



DIOCESE OF LONDON

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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December 3, 2012

To the clergy and lay-faithful of the Diocese of London,

The reservation of the Blessed Sacrament has been part of the tradition of the Catholic Church from earliest times. As our understanding and appreciation of Christ's presence in the Eucharistic Species has evolved, so too has the manner in which we have chosen to honour this presence in regards to reservation.

The shape, size, and placement of tabernacles have changed over the last thousand years. Often, at the basilicas in Rome, the primary space for reservation is in side-chapels. Later constructions have the tabernacle on the central axis or within close proximity to the altar. Over the years, these different placements have fostered the faithful's devotion to Christ's real presence in the Eucharist.

What has been of serious concern to me in the last few years is the movement of tabernacles and the redesign of sanctuary space in our churches by pastors who have not contacted me or those to whom I have entrusted these matters. When these changes are made and are not in accord with our diocesan policies and statutes, the faithful are often confused. In some cases, these adjustments to Church furnishings have been unnecessary and have placed an undue financial burden on the parish.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2002) article 387 states:

The Diocesan Bishop, who is to be regarded as the High Priest of his flock, from whom the life in Christ of his faithful in some sense derives and upon whom it depends, must promote, regulate, and be vigilant over the liturgical life in his diocese. It is to him that in this Instruction is entrusted the regulating of the discipline of concelebration (cf. nos. 202, 374) and the establishing of norms regarding the function of serving the Priest at the altar (cf. no. 107), the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds (cf. no. 283), and the construction and ordering of churches (cf. no. 291). It is above all for him, moreover, to nourish the spirit of the Sacred Liturgy in the Priests, Deacons, and faithful.

In order to exercise my responsibility for the liturgical life of the diocese, I have entrusted the evaluation of requests regarding the movement of tabernacles or the redesigning of the sanctuary to Father Michael Béchard, the Director of Liturgy, and to the members of the Building Commission under the leadership of the Chair, Mr. David Savel. ***Any movement of the tabernacle or any renovation of the sanctuary space is not to take place until permission has been obtained from the Director of Liturgy and the Building Commission of the Diocese of London.***

There is no simple rule which will cover all situations. We will need to consider, for example, the overall shape of the worship space, the feasibility of Chapels of Reservation, the ability of parishioners to access the church building for personal prayer.

I have asked Father Béchard to begin the process of revising the guidelines for the building and renovation of churches and places of worship, in keeping with recent directives of the Holy See and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. We plan to complete this work by Advent 2013. I invite you to present your questions and concerns to Father Béchard.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, reading "Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B." with a stylized cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B.
Bishop of London

RPF/bk