750 sq. ft. was estimated to cost us about \$40,000 to build.
- Where will we get the funding?
 - We networked and prayed even before we found out the cost estimate and incredibly a parishioner stepped up with a donation for that exact amount. The Holy Spirit answered our prayers.

Setup and Furnish the Chapel :

- 1.) Based on research and Church requirements, identify by consensus, the list of "Must Haves", versus the list of "Like to Haves", choose a subcommittee, and identify key individuals in the parish community with the skills to help design and decorate in terms of walls, floors, windows, lighting, fixtures, etc.**
- 2.) Come to a consensus on the findings and recommendations of these key individuals.**
- 3.) All must be done in close coordination with your pastor.**
- 4.) Carefully consider the areas below and come to a consensus.**

Here is a list of items we considered and the consensus we arrived at based on our information:

- An outer hall or corridor with a place for sign-in and resources is important.
 - In our case there was enough room to build an entrance hall for sign-ins, to buffer noise, and add a place for resources (books etc.), a holy water scone, and chair.
- A space shaped to easily set up adorers all in clear view of the Holy Sacrament.
 - In our case we were able to configure the space horizontally facing front and in order to eliminate a long blank wall, or having to place chairs almost facing each other, we built the wall holding the monstrance angled concave to the chairs.
- Climate control which keeps adorers comfortable.
 - In our case there was an existing furnace and air conditioner unit, which we were able to adapt, improve and reuse. While it assures year round comfort, there is a separate control for adorers (out

of reach of children), which can be personally set. We double insulated walls adjacent to the entrance area for an extra noise barrier.

- Lighting is extremely important and needs to be fitted to accommodate a quiet worship space.
 - In our case we opted to use recessed lighting for two reasons, no buzz like that from fluorescent, and a nice clean look of lighting with slide controls in three zones for personal lighting needs and a combination of floods and spots to enhance the focal point of the room.
- A phone is needed for emergencies
 - We placed a simple phone with local access only in the entrance hall for security and emergencies.
- Seating had to accommodate 22 to 24 adorers.
 - While this seems like a lot, there are times when whole Religious Education classes and entire small faith groups adore and pray together. We were fortunate to obtain a long term loan of chairs with kneelers from the former chapel area of the main church
- A quiet prayer space is required.
 - We double insulated the wall adjacent to the office building, used sheetrock on the ceilings instead of ceiling tile, put in a nine foot ceiling to lower noise, installed an extra heavy entrance wood door, and good carpeting with a nice pad to absorb sound. A durable but beautiful carpet was installed to mitigate noise, and add color and texture to the room.
- Walls and decor must be conducive to adoration.
 - Walls were pointed and then textured to add softness and colors were chosen to soften the room and stay with the soft color and feel of our main church. While it can be done and we saw it in other chapels, we opted not to add any statuary nor art to the room, at this point, in order to focus all eyes on the Blessed Sacrament. The only other décor in the room is a table (there is no altar) for candles adjacent to the monstrance. We use six candles.
- The monstrance is required.
 - While the monstrance used can be presented in many ways (as long as the Blessed Sacrament is secure and beautifully displayed), we were fortunate to have been gifted by our pastor with a wall recessed Monstrance which keeps the Blessed Sacrament secure and still has all the features of the radiating grace look of a portable monstrance. This monstrance also fits well with the overall look and feel of our main church. It is mounted at eye level to the kneeling adorer for comfortable viewing
- Security for the late night adorer is critical.
 - We have installed numerical touch pads at front and rear doors with a combination known only to adorers, which automatically sets up at 9 PM and deactivates at 7AM.
- Parking space day and night close by is important.

- Parking is allowed close to the entry, but established so as not to interfere with parish office parking.
- Good Exterior lighting is critical.
 - We installed light sensor activated commercial grade halogen lamps in the entry alley way and on the parking lot side of the building for security.
- Installation of meaningful exterior and interior signs is critical.
 - Not only is there a directional sign internally from the parish offices to the chapel, but also on the front and rear exterior chapel doors and approach wall. We also installed a "You are here" sign on the exterior of the main church which clearly directs the first time visitor to the chapel.
- A Chapel Name Sign is very important.
 - Our "Pope John Paul II Eucharistic Adoration Chapel" sign is large, well lit and beautifully sandblasted from wood in colors matching the exterior and interior décor of the chapel.

Summary

I know this is a lot of detail so I hope when you take a copy of this presentation home to your parish you can see in the process here, how indeed it can be done from scratch, even in a relatively young parish with space constraints. If it is meant to be, it can be done. Hopefully you can pick up an idea or two from our experience and use it in your efforts.

We are so proud of what we built, and I can tell you one thing for sure – if it wasn't for the incredibly active presence of the Holy Spirit in strengthening, guiding, and assisting us in overcoming many obstacles and paving the way – it would not have happened. So if you take back to your parishes even one helpful hint to smooth the way to the development of a special place for quiet worship – take this one :

Pray, Pray, Pray and get as many people as you can to pray to the Holy Spirit all through the process.

Sources:

- (1) Benedict Groschel and James Monti *In the Presence of Our Lord* (The History, Theology, Psychology of Eucharistic Devotion). 1996.
- (2). Canon Law Society of America *Code of Canon Law* 1984.
- (3). Liturgy Documentary Series 11 / *Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* 1996, United States Catholic Conference, p.23 #85.
- (4). Canon Law Society of America *Code of Canon Law* 1984.
- (5). Liturgy Documentary Series 11 / *Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* 1996, United States Catholic Conference, Contents.
- (6). Peter John Vere, JCL/M Canon Law *Eucharistic Devotion in the light of the Second Vatican Council* (excerpts from *Mysterium Fidei*, Paul VI ; *Inaestimabile Donum*, John Paul II) 2000.

Presented in prayerful and thankful service
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