

POLICY ON

CHAPELS

Convents, Hospitals, Aged Care
and Academic Institutions

2026



Archdiocese
of Brisbane

I. CONVENTS

- I.1 The Religious of the house are responsible for the chapel and the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.
- I.2 Where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, a priest must celebrate Mass regularly, as far as possible at least fortnightly.

2. HOSPITALS

Pastoral Principle

- 2.1 The reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in hospitals exists primarily to support the pastoral care of the sick, particularly the celebration of Viaticum and the distribution of Holy Communion to patients. All arrangements for reservation, security, transport and distribution should reflect this pastoral purpose and foster reverence for the Eucharist.

Responsibility

- 2.2 Contemporary hospital chapels are frequently multi-purpose spaces shared by people of different Christian traditions, other faith communities, and those seeking quiet reflection. The Catholic community is called to exercise particular sensitivity and respect within these shared environments while ensuring the reverent care of the Blessed Sacrament and the appropriate celebration of Catholic rites.
- 2.3 The chapel in a Catholic hospital which normally has the Blessed Sacrament reserved is the responsibility of the appointed ordained Catholic chaplain.
- 2.4 In the case of a Christian (ecumenical) chapel or a religious (inter-faith) space, an ordained Catholic chaplain or lay pastoral team leader may share responsibility for administering the space but has the sole care of any Catholic books, vestments and vessels which may be kept there.

- 2.5 Where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved at a hospital, the designated ordained Catholic chaplain or lay pastoral care team leader has a specific and serious duty of care for the worthiness and manner of the reservation. This person is responsible for safeguarding the tabernacle key and providing access for those who require it.

Reservation

- 2.6 The Blessed Sacrament should normally be reserved only in a permanent Catholic chapel or other designated Catholic sacred space.
- 2.7 Where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a hospital chapel, Mass should ordinarily be celebrated there at least fortnightly, and as regularly as pastoral circumstances permit.
- 2.8 A tabernacle is sometimes provided in a discreet place within the hospital's ecumenical or interfaith chapel, or in an adjoining sacristy or pastoral care centre. It may have a simple timber or metal door but should be clearly identified by an appropriate Christian symbol. It is not necessary to have it veiled or to have a lamp burning beside it, but it must be kept locked.
- 2.9 If Mass is not celebrated in a hospital with a tabernacle, the consecrated elements may be replenished with hosts from the local parish church.
- 2.10 A tabernacle should be kept solely for the Blessed Sacrament and perhaps the holy oil for anointing the sick. It may not be used for storing anything else, even liturgical books or other religious items.

- 2.11 Only the quantity of consecrated hosts reasonably required for the pastoral care of patients should be reserved.
- 2.12 Where Catholic and Anglican communities lawfully share a tabernacle, the consecrated elements of each Church must be clearly distinguished, preferably through separate labelled compartments or another secure means of identification.
- 2.13 The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a secure, locked tabernacle or other suitable locked receptacle designated solely for that purpose. It should not be stored among general office supplies or personal belongings.
- 2.14 Where there is no tabernacle available at a hospital, communion ministers bring the consecrated host from their parish church or a designated church close by. Parishes should provide convenient access for hospital communion ministers to enable them to bring communion to the sick and dying whenever required.
- 2.15 Communion ministers should not keep the Blessed Sacrament overnight in their homes, vehicles, handbags or personal storage before bringing it to the sick.
- 2.16 Communion ministers should ordinarily collect the Blessed Sacrament on the day it is to be taken to the sick and proceed directly to those receiving Holy Communion.
- 2.17 Hosts brought for the sick should be distributed as soon as possible. If there is no tabernacle, any hosts remaining after distribution has concluded should be consumed reverently by the minister.

Rites celebrated

- 2.18 Mass may be celebrated in any hospital chapel or even in a common space set aside for the occasion.
- 2.19 When Mass is celebrated at a hospital, where possible communion is taken by the ministers directly from the altar to those who are not able to attend in person.
- 2.20 The celebration of a blessing for the sick or the sacrament of anointing of the sick may take place in a hospital chapel.
- 2.21 Viaticum may be celebrated at a Mass in the hospital chapel, followed by the prayers for the commendation of the dying, though these 'last rites' would more commonly take place at the bedside.
- 2.22 Emergency baptism may be celebrated with the family in the hospital chapel or at the bedside of the sick person.
- 2.23 Where appropriate and permitted by the hospital, the Catholic funeral rites may be celebrated in a hospital chapel. A memorial service may also be celebrated, in accordance with hospital policy, at the request of the next of kin of a person who has died in the hospital.
- 2.24 In a hospital setting, ministers of other Christian Churches or ecclesial communities may celebrate rites in a Catholic chapel in consultation with the Catholic chaplain. Civil or non-Christian rites should normally be held in another common space in the hospital.

