



JOSEPH EDWARD STRICKLAND
BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE APOSTOLIC SEE
BISHOP OF TYLER

D E C R E E

On the Placement of the Tabernacle for the Reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist

The Lord Jesus is present to us in many ways – in the Church, in the faithful gathered, in the word of God proclaimed and preached, in the sacraments, in the person of the priest, and in the poor. Yet His presence in the Eucharist is raised above all else because it is where “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.”¹

The Eucharist, both in its celebration and in its adoration, is the “sum and summary of our faith” and sits at the center of our lives as Christian individuals, families and communities gathered in our parishes and missions.² As St. John Paul II wrote, “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church.”³ The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council beautifully summarized the centrality of the Eucharist to the People of God, declaring it “the source and summit of the Christian life.”⁴

In our Faith, the wonderful preeminence of the Eucharist is made perceptible in physical ways: using signs and symbols, and in the orientation of our places of worship. Among the ways the centrality of the Eucharist is expressed in our churches is the location of the altar and the tabernacle. The altar stands as the center of sacrifice and thanksgiving that takes place during the celebration of Mass when the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of the Lord. Following Holy Communion, the portion of the Eucharist that remains is reserved in the tabernacle for adoration and distribution to the sick.

Within the church, the tabernacle serves as a sign and gives a sense of the Savior's presence in the midst of His people. Consequently, the universal law directs the tabernacle to be located “in a distinguished place” that is “conspicuous, suitably adorned and conducive to prayer.”⁵ In making these prescriptions for the place where the Lord dwells among us, the Church seeks to promote a deeper personal relationship with Jesus, foster adoration of the Lord, provide a sign for all that the Eucharist is at the heart of our

¹ *Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*, Council of Trent

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1327

³ Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 1

⁴ Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 11

⁵ *Code of Canon Law*, 938

work, and contribute to the recognition of Christ's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament.⁶

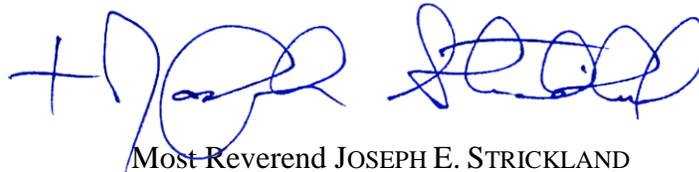
Mindful of these things, and while aware that the tradition of the Church admits of the tabernacle being situated in either the sanctuary or in a chapel suitable for private adoration, it is my pastoral judgment that, for the good of the mission of the Church and the souls of the faithful in the Diocese of Tyler, the tabernacle is always to be located in a prominent place of honor in the main body of the church.

Therefore, I decree as follows:

1. In all current and future churches, chapels and oratories, the tabernacle for the reservation of the Most Blessed Sacrament is to be located in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, along the center axis of the church.⁷
2. Tabernacles which are not currently so positioned are to be moved so as to comply with this decree by May 31, 2018.
3. With the permission of the diocesan bishop and for a serious reason, the tabernacle may be located in another visible, prominent and noble space, but always in the sanctuary of the main body of the church.

Finally, I ask all the clergy to review the universal laws and liturgical norms governing the place for the reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist and ensure they are faithfully observed.

Given at Tyler, at the Diocesan Curia, under my sign and seal, and the countersign of my Chancellor, on the 20th day of the month of January in the year of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, two thousand and seventeen.



Most Reverend JOSEPH E. STRICKLAND
Bishop of Tyler



Peyton Low
Chancellor

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⁶ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 69

⁷ Those churches where the sacraments are exclusively celebrated according to the liturgical books of 1962 are exempted from requirement that the tabernacle stand apart from the altar of celebration.