

Eucharistic



Adoration

How many people should be at adoration?

Question: My wife and I have been part of Blessed Sacrament adoration for the past dozen years. Recently, we read that during an adoration hour there should always be at least two people present. Occasionally, one of us will not be available. Is it liturgically necessary that two individuals be present at all times, and if so what is the purpose for that guideline?

- Joe & Cathy Steffan, Van Wert, Ohio

Answer: Thank you for the great work you and your wife are doing for the church and all souls by participating in adoration for the past dozen years. It is a very hopeful sign of the new “springtime of holiness” for the church that, in ever more places, the faithful are participating in regular adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Very early in his pontificate, St. John Paul II established adoration chapels in the major patriarchal basilicas in Rome, realizing that the holy Eucharist is the source and summit of life in the church. When there is faith, devotion, and reverence for the Eucharist, the faithful grow in charity and holiness, and the community is blessed with a variety of vocations that serve the church and all souls with joy and simplicity. The Eucharist is the source of life for the church.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament has been a pious custom in the church since time immemorial, and likewise the custom of having at least two persons present at all times has been the rule. The Rites for Holy Communion and Worship of the Holy Eucharist Outside of Mass, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1973, mentions the two-person norm (see No. 90).

Likewise, a helpful guideline from the Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, states: “Perpetual adoration occurs when parishioners, religious orders and communities, and other interested people arrange their visits to church in an organized way. Typically, two or more people, taking turns, spend an hour, in prayer and silence, before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. The hours of the day or night are so divided that adoration is considered perpetual or extended over a period of time.

“Perpetual adoration is worthy to be promoted. In parishes and oratories where it does occur, measures should be taken to ensure that there are two or more of the faithful present and that there is a safe and secure environment for the adorers.”

So you ask, “What’s the reason for having two people present?” Safety! In case something happens to one of the adorers (falls asleep, faints, has a medical emergency, etc.) the other can call for aid while at the same time insuring that the Most Blessed Sacrament exposed in the monstrance is not left unattended.

Why should we not leave the Most Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance unattended? First, out of courtesy, and second for safety, because – while in the monstrance – the Eucharist is vulnerable. It may happen, no matter how hard you try, that sometimes there is only one person in the adoration chapel. When that happens, that person should not leave until another person arrives, or if that is not possible, that person should carefully repose the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle or secure the safety of the Eucharist in some other way.

~ Father Francis Hoffman

Finally, those good souls who are entrusted with managing the adoration program at their parish should continue to promote adoration so that there be at least two people there at all times. This may be difficult, but it’s well worth the effort.

(Catholic New World Commentary July 12-25, 2015)