3. AGED CARE

Responsibility

- 3.1 In general, responsibility for aged care homes belongs to the parish priest of the parish in which they are built.
- 3.2 The parish priest is directly responsible for a Catholic chapel, with or without the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. He has the care of its vessels, vestments and liturgical books.
- 3.3 The parish priest liaises with others on the management of an ecumenical or inter-faith chapel, whether in a Catholic aged care facility, a place belonging to another Christian church, or a non-denominational facility. He is responsible for the care of any Catholic books, vestments and vessels which may be kept there.

Reservation

- 3.4 The Blessed Sacrament should normally be reserved only in a permanent Catholic chapel or other designated Catholic sacred space. Where the only available space is multi-purpose, ecumenical or inter-faith, the Blessed Sacrament may be reserved in a secure, locked tabernacle or other suitable locked receptacle designated solely for this purpose and clearly identified with an appropriate Christian symbol.
- 3.5 Where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a Catholic chapel, Mass should ordinarily be celebrated there at least fortnightly, and as regularly as pastoral circumstances permit.

Rites Celebrated

- 3.6 In an aged care community, Mass may be celebrated in any chapel or even in a common space set aside for the occasion.
- 3.7 Where Mass is celebrated at a nursing home, where possible communion is taken by the ministers directly from the altar to those who are not able to attend in person.
- 3.8 The celebration of a blessing for the sick or the sacrament of anointing of the sick may take place in the chapel of an aged care facility.
- 3.9 In a Catholic aged care facility, ministers of other Christian Churches or ecclesial communities may celebrate rites in a Catholic chapel in consultation with the ordained Catholic chaplain. Civil or non-Christian rites should normally be held in another common space in the complex.
- 3.10 Non-Christian or civil funeral rites are not allowed in a Catholic chapel.

4. ACADEMIC

Responsibility

- 4.1 The chapel at Australian Catholic University is administered by the Holy Spirit Provincial Seminary.
- 4.2 A Catholic university or college chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved is the responsibility of the ordained Catholic chaplain or college pastoral director.
- 4.3 In the case of a Christian (ecumenical) chapel or a religious (inter-faith) space, a Catholic chaplain may share joint responsibility for the space but has the sole care of any Catholic books, vestments and vessels which may be kept there.
- 4.4 Care of chapels in Catholic secondary schools, whether the Blessed Sacrament is reserved there or not, should be located within the college leadership team, normally with the APRE or pastoral director.
- 4.5 Specific procedures need to be established for booking, celebrating and recording weddings.

Reservation

- 4.6 The Blessed Sacrament should normally be reserved only in a permanent Catholic chapel or other designated Catholic sacred space.

- 4.7 Where the only available space is multi-purpose, ecumenical or inter-faith, the Blessed Sacrament may be reserved in a secure, locked tabernacle or other suitable locked receptacle designated solely for this purpose and clearly identified with an appropriate Christian symbol.
- 4.8 Where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in an academic institution, provision should be made for regular Eucharistic celebration, as far as possible at least fortnightly.

Rites Celebrated

- 4.9 Chapels are primarily places for prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist or other liturgies.
- 4.10 A chapel may also be used for other pastoral activities such as graduation, school assembly or parents' information gatherings, but is not reduced to a general-purpose social space.
- 4.11 Catholic weddings may be celebrated in the Catholic chapel of a university or school with the permission of the couple's parish priest. The weddings must abide by all the requirements of Canon Law, and be duly registered in an official church register, with the marriage papers lodged in the local parish.
- 4.12 An annual report on Catholic weddings is to be provided to the Archbishop, listing the couples' names, the date, the celebrant and where the marriage papers are lodged.

- 4.13 Ministers of other Christian Churches or ecclesial communities may conduct religious weddings in Catholic university or school chapels with the permission of the Archbishop. The Archbishop cannot give permission for the wedding of a divorced Catholic without a declaration of freedom to marry from a tribunal of the Catholic Church. If the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the chapel, it may be considered appropriate to remove it out of respect for the Christian service.
- 4.14 Non-Christian weddings, or same-sex weddings, or weddings with a civil celebrant are not allowed.
- 4.15 Baptism and Confirmation rites take place in the parish church. The specific permission of the Archbishop is required if it is desired to celebrate one of these sacraments in a university or school chapel.
- 4.16 Where appropriate, the Catholic funeral rites may be celebrated in a university or school chapel.

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