



A Catholic Church is the Lord's house of prayer where the Eucharist is not only celebrated, but where it is also reserved in a tabernacle (Latin: *tābernācŭlum* – tent). The faithful assemble in the true presence of Jesus Christ to worship.

The Sacrifice of the Mass takes place in the Sanctuary on the altar, which is traditionally made of stone. The Sanctuary has always been set apart structurally from the body of the Church. It is a holy place which serves as the center of the liturgy.

In early Christianity, priests and lay people took the Eucharist to the homes of the sick and others unable to attend the celebration. They also took the Eucharist into their homes in order to protect and hide it from those who sought to persecute the Church.

When the peace of Constantine ended in persecution, the practice was established of keeping the Eucharist only in Churches and no longer in people's homes. Elaborate vessels were mounted into the walls of the Sanctuary or suspended by fine chains. Later, simpler vessels replaced the more elaborate ones. By the 13th Century, the Eucharist was most often kept in a highly embellished cabinet.

Later on, reaction to the denial by Protestants of the reality and permanence of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist led to the spread of the placing of the tabernacle on a high altar, so as to make it more evidently visible, and to allow it to serve as a focus for the prayers of those who visit the Church.



The Catholic Church holds the doctrine of transubstantiation, that is, bread and wine become the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; Christ is “truly present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity” under the appearance of bread and wine. This presence continues after the Consecration, so that even after Mass is concluded, Christ is still truly present.

A tabernacle, therefore, serves as a secure place in which to reserve the Blessed Sacrament. A candle burns near the tabernacle whenever the Eucharist is present as a sign to the faithful that Jesus Christ is truly present. Therefore, the tabernacle is to be an object of the greatest respect and reverence.

The Lord said to Moses, “They shall make a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell in their midst.” Exodus 35:8.

God bless you,



Father Richard